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## Gertrude Stein, Vladimir Nabokov and the language of exile An analysis of writing strategies beyond the nation

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GERTRUDE STEIN, VLADIMIR NABOKOV AND THE LANGUAGE  
OF EXILE. AN ANALYSIS OF WRITING STRATEGIES  
BEYOND THE NATION

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
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ABSTRACT

**Gertrude Stein, Vladimir Nabokov and the Language of Exile:  
An Analysis of Writing Beyond the Nation**

by

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This study analyzes three texts by Vladimir Nabokov- *Lolita*, *Pale Fire* and *Speak, Memory*- and three by Gertrude Stein- "Patriarchal Poetry", "Poetry and Grammar" and *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*- employing theoretical concepts from Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* to argue that both writers use specific writing strategies to resist the category of nation and the traditional view of exile as an essentially painful experience. While Nabokov thematizes exile frequently, his views on nation and exile reside at a deeper level, visible as undermining conventional means of understanding language. I read in his concern for misrepresentation the overarching strategy of the three texts. Stein, on the other hand, does not thematize exile. However, I read in her focus on the materiality of language and on self-referentiality, strategies of de- and re-territorializing the English language,. Both Nabokov and Stein resist clichés of the nation and exile.

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## CHAPTER I

### NATION, EXILE AND TRANSLATION: FINDING

#### THE RIGHT WORD

In a conversation on stage following a poetry reading by Derek Walcott, Wole Soyinka conferred the attribute “exile” to his poet friend. But Derek Walcott amusingly passed it back on immediately. The “real” exile- writer was Soyinka, because he was forced to leave, because he could not go back, because he was still fighting for his country even after he was safe from its fiendish powers. Walcott, on the other hand, was admitting to a voluntary, more “comfortable” exile. The power and the ambiguity of the term exile for two contemporary arguably exile-writers is symptomatic. Moreover, Walcott’s extensive preoccupation with exile and the detailed creative accounts of its various ramifications testify to a definite exilic component of Walcott’s identity. The first section of his poem “The Schooner Flight” ends with the famous lines “I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me, / and either I’m nobody, or I’m a nation.” (346) Exile and nation are indivisible and complicating terms. Thus, Walcott can refute the word to emphasize the uneasiness of gathering different types of exile writers under one term but the struggle with internal exile pervades his work.

Contemporary theories on displacement and its effects on identity have developed rapidly since the emergence of postcolonial theories. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century



however, consolidating ideas about nation and the national unsettled a vast array of cultural notions about identity and physical space. The one I am interested in is the notion of exile and its numerous synonyms and variants. Displacement, whether voluntary or not, and its correlative concept, transgressing borders, have always provided material for a literature about one of the most deeply embedded human needs- a coherent identity. The exiled or the expatriate has had the opportunity to redefine binary oppositions such as inside versus outside, with both implications of physical space and physical body; mother or natural versus adopted country, culture or language; integral versus disintegrated identity; point of view and representativity. The traditional view on exile as an experience is constantly interrelated with the notion of outcast, trauma and tragedy, as well as a sense of inescapable sadness. The given frame of leaving or having to leave one's community, country or language lays the foundation for the presence of loss. In the introductory chapter to her 2002 *The Art of Memory in Exile. Vladimir Nabokov & Milan Kundera*, Hana Píchová recapitulates a few texts concerned with exile, including Michael Seidel's 1986 book *Exile and the Narrative Imagination* in order to inscribe her study within the paradigm of exile as trauma tradition. She claims "the émigré finds himself or herself on a kind of unstable, rickety bridge" (2) and the instability of the bridge is the metaphor for the writer's pain and inability to negotiate between the country/culture left behind and the new one. In his *Literary Exile in the Twentieth Century: an Analysis and Biographical Dictionary*, Martin Tucker provides quite an extensive list of possibilities for nuances of the term exile:

Writers who have suffered the experience of banishment, deportation, voluntary departure (with varying degrees of hope and/ or expectation of return), flight from

possible imprisonment, harassment or torture, or flight from incarceration for reasons of expression or belief, and, in a few selected cases, writers who reflect a profound state of psychic exile that permeates their consciousness and brings to their work a characteristic tenor or recognizable portrait of attributes that may be distinguished as part of the gallery of literary exilic behavior.(vii)

Studies of exile writers and Postcolonial Studies of more recent dates share more than tangential aspects and they both work within a evaluative paradigm. Pichová deems both writers, Nabokov and Kundera, “extremely successful” employing some of Edward Said’s theories, arguing that the reason for their success is that they “successfully crossed from one shore to another” (7) and the shores are naturally linguistic and cultural ones. Nico Israel bases his analysis of “the rhetoric of displacement,” of exile and diaspora on Said and Bhabha’s theories, which are Postcolonial. Cyraina E. Johnson-Roullier’s wide definition of exile extends to “include the alienation often brought about by the experience of oppression and/or exclusion as a result of race or sexual preference.” (*Reading on the Edge* 4) Contemporary critical studies of exile, particularly in modernism, cannot avoid its ethical component.

Two modernist writers stand out as refuting the defined, set, almost clichéd vision of the expatriate: Gertrude Stein and Vladimir Nabokov. Despite the obvious differences between them, they share a serene attitude towards the effects of expatriation on one’s identity. One of the focuses of my analysis will be their stylistic techniques– their vision on language that ends up dictating, creating a new identity resistant to the national perimeter. Nabokov transgresses borders from East to West and ends up being one of the influential writers of the American patrimony. His being trilingual as a child seems to

enable his later tranquility in choosing English as his language of artistic expression. “I was bilingual as a baby (Russian and English) and added French at five years of age.” (*Strong Opinions* 5) His statements examining his geographical homes constantly refute the idea of trauma, with very few exceptions. Following the opposite geographical trail, Stein moves from America to Europe. In spite her adopting France as her geographical home country, she never leaves the language, American English that she frequently declares as her *only* language; French, Austrian German do not leave the same type of mark as French and English do on Nabokov. Still, both writers are in fact active agents—reversing the usual image of the artist-in-exile equation. Nabokov and Stein claim full agency, dismantling thus the notion of expatriate status as linked inherently with loss of country, community or language. I am concerned however with the strategies and the causes for the lack of a typical exile scenario in Stein and Nabokov. Both traveled across the Atlantic in opposite directions, both examined and “played”/ transformed the English language within the space of displacement. Both resist the national and its corollaries.

The term “exile” carries with it a compulsory need for disambiguation that involves not only the geopolitical coordinate, but the temporal one, as well. Even though the two might seem inherently indivisible, different combinations of time and space render various understandings of terms like émigré, exile, refugee, emigrant and many others. The main component is however, the perception of one’s affiliation in terms of community. The exile undoubtedly imagines the boundaries to be crossed, since one internalizes spatial borders as emotional borders, and since communities are imagined, as Benedict Anderson revealed. If before 20<sup>th</sup> century exile was rarely related to nationality, the modern era approaches the concept in more adamant and specialized terms. Before

the nation, the exile writer had the opportunity to define the community from outside which made it more visible. Florence becomes Dante's Florence precisely because he is forced to leave it. On the other hand, the Other/ new/ adoptive place of residence for the exile writer is illuminated again due to the very act of exile. Ovid's place of exile cherishes to this day his presence despite the poet's contempt both for the geography (the climate) and for the inhabitants of the place.

The term exile offers however, a generous space where Stein and Nabokov where one can read them in parallel. Nabokov's "correct" denomination would be émigré writer, although not in Tucker's classification where he would fall under Political and voluntary exile. Stein left the United States again voluntarily, but further than that, it is difficult to distinguish among the possibilities listed as purposes. Furthermore, since I will read neither in strict connection to the political, the fine distinctions would not be useful here. Therefore, I will work with "exile" as my main term.

Most displaced writers show pain. Tucker gives a brief overview of the terminology related to the term exile and distinguishes among various types of exile writers in the Preface of the *Dictionary*. Despite the abundant specific manifestations and thus the numerous defining elements, one common denominator persists: pain. When Tucker concludes his preface, he warns that the pain associated with extremes like genocide and political torture should not be equated with lesser forms of "horror" but at the same time, "All pain is pain." (xii) Earlier, when he presents the scope of the book he adds to the phrase "survey of modern writers in exile" the laconic "and its *corresponding impact* on their work" (my emphasis) which, although unnamed, one can easily refer back to the pain and the angst; particularly since it is viewed as a generally shared, homogeneous

impact. Thus, whatever the variation of terminology or the actual experience, exile (as an umbrella term for now) implies pain.

Tucker remarks though in the “Preface” the instance of the “Three giants of modern literature in English ... Henry James, T. S. Eliot, and W. H. Auden” who are not customarily viewed as exiles although in Tucker’s opinion “they forsook one land for another.” And he continues the sentence with a very perceptive observation, though not developed further in the Preface. The three authors “seemed to have *no agony or qualms* about their decision.”<sup>1</sup> (ix) (my emphasis) Two important elements need mentioning in connection to this. First, the writers in exile who like Auden “never felt such loss” need a more in depth analysis since they do form a separate manifestation of exile- such as I intend to show with Stein and Nabokov. Second, since my argument will be that such a display of non-painful exilic experience has to do with perception and manipulation of language, it should be noted that the “three giants”, even after “forsaking one land for another”, did not forsake one language for another. Thus, what made Auden write “above boundaries of geography,” and his “world beyond even internationalism,” might be explained better not only in terms of space and time - “he wrote out of a *sui generis* view that was timeless in expression and of its time in character”(ix) – but in terms of what was beginning to manifest as the lingua franca status of the English language. Tucker considers that the three writers should be incorporated under the exile category because they conform to the main criterion of “forsaking one country for another.” His explanation for the opposite view lies in an understanding of authorship very much as the one Stein and Nabokov have, as I will show later. However, this notion of authorship

beyond nation is in my readings strictly connected to their equally exclusive views about language in general and national language that Tucker does not mention in the “Preface.”

In the “Introduction” to the text, Tucker does discuss language when talking about the writers who “transcend exile,” basing his ideas on Asher Milbauer’s analysis of Joseph Conrad, Vladimir Nabokov and Isaac Bashevis Singer. In Tucker’s opinion, “a writer transcends exile once he adopts the home of a new language.” (xxiii) He admits that language, as the structural ingredient that “makes” or annihilates a writer, is “another measure of both psychic, rooted exile and literal exile.” In Tucker’s view then the writer who transcends exile, because he adopted the new language as “home,” is the successful writer. Considering Tucker’s categories, a reading of Nabokov and Stein would reveal what he considers successful. Stein, much like the “three giants” abandons one country for another, but never forsakes English. She is thus transcending exile, succeeding in writing beyond the national. On the other hand, Nabokov becomes a clear case of success not in the same line as the “three giants” but by making English his own creative expression language. Both Stein and Nabokov enter the same category as the “three giants” because they do not “feel the agony or qualms” of the exilic experience, albeit for different causes as I will show later.

Tucker claims that once one can communicate within the adopted language and with its community, “his exile is lessened.” (xiii) Despite the insightful understanding of the role of language in molding the exile experience, I distrust Tucker’s associating transcendence of exile and adopting the “new” language for creating as a success. It would mean that the entire corpus of writers who explore the meanders of exilic experience fail. My readings of Nabokov and Stein rely heavily on their obsessive

manipulation of language to propose a different thesis- not transcendence but resistance to the nation in a trajectory defined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari against the intuitive or conventional through linguistic deterritorialization (as I will explain below)- not a success in rising above but a dismantling of the duality. Tucker considers an “awareness of duality” appropriately widespread for critics examining the exile “since an exile immediately has two selves. He is from *there*, but he is from *here* now.” (xxi) Nabokov, even though brilliant in English, does not forsake Russian. At the same time, he does not suffer the “pangs of loss.” (Tucker, xvii) Russian (one of his writing languages) exists “under erasure,” or thematized, or as a particular/Nabokovian style of English (a European style, as I will show later). Stein dismantles English to the point where it resembles a foreign language for the native English speaker. The same type of dismantling happens with genres. Both their autobiographies resist the conventional genre of autobiography. Stein relies on self-referentiality within different types of texts. Nabokov does the same even if within one text – overloading it with fictional paratexts and the effect is a consistent mis-representation. Nabokov manipulates English so well that he achieves a literary status bestowed traditionally on native speakers. On the other hand, Stein’s techniques make the foreignness of English surface in a disruptive way. At all times, however, none of them ever displays the two selves corresponding to the two terms of the binaries mentioned before, the two selves belonging to the two territories contained in the exile identity.

When reading Stein and Nabokov from the exile perspective, the idea of nation becomes preeminent, particularly since the 20<sup>th</sup> century sees not only the crystallization of but also the major shifts in the concept. One cannot now separate a discussion of

nation and nationalism from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. His hypothesis grounds communities (any larger than a village) in imagination and their specificity in style. The coagulant factor for the nation is the print-language and the implementing of particular ideas of nation are in fact, "two forms of imagining ... the novel and the newspaper." (24-25) Literature displays the specificity of the nation. The "old fashion novel," claims Anderson, provides an imagined "sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time" as an equivalent of the idea of nation itself. Stein and Nabokov, as exile writers, become important specifically for their highlighting and resisting the very mechanisms of nation as constructed within literature.

The choice to write in English, then, is both Stein's and Nabokov's identity card. If the languages of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have arguably clear corresponding borders (even if disputed), the two writers chose their communities by choosing the language. Nabokov chose the English language as an overt challenge to the very idea of national language. Stein although again as resisting the national, chose American English as the new and thus perfect space for implementing a national canon and language, but with very particular traits. This is not to say they accept nationality without complicating its components.

Both Stein and Nabokov work in English, but with specific goals and tools that question the alignment of identity and language. For Stein on one hand, although she writes in her native tongue, the process and the results are similar sometimes to a non-native speaker/writer's distortion of the language. An episode in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* describes the surprise of an American editor to find that Stein is actually a native speaker of English, and this episode is relevant on multiple levels, as I will show



later. Nabokov, on the other hand, manipulates the English language to perfection, but he does not write in his native tongue. Both authors share a multilingual childhood, which arguably has structural repercussions on their later development as writers. For understanding these complications, I will use Deleuze and Guattari's idea of minor literature written in a major language (demonstrated on Kafka's works) elucidates some of Stein and Nabokov's methods. Despite their heavily metaphorical construction, Deleuze and Guattari manage to maintain a very close connection to the Kafkian texts, which in turn gives their initial figurative apparatus a practical layer. Their main claim takes different shapes, but the skeleton of their argument involves consistently the "line of escape," poised against traditional readings of Kafka as a writer of submission and failure. Thus, the "becoming-animal" of Gregor Samsa is his successful conclusion rather than his giving in to the bureaucratic life set up for him. (12-13).

The seminal concept in their text is of course minor literature. "A minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language." (16) One of the three components of 'minor literature' besides "the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation" is "the deterritorialization of language." "When language users subvert standard pronunciations, syntactic structures or meanings, they 'deterritorialize' the language," explains Ronald Bogue in his article "The Minor." (111)

In the following chapters, I will analyze both Stein and Nabokov's particular writing strategies as writers of deterritorialization. In Deleuze and Guattari's vision, there are two ways of obtaining this goal "One way is to artificially enrich this German [the language in question] to swell it up through all the resources of symbolism, of oneirism of esoteric

sense, of a hidden signifier.” (18-19) Although Nabokov (working in English) does not overlap perfectly Deleuze and Guattari’s profile, his manipulation of language follows the purpose just described in an attempt at “symbolic reterritorialization”. Critics consistently describe Nabokov as a master of style. But if his stylistic intricacies are for the most part a commendatory staple of his writing, they become estranging, for instance, when he translates Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin*. This case is a perfect attestation of Deleuze and Guattari’s “artificiality” involved in the first type of deterritorialization. Edmund Wilson points to the reader’s frustration due to Nabokov’s “addiction to rare and unfamiliar words.” Nabokov’s intention is to be as faithful to the Russian text as possible, but Wilson declares that the reader is compelled to look up words, which undermines the very purpose of the translation. More importantly, I want to emphasize, it is unjustified because the result is in fact “not really to translate at all, for it is not to write idiomatic and recognizable English.” The result is thus, just as with Stein, highlighting the foreignness within a familiar language. For Nabokov deterritorializing the language is revealed in a combination of rich, abundant (almost abusive in the sense mentioned in Wilson’s review) style and its effects on disrupting genre and other literary (the autobiography) and linguistic (translation in *Pale Fire* and representation in *Lolita*) conventions.

The other way of deterritorializing the language, the way Kafka “will invent,” is to “Go always farther in the direction of deterritorialization, to the point of sobriety.” (19) This particular reading renders English (American) as the language of the major culture that is somehow deterritorialized by being written in Europe (by Stein) or by a European (Nabokov). Stein creates very much in the style described by the two authors on Kafka:

“There is nothing that is major or revolutionary except the minor... What interests him even more is the possibility of making his own language- assuming that it is unique, that it is a major language or has been- a minor utilization. To be a sort of stranger *within* his own language.” (26) Numerous instances reveal Stein continually questioning the familiarity of language. In her lecture on ““Poetry and Grammar,” Stein dissects systematically every linguistic category of making sense and reassembles them according to new criteria emotional ones. She manages, in fact, not only to describe her feeling as stranger within her own language, having strong emotional responses to what supposedly makes the language familiar – the role of nouns and pronouns to name or replace the name, the role of commas and other punctuation marks—but also to induce a similar effect in the reader. “One of the things that is a very interesting thing to know is how you are feeling inside you to the words that are coming out to be outside of you.” (“Poetry and Grammar” 313)

An unexpected tenet in Deleuze and Guattari’s text is that one cannot separate life from writing for Kafka. “Because expression precedes content and draws it along (on the condition, of course, is nonsignifying: living and writing, art and life, are opposed only from the point of view of a major literature.” (41) This is unexpected inasmuch as Barthes has announced “The Death of the Author” a few years before, and since conflating life with writing, as they show in their text, runs the risk of psychological/analytical speculation. Here Stein is an undeniable example. Her writing is weaved with her life- which does not overlap entirely with her biography- and insisting on separating the two deprives the reader of a fuller understanding. Nabokov’s stylistic mannerism in his autobiography replaces the straightforward narrative of biographical

events with a meta-narrative of his style. This has a double effect- on one hand, his fictional work becomes more “personal” than he usually allows it to be, and on the other, his personal story becomes in fact his art. Reading an autobiographical text involves a preset array of conventions, both from the writer’s perspective and from the reader’s. I will read Stein’s *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and Nabokov’s *Speak, Memory* as texts that are supposed to decode their other texts, but they do so. What happens instead in both cases is a revelation, of writing strategies that subvert literary conventions and that manifest a definite fascination with linguistic materiality, which points in turn to a subversion of the national.

The over arching motif in my reading three of Nabokov’s texts is the refusal or the impossibility of correct representation—be it the impossibility of translation (in *Pale Fire*), misrepresentation at the linguistic level (in *Lolita*), or stylistic and generic misrepresentation (in *Speak, Memory*). Nabokov’s autobiography is the more evident illustration for the impossibility of separating art from life. As I show later, he misrepresents the narrative, disrupting the genre of autobiography, making it again art. Stein’s deferred autobiography is indeed more factual than Nabokov’s is but the text manifests a comparable strategy where the style obscures the object of the narrative. I will read the three Stein texts as marking stages on a de-/re-territorialization continuum. “Poetry and Grammar” marks the pole of utter linguistic disruption, “Patriarchal Poetry” begins to reterritorialize setting in place new linguistic codes and *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* focuses exclusively on reterritorialization.

Stein and Nabokov are but two cases among others that could be discussed in terms of resisting the national category. Ramazani describes the modernist poets who escape

the national narrative as numerically overwhelming exceptions, prompting thus a “reconsideration of the conceptual structure.” of reading Modernist poets (332) Similarly I want to suggest that the current view of exile writers as necessarily caught within a dualistic frame of identity that necessarily implies pain is insufficient. Stein belongs with authors such as T. S. Eliot, Henry James, James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, Ezra Pound and so many others who left their native country but not their native tongue. Nabokov is usually viewed as “successful” exile writer particularly because he adopted the “other” language as language of expression. In this case, he belongs with Joseph Conrad, Milan Kundera, Joseph Brodsky, Jerzy Kosinski and, again, so many others. What needs to be re-thought is the rigid paradigm of success defined in terms of language acquisition and the pain as unavoidable component of an exilic experience.

Stein and Nabokov resist the national disrupting thus the paradigm of “success” in relation to exile. If nationality does not enter the duality anymore, loss and gain (of space/country, language, and culture) are not valid components of identity anymore. Read within Deleuze and Guattari’s framework, they write a minor literature. Their writing strategies undermine the familiar in language, questioning the idea of a “native speaker” in a language and the arbitrariness of the national language by extension. They deterritorialize English in different ways and they unsettle literary conventions. The result is a transparent image of arbitrariness of language as a set of codes. What becomes important, then, is reterritorializing the language according to the artists’ vision.

In Derek Walcott’s words, again from “The Schooner Flight,” once Stein and Nabokov leave, they have “no nation now but the imagination.” (350)

## CHAPTER II

### GERRTRUDE STEIN REINVENTING ENGLISH

“After all Gertrude Stein’s readers are writers, university students, librarians and young people who have very little money. Gertrude Stein wants readers not collectors.”

(Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*)

Little has changed since the time Gertrude Stein was writing vicariously her autobiography. Her audience remained a specialized one simply because in order to read Stein, one needs to learn a new language, the Steinian reinvented English. Her writing is not part of any conventional national literary patrimony. Just as any language, Stein’s is not a rigid unified and consistent entity. Rather, it is comprised of different styles and levels of signification according to contextual factors. Marjorie Perloff for instance identifies six such styles and the premise of her article, “Six Stein Styles in Search of a Reader,” is to dismantle the established dual view of Stein’s writing as either “the public, accessible, ‘transparent’, and more or less straightforward mode” or “the opaque, private experimental, ‘difficult’ mode.” (96) Perloff suggests that even these six distinct styles can be further “refined” and that simple chronological criteria will not do to explain variety in Stein’s language. Nor is the process of identifying further “permutations” of these six styles to remain confined to the two opposed areas “transparent”/ “experimental,” even if viewed synchronically. (96)

I will read three Stein texts: “Patriarchal Poetry” in relation to “Poetry and Grammar” and *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. My main argument is that Stein reinvents English to resist a simplistic association with the nation. She refuses to acknowledge a natural connection between the name of the nation and its content. She manipulates language to reveal this arbitrariness and by extension the arbitrariness of the national within a language. In a subsequent gesture she re-motivates the American language and nation but this time on her own terms. These two stages correspond to the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of English as I will discuss later. In her view, this revealing of unmotivated connection between language and nation – English language does not correspond to an English nation after all- and an artificial, creative re-motivation can only be done by a genius writer such as her. The author- genius is outside the demarcations of language and nation. Genius chooses nation and its language and not the other way around. Just as Nabokov *chooses* to become an American writer at one point in his career, Stein *chooses* to become an American writer (the national writer). For both, the nation is a rhetorical device and that view translates in a particular outlook of authorship –genius, transnational even if multicultural- and an equally unique approach to language- as a subsequent (not natural/ immediate) instrument to express identity. This notion of language surfaces in Stein’s writing as a few specific strategies of deterritorialiation- a focus on “material intensity” in her obsession with naming and the primary function of language; and consistent self-referentiality which in turn takes two forms/ has two main effects: either of blurring distinctions between genres (lectures include poetry and are poetry or vice versa) or entirely misrepresenting a genre- autobiography. Genius chooses nation, but nation is expressed in national language and

the expression of the national depends on well established literary conventions such as genre. The sonnet as a poetic genre recalls the Italian for instance, even though the form has changed enormously by the hand of British writers. Or, in Caribbean sensibility the iambic pentameter is British. The striving for defining what qualifies as national is the striving for specificity in forms since national content is not justifiably, naturally emerging in form.

Ronald Bogue explains Deleuze and Guattari's definition of language as a "mode of action" upheld by norms and codes. Thus, "When language users subvert standard pronunciations, syntactic structures or meanings, they 'deterritorialize' the language, in that they detach it from its clearly delineated, regularly gridded territory of conventions, codes, labels and markers." (111-112) And much of Stein's writing can be read as a process of deterritorializing. I will discuss later particular nuances of this strategy in reading "Patriarchal Poetry." First, a refining of Deleuze and Guattari concepts is in order. Their view on language is inextricably connected with other prolific concepts such as expression and its correlative conceptualization, and making meaning/sense. Despite the evanescent nature of their formulations given, Deleuze and Guattari's recapitulative and exemplifying tendencies, one can rather safely apply their theories. Expression and its components are partly explained in their book on *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*. Expression and conceptualizing are sequential in a minor literature whereas they are simultaneous in a major one. Stein writes *mutatis mutandis* a minor literature very much like Kafka in Deleuze and Guattari's view that "begins by expressing itself and doesn't conceptualize until afterward." "Poetry and Grammar" is the conceptualizing text- a



lecture supposedly explaining expression, and "Patriarchal Poetry" is the expression that "must break forms, encourage ruptures and new sproutings." (28)

The two analysts oppose reading such expression as an escape from life in Kafka, as a device of imaginary reorganizing of life events. They deem as "awful" and "grotesque" interpretations of life and writing/ art as separate and consequential. "Because expression precedes content and draws it along ... living and writing, art and life, are opposed only from the point of view of major literature." (41) Stein's autobiography induces a similar interpretation, notwithstanding the delegated narrative voice and its complications. Life and art are inseparable above all because she declares herself a genius. The secondary perspective, the voice of Alice B. Toklas, might seem a simple rhetorical device of modesty, but Stein is consistent in her definition even when characterizing other people as geniuses or less than that (Picasso for instance). One is not supposed to recognize a genius by his or her art. Alice B. Toklas has an instinctive reaction "a bell within me rang" even "before there was any general recognition of the quality of genius" (*The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* 660- 661). Her apparent struggle and anxiety with public recognition does not seem to alter her clear internal sense of her being a genius. And the unity of her life and art might be the reason for her unwavering sense of extraordinary. It is not her writing as separate expression of her life that would signal her genius, but their wholeness. Bob Perelman offers a few "counter-models" of reading Stein from the point of view of her declared genius. In *The Trouble with Genius*, he shows that even though she knew she was a genius she tried to become a public genius, to demonstrate her genius quality in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, lectures, *Everybody's Autobiography*, *Four in America*, and *The Geographical History* where "she

wrote about her writing, herself, society, and history, but these subjects were all variations of the basic theme of the genius.” (143) However, he concludes the chapter with “she was celebrated not for her writing but for her identity as a genius, an eccentric- for being ‘Gertrude Stein’.”(168)

At all times Stein relates her genius to the American nation. This seems the perfect means of expression for her. The newness, the youth and modernity of the American nation at that point in time present the ideal space for attaching certain literary conventions to national conventions. If there is no other indication regarding her belonging to the American community, in Anderson’s terms, it is the fact that she only reads American/ English language newspapers and books despite her living in Europe for such an extended period. “When I first knew Gertrude Stein in Paris I was surprised never to see a french (sic!) book on her table, although there were always plenty of english ones, there were even no french newspapers.” (729) And the decisive moment of “choosing’ a language -after all she was too a multilingual child is when she starts reading – is the moment of her starting to read in English. “Gertrude Stein had prattled in german and then in french but she had never read until she read in english. As she says eyes to her were more important than ears and it happened then as always that english was her only language.” (735) This is the moment she chooses her national community and after that “she lived continuously with the english language” (735) That is why for instance Martin Tucker’s approach on writers that transcend exile does not work for Stein. She does not assume the language of the adopting country (French) which would be the strategy for “success.” However, she is not in the same category with the three giants mentioned before either. If they are beyond the pain of exile, it is partly because

they moved to a country that spoke English still (England for America or the other way around). Stein left an English speaking country for a foreign language speaking country; she does not adopt the new country's language and she is still a "successful" model-writer who does not exhibit any 'pangs of loss.'

Ramazani's article "A Transnational Poetics" supplies part of the explanation. The far too numerous exceptions in the modernist period to the "mononational narratives" within which writers are inscribed for cultural and pedagogical reasons ignites Ramazani's theory. The very first line of the article is Stein's "America is my country and Paris is my hometown" Her apparently paradoxical statement leads Ramazani to declare the exceptions as the main rule. What if "this transnationalism were taken to be primary rather than incidental?" (333) The 'cross-national' influences affected all creators (in Europe particularly) of the time. But if Stein's biography fits this apt delineation, she nevertheless escapes even the generous model of the translocal poetics when one analyses her particular writing patterns. She does not exhibit multi-national or multicultural tendencies in her work; she does not display a "transcultural alienation [translated] into a poetics of bricolage and translocation." (333) Ramazani's hypothesis is based on her having spoken French and German as a child which in turn he claims has affected her in her focus on language "and indeed Stein's early polylingualism helps explain her insistence on the material density of the linguistic medium, as does her engagement with the fractured planes of Picasso's Cubist and Cezanne's proto-Cubist painting." (343) And indeed, just as I will discuss later with Nabokov, I agree that childhood multilingualism must be a source for a writer's preoccupation with internal mechanisms of language and with an obsession for taking apart and changing those mechanisms. Stein however

exhibits these tendencies less at the thematic level of her writing even than Nabokov. Another part of his overall argument reads in the modernist tendencies for “dissonance and defamiliarization, and this hybrid and strange-making art” as means to “defy the national literary genealogies.” (333)

While Stein’s writing indisputably centers on defamiliarization the influencing factors do not seem to be outside, “foreign” pressures however. Stein is rather the “stranger *within* [her] own language” (original emphasis) as Kafka is for Deleuze and Guattari. She writes a minor literature, a reinvented English language. And I will reiterate that encapsulating her writing within one entity is more an emphasis on a clear sign of internal coherence than a simplifying of her undoubtedly various styles. Deleuze and Guattari describe a language as “a mixture, a schizophrenic *mélange*, a Harlequin costume” (26) that allows for a complicated dynamics among power centers and rules as well as for a comprehensive manifestation of de- and re-territorialization facets. As mentioned in the introduction, the French theorists characterize “minor literature” by three main aspects: collective, political and with a “high coefficient of deterritorialization”. If of the “collective” attribute Stein’s writing is not a noticeable example, of the political and the “high coefficient of deterritorialization” the opposite is true. In Deleuze and Guattari’s text, the political dimension of writing a minor literature does not refer to an overt, traditional understanding of the word. It is rather a nuance of thematic interpretation. The social milieu is viewed as an extension of the “individual concern” within the major literature for instance. The minor literature, on the contrary “each individual intrigue” is instantly bound to politics. “The individual concern thus becomes all the more necessary, indispensable, magnified, because a whole other story is

vibrating within.” (17) The individual concern is representative of; it is defined by and defines the power of larger concerns.

For Stein, the entire writing and publishing process testifies to the politics of her endeavor. Her unwavering answer about English being her only language when she undoubtedly speaks French and can appreciate translations of her texts in French as well as her anxiety at one point for public recognition which can only happen in English; her frequent recurrence to topics concerning America –from the short works “Americans”, “The Difference Between the Inhabitants of France and the Inhabitants of the United States of America” to lectures prepared for an American audience, to *The Geographical History of America* or to the monumental *The Making of Americans*, her texts span a life abroad, different receptions and an obsession with the nation; they all speak for her politics in the Deleuzian sense- as a quality of representativity of larger stories. In her lecture “What is English Literature?” Stein openly declares, “In English Literature they just went back to the nineteenth century ... because well because they were a little weaker.” while of course American literature “went on and we are the twentieth century literature.” (219) Such statements can be claimed and connected to a variety of reasons, but one cannot exclude the political and by extension the national. (Deleuze and Guattari meaning).

The most obvious aspect of Stein’s writing a minor literature is her deterritorialization of the English language. Many critical studies focus on or touch on the strangeness, the defamiliarization techniques, and the opacity of her writing mainly due to her obsessive attention to the linguistic material.<sup>2</sup> Although these strategies are among the most critically discussed, I am interested additionally in the simultaneous process of

reterritorialization that in fact stands for her articulating the rules, the codes and norms for her new English. For that, I want to suggest a deterritorializing – reterritorializing continuum for reading the three texts. If "Patriarchal Poetry" were at the pure deterritorializing end of the spectrum – achieved through the “materially intense expression”- then, the other pole would be *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* as a text meant more to reterritorialize- by offering the key to understanding her own work.

#### "Patriarchal Poetry" and as Resonating Mirrors

Patriarchal denotes by design the type of literary and, by extension, national community of Stein’s times. "Patriarchal Poetry" manifests not only a dismantling of poetic conventions, but it also exhibits Stein’s resistance to how these conventions were set in place. Poetry needs redefining outside the patriarchal/national terms. Similarly, in “Poetry and Grammar” Stein unsettles not any rules, but the structural foundation of language as set in place by patriarchal grammarians; by other people who have already defined how English functions. In her attempt to recreate English she questions implicitly the validity of English grammar rules established for American English.

The first strategy of deterritorialization is that of writing “the materially intense expression.” noticeable in two levels of linguistic disruption. First, Stein redefines the relationship between sentence and paragraph as units of meaning adding emotion in the equation. Second, the semantic and syntactic levels are disturbed by adding the visible architecture of the page, again as a unit of meaning, displacing the word.

Deterritorialization happens at a second stage outside one text, involving two or more texts resonating with one another. The third phase is self-referentiality.

“Patriarchal Poetry” is just as representative as any of her other texts for crooked/  
dislodged/ broken, dry sentences that become thoroughly emotional paragraphs:

Not to such a pretty bird Not to not to not to not to such a pretty bird.

Not to such a pretty bird.

Not to such a pretty bird.

As to as such a pretty bird. As to as to as such a pretty bird.

To and such a pretty bird.

And to and such a pretty bird.

And to as to not to as to and such a pretty bird. (570)

Up to this point, they are syntactically valid sentences. Orderly presented- one or two on a line- short poetry lines. They sound broken and experimental, but the next line gushes out the same words without regard for lines or punctuation and goes on repeating them frantically, rhythmically like an incantation for thirty prose lines. At the end of the almost page-long paragraph, emotion must have definitely emerged for the “pretty bird” although the components do not refer specifically to any. She famously explains how “listening to the rhythm of his [Basket, her dog] water drinking made her recognise (sic!) the difference between sentences and paragraphs, that paragraphs are emotional and sentences are not.” (*The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* 907) Thus the key to reading correctly is to apprehend the emotion of the paragraph.

She talks about sentences and paragraphs, or words but as syntactical units, only to bring in a third, seemingly foreign term to redefine the relationship between the physical aspect and the conceptual aspect of language: emotion. “One of the things that is very interesting to know is how you are feeling inside you to the words that are coming out to

be outside of you.” (“Poetry and Grammar” 313) Steven Meyer discusses the simultaneous influence of William James’ definition of emotion on both Stein and Ludwig Wittgenstein. In the reversed psychological account-, the emotion is rather “a secondary feeling indirectly aroused by the organic changes, muscular and visceral, of which the so-called ‘expression’ of emotion consists.” (James qtd in Meyer106) Thus, Meyer concludes that Stein extended James’ theory to writing. Stein will say:

In a book called *How to Write* I worked a lot at this thing trying to find out just exactly what the balance the unemotional balance of a sentence is and what the emotional balance of a paragraph is and if it were possible to make even in a short sentence the two things come to be one. I think I did a few times succeed. Will you listen to one or two sentences where I did think I had done this thing.

He looks like a young man grown old. (323)

This passage goes even further to explain not the rules, but the mechanism and the process of constructing a valid example of the new language, which places the strategy in an interminable *mise-en-abyme*.

In a conventional and rigid account, poetry is most of the time recognizable visually by its short lines – shorter than the page width- and prose by the contrary. I will keep this excessively simplistic distinction only because Stein herself uses it to deconstruct it both ways- texts labeled as poetry take attributes of prose, including the text in question. If the prose poem has come to point directly to the protean ability of poetry to shift its shape into any given form, prose even when poetic maintains the page width minimal length. Thus, passages as the one quoted disrupt genres first at a visual level- poetry lines follow a traditional punctuation, which makes them *look* like sentences. On the other hand, prose



lines, page wide lines disregard punctuation and even though they look like prose, they cannot be read as such. The paragraph becomes the material sign of code/ genre switching or more accurately of maintaining the poetry-reading mode even if what is to be read looks like prose. At the same time, the punctuation of the poetry line and Stein's disregard for the sentence, alter the poetic passage reading mode to prose<sup>3</sup>.

The second level of material disruption happens at the semantic and syntactic level. The excessive repetition of phrases or words, still visually realized, is a technique of fracturing meaning constituted with the traditional unit of the word and displacing in onto the paragraph, or into architectural patterns or into rhythms. Reading such passages though implies a distance; language does not follow a "natural"/ conventional pattern of signifying- repetition is usually redundant- language has "foreign"/ unfamiliar semantic means. Recapitulating Deleuze and Guattari, this type of procedure could be the "style that becomes language" for Stein. "that is the same as stammering, making language stammer rather than stammering in speech. To be a foreigner in one's own tongue ... when language becomes intensive, a pure continuum of values and intensities." (qtd. in Albrecht-Crane 128)

If the paragraph is her own suggestion of minimal unit of meaning in reading her texts then we must notice the paragraphs that seem to have meaning in the very disposition of the words on the page. "Patriarchal Poetry" displays perfect columns of the same words substituting one word for a visually similar other; or playfully adding or subtracting words:

Patriarchal Poetry once in a while.

Patriarchal Poetry out of pink once in a while

Patriarchal Poetry out of pink to be bird once in a while.

Patriarchal Poetry out of pink to be bird left and three once  
in a while.

Patriarchal Poetry handles once inn a while

Patriarchal Poetry handles in a while

Patriarchal Poetry handles in a while

Patriarchal Poetry to be added. (588)

Unlike the intentionally column organized paragraphs or sentences, the block like or sentence long paragraphs reveal themselves as quite possibly organized architecturally when looked at rather than read. Provided Stein's reader is willing to perceive her text as one would a painting- to view all words in a paragraph simultaneously, - the words seem to delegate their semantic function and undertake a numeric one. Unlike prose line breaks that carry no particular meaning, poetry lines are definitely involved in the signification process. Many critics mention the term "code." Making meaning becomes a physical operation- the pencil tends to connect the dots or to count occurrences of certain key words and to draw the specific positions where they occur. A pattern rather common in "Patriarchal Poetry" is the diagonal or the broken zigzag sentence for instance, which could be read as multiple interlocking rhyme schemes. If the reader follows the individual physical direction of the phrases 'such', 'a pretty bird' or 'and'- they trace a zigzag line.

and such a pretty bird as to and such a pretty bird and to and  
such a pretty bird as to and to and such a pretty bird not to  
as to and such a pretty bird and to not as to and to not to as  
such a pretty bird and such a pretty bird not to and such a

pretty bird as to and such a pretty bird as such a pretty bird (571)

Stein disrupts again the reader's expectations at the textual, the material level by replacing semantic with word architecture. "*Language stops being representative in order to now move toward its extremities or its limits.*" (original emphasis) (Deleuze and Guattari 23) Stein is testing the language boundaries.

The second strategy of deterritorialization consists of placing texts in a resonating and mirroring relationship. "Poetry and Grammar" and "Patriarchal Poetry" are two possibilities for analyzing the exact method of resonating with each other, rather than the lecture as illuminating the poetic text unidirectionally in what would be a conventional reading from a straightforward text to a poetic/creative one.

Two types of sentences are of interest here. I will call them the straightforward one and the creative one, simply to suggest that usually the lecture, as straightforward text, is expected to be comprised of the first type of sentences and the creative text of the second type of sentence, respectively. Thus, the sentence becomes representative of genre. The straightforward sentence in the creative text resonates with the straightforward sentence in the lecture. Sentences such as "Patriarchal Poetry makes no mistake." or "Patriarchal Poetry needs rectification and there about it." (576) in the creative text, "Patriarchal Poetry," resemble the tone of sentences such as "Poetry has to do with vocabulary just as prose has not." ("Poetry and Grammar" 327) This phenomenon of resonating blurs genre boundaries. In "Patriarchal Poetry," specifically Stein lecture-type sentences function more effectively as explanations than the ones in the lecture simply because they stand out more

Similarly, the creative/ non-straightforward sentence, while expected in her poetic text, appears within the lecture and disrupts the genre. Sentences constructed in the creative text manner- that rely on the visible, architectural aspect or on overwhelming repetition- appear within the lecture. “Perhaps yes perhaps not but really and inevitably really it really does not really make any difference.” (“Poetry and Grammar” 321) And if the spatial decoding is unavailable, then the materiality of the sound will take over that function. The lectures were after all meant for reading aloud. However, the poetic aspect of the lecture resides more at the semantic level. All her definitions and explanations are entirely metaphorical or non-straightforward, relating the material aspect of language. “verbs can change to look like themselves or to look like something else, they are so to speak on the move.” (“Poetry and Grammar” 315) Some speech parts are “lively” and others are “uninteresting” and “Exclamation marks have the same difficulty and also quotation marks, they are unnecessary, they are ugly, they spoil the line of the writing” (317) and of course commas “are servile” (319)

Patriarchal Poetry should be this without which and organisation. It should be defined as once leaving once leaving it having been placed in that way at once letting this be with them after all. Patriarchal Poetry makes it a masterpiece like this makes it which which alone makes like it like it previously to know that it that that might be all very well patriarchal poetry might be resumed.(594)

Her poetic text comes very close to functioning as a didactic one; extremely similar to sentences one finds in the lectures. Consequently, the sentences in the lectures which seem to lose focus of explanation and become poetic resonate with their non-lecture siblings “... a poetry of naming something of really naming that thing passionately

completely passionately naming that thing by its name.” (333) Reading this passage aloud sounds like poetry recitation- repetition, the emphasis on “passionately” , the rhythm of the repetition and the open possibilities within the neutral “thing”– with the context suspended for an instance, a poetic analysis suggests a metaphorical sense, almost an erotic one.

Poetically she does use/ abuse the noun/name. She also gives examples from her own work and some sentences from other texts resonate in sentences of this lecture. All the time Stein is trying to explain in a spiral what “Patriarchal Poetry” is and failing to illustrate the definition much like what happens with the definition of poetry from a grammatical point of view in "Poetry and Grammar.” What I mean to show is how organically similar are two of her texts of categorically distinct types. Lectures are Stein’s arena of manipulating the conventionality of the genre to reinforce her ars poetica. On the other hand, straightforward type sentences emerge as coherence oases in the challenging poetic texts- in turn exploiting the genre conventions of their immediate context.

This is why the first common impediment in analyzing Stein’s texts is the difficulty of convincingly assigning them a genre. Stein’s subtitles are complicating the reading rather than allowing conventions to function as key. Left without the titles, as in *Portraits* or *A Movie* for instance, the reader would be completely lost in identifying a genre. Her plays, novels, poems, scripts or lectures’ conventional contours are slippery at close encounter. They merge and separate according to almost impenetrable criteria. Her intention however is not to dismantle the categories altogether, after all she still assigns genres to her texts. The tension is between the set of expectations set in motion by the name of the genre and the texts’ unconformity to the genre.

In a conventional manner, the reader would approach the lectures in order to find a key to her non-lecture texts. Lectures are traditionally the frame for explanations. Stein's titles invite such a method: "Poetry and Grammar", "Narration", "Portraits and Repetition", "What is English Literature?" However, Gertrude Stein's lectures involve a mise-en-abyme of the essential purpose of her writing: dismantling the traditional mechanisms of signification in language and restoring subsequently the original function of words as summoning reality into existence. Thus, Stein's words self-reflectively become original while returning to their origins.

Obviously, Stein's lectures fail to distinguish themselves entirely from her non-straightforward writings. As loose as the seemingly vague term non-straightforward might be, it denotes the fluidity of any fixed category one might want to constraint her texts into. Apart from Stein's own decisions in dividing texts into arbitrary genres (plays, poems, portraits), any strategy of cataloguing her work proves futile against the structural coherence/ cohesiveness of her work which compels the reader to witness one single text—the Stein continuum.

Syntax and semantic enter a conflictual relationship furthering the deterritorialization. The language is "torn from sense, conquering sense, bringing about an active neutralization of sense" (Deleuze and Guattari 21). "Patriarchal Poetry makes no mistake makes no mistake in estimating the value to be placed upon the best and most arranged of considerations..." (585) However, in Gertrude Stein's vision to be mistaken is "one very nice quality." Verbs and adverbs together with "The thing that can of all things be most mistaken... prepositions" can "be irritating if you feel that way about mistakes but certainly something ... everlastingly enjoying." ("Poetry and Grammar" 314-315). Stein

is playing with language within the textual frame adopting strategies heavily favored by her contemporary theorists of the movement. She displays lecture within lecture, relies frequently on the oxymoron and her syntax is creating terms from relationships.

“Patriarchal Poetry usually.” seems an incomplete sentence; but the absence of the verb creates the presence of its function calling into existence the paradigmatic column of possible verbs- meaning them abstractly all at once. Such paradigmatic columns are dependent on punctuation and word order, however. “Patriarchal Poetry might be what is left./ Indifferently.” (595) In this example the adjacent sentence begins with a word that would fit paradigmatically within the previous sentence. And even though syntactically the rules deny its belonging with that sentence, semantically the connection is made.

The third strategy of deterritorialization is more obvious when illuminate by its correlative. Self-referentiality takes the shape of metatext. In her lectures, most of the examples she offers are her own texts to clarify and describe the exact nature of her ideas. This continuous dialogue between the two types of texts frames the overarching obsession for reassigning codes, rules and norms for the new English she writes- and this is clearly a reterritorialization which is the converse process “when users reinforce linguistic norms.” (Bogue 112) Stein describes the new code and then reinforces it with examples from her own work.

Patriarchal Poetry shall be as much as if it was counted from one to one hundred.

From one to one hundred.

From one to one hundred.

From one to one hundred.

Counted from one to one hundred. (“Patriarchal Poetry” 586)

Had it not been for the repetition, the phrase “One hundred prominent men”, the title of another text of hers “An Instant Answer or A Hundred Prominent Men” might have escaped the reader at first. The first sentence becomes true- she does count to a hundred prominent men and "Patriarchal Poetry" is definitely related to prominent men. Hence, referring back to her own texts creates in a meta-textual endeavor creates a conspicuously particular and at the same time elusive language. Stein pronounces,

Of course you might say why not invent new names new languages but that cannot be one... Language as a real thing is not imitation either of sounds or colors or emotions it is an intellectual recreation... So everyone must stay with the language their language that has come to be spoken and written and which has in it all the history of its intellectual recreation. ("Poetry and Grammar" 331)

She stayed within her own language but disrupted its norms by deterritorializing and reterritorializing English; indeed not by imitation or by symbolic reterritorialization like Nabokov did. I will show later how Nabokov disrupts codes and norms himself, but by overloading the linguistic norms. She stayed within the language and went “always further in the direction of deterritorialization, to the point of sobriety.” she made it “vibrate with new intensity.” (Deleuze and Guattari 19)

Indeed most of her grammatical, syntactical and orthographical pseudo-definitions are concerned with formal, physical aspect rather than a genuinely semantic or semiotic approach. “Therefore I never could bring myself to use a question mark, I always found it positively revolting, and now very few do use it. Exclamation marks have the same difficulty and also quotation marks, they are unnecessary, they are ugly, they spoil the line of the writing or the printing.” ("Poetry and Grammar" 317) Of course, orthography



and punctuation are inherently concerned with that graphic aspect, but parts of speech instead of being described in terms of function shift to visually exciting or unexciting elements of poetic language; or they are personified. She begins talking about parts of speech by remembering how exciting “diagramming sentences” was in school. She is fond of the verbs because “Beside being able to be mistaken and to make mistakes verbs *can change to look like* themselves or to look like something else, they are, so to speak on the move and adverbs move with them”.( my emphasis) ("Poetry and Grammar" 315) Furthermore, articles “remain as delicate”, adjectives “are not really and truly interesting” because they are “the first thing that anybody takes out of anybody’s writing”.

The most famous approach is the noun-name discussion she stages in "Poetry and Grammar.". “As I say a noun is a name of a thing, and therefore slowly if you feel what is inside that thing you do not call it by the name by which it is known.” ("Poetry and Grammar" 315) Still, “poetry is concerned with using with abusing, with losing with wanting, with denying with avoiding with adoring with replacing the noun.” ("Poetry and Grammar" 327) Thus, the noun becomes another vehicle for yet another type of referentiality- the demiurgic type of reference; self sufficient- the word that summons into existence without intermediary concepts. But this is not the mythical golden power of language to be reality not to mediate it- the Adamic language. Rather, Stein reterritorializes the new English along similar lines. The difference is that the non-arbitrary connection between the name and the thing is motivated by her, not an outside, transcendental force. Her language and her work are self-referential and self-sufficient. Genius becomes the self as norm.

Of course when poetry really began it practically included everything it included narrative and feelings and excitements and nouns so many nouns and all emotions. [...] Poetry did then in beginning include everything and it was natural that it should because then everything including what was happening could be made real to anyone by just naming what was happening in other words by doing what poetry always must do by living in nouns. ("Poetry and Grammar" 328)

Stein proves that uttering is being. "Never to name Jenny. Have been added to by two. Never have named Helen Jenny never have named Agnes Helen never have named Helen Jenny." Even though grammatically the meaning is negating- semantically, some women exist in the reader's mind; they even have some sort of relationships- their reality *is* when their name is uttered. This is a typical Stein technique, simultaneously a de-/re-territorializing one. She disrupts the usual codes with "materially intensive expression" at the same time that she enables new reading codes. "There is no longer a designation of something by means of a proper name, nor an assignation of metaphors by means of a figurative sense. But *like* images, the thing no longer forms anything but a sequence of intensive states" (Deleuze and Guattari 21)

She illustrates her precepts with her own tailored examples "When I said. A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose. And then later made that into a ring I made poetry and what did I do I caressed completely caressed and addressed a noun." (327), or "I was writing The Making of Americans... I called them by their names with passion and that made poetry, I did not mean it to make poetry but it did, it made the Tender Buttons, and the Tender Buttons was very good poetry." (329-330) Accordingly, when she approaches grammar and lays down her rules, she is in fact not only deterritorializing conventional frames of

understanding, but also she is reterritorializing; she is setting in place the new material as base for new codes. If demonstrating her principles with her own “practical” texts invokes again self-referentiality, then exemplifying the same principles with another text that is theoretical seems doubles the power of self-referentiality.

Designing the New English: *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*

At the end of the de-/re-territorializing continuum, is *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* as the “straightforward text.” I read it more as a reterritorializing text than the others because, by continuing the self-referentiality technique this text shifts from the story of Gertrude Stein’s life – which is immediately transparent despite the title- to the story of Stein’s genius, and writing process. If her lectures/non-fictional texts resonate and distort her poetry/fictional texts and vice versa, her detoured autobiography is the text where the reader expects a definitive, unidirectional connection between meaning and form. If interviews, lectures, letters, and texts intended under the non-fictional sign are more than often driven by premeditated questionnaires or topic frames, the autobiography is supposed to allow for freedom from superimposed frames and also to record “the real story”, the explanation or the legend for the author’s coded work alongside undoubtedly a new story- with the author as the main character- the autobiography is supposed to be matrix of all his/her texts. Just as Nabokov’s autobiography frustrates the reader in search for “the truth” behind the fiction, Gertrude Stein’s autobiography written from Alice B. Toklas’ perspective reveals very little albeit in a completely different style than the habitual deformation of language in her other texts. The language and the style are deceptively simple in comparison to the intensity emphasized in the first part of this chapter. However, the clear signs of her project- reinventing English- are still apparent.

The complications of the genre are of course in place and Stein convolutes the genre's delineations even more with her strategy of dismantling the auto- by signing instead of Alice B. Toklas. The technique does not end with that naturally, but even once the reader operates under the assumption of reading the narrative as if it were Alice B. Toklas' voice, the subject is very little the presumed narrator but Gertrude Stein.

Just as the reader expects Nabokov's autobiography to be the story of his journey from Russian nationality to the American one, the same reader expects Stein's autobiography to be the story of her remaining within the American nationality. And in both cases the reader is failed. Still for Stein, the (American) nation is visible in the text as a subject. By Anderson's criteria, she definitely resides in an imagined American community. She reads American newspapers and publishes in English. She expects thus cultural recognition from an English speaking, more specifically the American public. She moves within the American nation imagined around the American English print-language.

The minor literature thus is the literature that is supposedly going "always farther in the direction of deterritorialization, to the point of *sobriety*" just as Kafka opted for "the German language of Prague as it is and its very *poverty*." (my emphases) (Deleuze and Guattari 19) And Stein's writing style in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* does not elevate, complicate but it strives to such a status of simplicity that she reaches her intended effects the other way. Short sentences and simple structures, child like composition. The array of epithets is poor- and the structure of description of different elements is comparison and contrast and the adjectives are big/small; dull/lively. Her style distorts English to the point where Stein seems a non-native speaker writing in

English as a foreign language. When she sends “Three Lives” to an American publisher, they send somebody to express their incredulity in Stein’s comprehension of English.

He said, I have come at the request of the Grafton Press. Yes, she said. You see, he said slightly hesitant, the director of the Grafton Press is under the impression that perhaps your knowledge of english. But I am an american, said Gertrude Stein indignantly. Yes yes I understand that perfectly now, he said, but perhaps you have not had much experience in writing. (727)

Not only is she perceived as a foreigner speaker of English, but even after the man can see and hear she indeed is a native-speaker of English, her writing still does not “make sense” for him. The reasons behind including such an episode in the autobiography are certainly *not* the supposed fidelity to the events in her life that the genre presumes. The narrative has a different topic, as I said. It is rather the exemplarity of the episode for her perceived status, but more than that, it is an allegory of her perseverance in her project. She does not use the episode to mark a change in style, but to mark that despite such opinions she continued to write as a “stranger within her own language.”

Stein declares herself American. Because she reads and writes in English, her language is English and because she reads American writers, her nation is American. As I said before, though, the American nation is redefined, remotivated by her genius. Stein opposes a naïve correlation with the nation. She declares herself American and the declaration itself points toward the possibility of manipulating the connection between denomination and content within the national. More than that, she does not allow French to interfere with her creative process apart from a few scattered phrases present in the

autobiography as authenticity guarantors, most of them immediately translated. She undoubtedly speaks French not only in her daily, routine conversations but when discussing abstract ideas in her highly frequent encounters with the numerous artistic personalities who surround her.

But do you never read french, I as well as many other people asked her. No, she replied, you see I feel with my eyes and it does not make any difference what language I hear, I don't hear a language, I hear tones of voice and rhythms, but with my eyes I see words and sentences and there is for me only one language and that is english. One of the things that I have liked all these years is to be surrounded by people who know no english. It has left me more intensely alone with my eyes and my english." (729)

English is deterritorialized language for and by Stein. The stylistic scarcity becomes a strategy for a clearer focus. Style, wording, figurative language do not get in the way of signification for her. "In explaining his happiness he told Gertrude Stein, they talk about the sorrows of great artists, the tragic unhappiness of great artists but after all they are great artists. A little artist has all the tragic unhappiness and the sorrows of a great artist and he is not a great artist." (777) Not only the sole epithet has the resonance of poor vocabulary and a clichéd one "great artists," but it also appears four times in two sentences. This fragment is oversaturated with one epithet. The same with "unhappiness"- it shows up three times in two sentences. Once the opposite "little" appears it has an unusual freshness and it colors the sorrow and unhappiness with new nuances- stronger ones. The "little" artist is individualized among the "great" artists by appearing in contrast just once. Moreover, he is the only one that suffers the same "tragic

unhappiness and sorrows” but he is excluded from the category of “great artists” which suddenly transforms his sorrow into a greater one, the unhappiness of isolation. This is however as close as Stein gets to the pain, the “pangs of exile.” Just like Nabokov, Stein will only allow pain, sorrow or unhappiness as signs of genius, of a Weltschmerz with diffuse transcendent origin, not obvious biographical incidents

As defamiliarizing as her writing strategies are, her goal is exactitude in all her writing projects as she explains in the autobiography, continuing to reterritorialize. “Gertrude Stein, in her work, has always been possessed by the intellectual passion for exactitude in the description of inner and outer reality.” (*The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* 865) This kind of vision has a complicating effect. It alienates the reader who is bound to live within codes. If Stein advocates the lack of codes altogether, for the sake of exactitude and she manages writes somehow outside linguistic codes, paradoxically, it does not become easier to access her texts. Her style does not transcend the materiality- does not transport one beyond the written into the white space of the metaphors; but it forces one to go back(wards) before even historical connotation of words; it forces one to be exact; there is no loose space of comprehension. It is a very clearly delineated space of understanding where the only sense is made by Gertrude Stein’s texts. That is why for instance the autobiography records people as puppets- their movement is more evident than their reflection on the narrator. People are coming and there is a list of names; and then people go away; lists of people who are somewhere take the expected place of the actual conversations. Conversations are recorded by subjects and whether or not the participants agreed or not instead of reproducing the actual dialogue. Friendships are

recorded with simple epithet categorizations –deep or shallow or none and by time intervals.

The subject even is indirect. Stein writes for Alice B. Toklas therefore the subject should be Alice B. Toklas. However, in Alice B. Toklas' voice the subject is Gertrude Stein- a third level of remoteness. Even so, the actual subject is more than anything the process of coming together and dispersing- of paintings, people, ideas (in that order) and not Stein or Alice B. Toklas. In the first part of the text – paintings are more heavily present, but their number and size and transactions details are what seems to matter more than their description or their creative context (with sparse exceptions- like the *Femme au Chapeau*). Some episodes in painters' lives are always written as digressive episodes- the leitmotif of the autobiography is “but to return to...” This text seems at first the written version of the walls in the Atelier. “And on all the walls right up to the ceiling were pictures ... The pictures were so strange that one quite instinctively looked at anything rather than at them just at first. I have refreshed my memory by looking at some snapshots taken inside the atelier at that time.” Again, at this point the narrative fractures the anticipations. The reader expects at this point the actual description (even if via secondary means- the snapshots) of those “strange pictures.” The narrator describes instead the furniture, then returns to the pictures only to arrive to a simple enumeration of names “At the time there was a great deal of Matisse, Picasso, Renoir, Cézanne ... two Gauguins, there were Maguins...” (667)

The highest frequency of topics in this text is self-referentiality and this is strictly connected to Deleuze and Guattari's impossibility of separation of life from writing first because theoretically the autobiography is a “life” text and then because the writing of



this text- is a not a life event but a writing device. She is not writing her own autobiography but Alice B. Toklas'. The first page contains the self-referential/ intertextual gesture "In the story *Ada in Geography and Plays* Gertrude Stein has given a very good description of me as I was at that time." (659) Not only is she referring back to her own texts to make temporal clarifications, but she is also of course explaining or offering a paratextual key for her other texts. "She was at that time planning her long book. *The Making of Americans*, she was struggling with her sentences, those long sentences that had to be so exactly carried out. Sentences not only words but sentences and always sentences have been Gertrude Stein's life long passion." (699)

The autobiography is not the story of Alice B. Toklas, but Gertrude Stein's which is not as disrupting the reader knows from the beginning that the voice behind the puppet is in fact Gertrude Stein's. At the same time it does not seem a mis-written autobiography. Alice B. Toklas appears from the beginning as a reflector, as a passive tool but the key one in unveiling Gertrude Stein. Even if the final lines declare that Gertrude Stein will write the autobiography just as Daniel Defoe wrote *Robinson Crusoe's* these lines are at the end of the text and they do not interfere retrospectively. The only effect at the end is that of a punch line. We would know a lot more about Daniel Defoe if the enterprises had been indeed similar. The main purpose is to describe (in the scholastic understanding of the word) a composite tableaux of certain moments in their lives. There is no narrative action, no consequential development just seemingly random comings and goings and paintings. The autobiography contains in fact its own deconstruction key. "One day Gertrude Stein was saying something about herself and Roché said good good excellent that is very important for your biography. She was terribly touched, it was the first time

that she really realized that some time she would have a biography.” and the very next sentence or paragraph should contain the “what” that was said at that moment. The context is the perfect one- the announced (auto)biography. However the next sentence is “It is quite true that although she has not seen him for years somewhere Roché is probably perfectly faithful.” (704) The reader never finds out what was supposed to be part of Stein’s biography and was remembered with that purpose.

The voice of Alice B. Toklas even in the assumed “I” is a mere recorder and at best a reflector-, which in turn reveals Gertrude Stein’s authorial intention to be remote, not to be a participant in the story. Alice B. Toklas is not only the narrative instrument- but she appears as a character in the passive stance. She is ordered and told what to do continually; she has no content as a character. At the same time her position is the privileged one; the sole position available as a key to Gertrude Stein’s work; it is the position that is close enough but at the same time outside the inside of Gertrude Stein which gives her the necessary frame of objectivity. And all this is of course turned on its head when one replaces the Alice B. Toklas with Gertrude Stein. “As a matter of fact her handwriting has always been illegible and I am very often able to read it when she is not.” (737) Even if just at a thematic level, Stein still describes her writing in terms of materiality. Alice B. Toklas is literally the key to Gertrude Stein’s writing

One of the most potent writing strategies in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* is replacing. On a narrative level, it manifests as postponing, recurrent beginnings, digression, frame- stories. As a subject, the paintings are more prominent than people and in general the outside instead of the inside. The atmosphere is heavily cosmopolitan, but not acknowledged as such. The vision is cinematic and lead by very economical

description- thus it gives the text a specific type of cohesion- a visual one, not a narrative one. The eye is definitely privileged in this text- and the sensorial preferred to the rational. "It was during this summer that she first felt the desire to express the rhythm of the visible world. It was a long tormenting process, she looked, listened and described. She always was, she always is, tormented by the problem of the external and the internal." (781)

But most of all, Stein is concerned with the reception of her work. It is not heavily present in the text, but when it does appear as a subject, an emotional intensity and a slightly educational intent accompany the topic. She wants her readers to know how to read her texts because they need a key; they need to learn the alphabet of her reinvented English.

Patriarchal Poetry may be mistaken may be undivided may be usefully to be sure settled and they would be after a while as establish in relatively understanding a promise of not in time but at a time wholly reconciled to feel that as well by an instance of escaped and interrelated choice. That makes it even. Patriarchal Poetry may seem misplaced at one time. (Patriarchal Poetry 587)

This fragment sounds true for her work in general. The reader should take into account that misplacing, mistaking, misunderstanding are all part of her deterritorializing English and I will show in the next chapter how Nabokov will use many of the same tools to promote his vision on language. Establishing these as strategies of writing and reading is her reterritorialization; her unequivocal map to understanding Stein English.

Even so, Gertrude Stein's reader will never be sure. And if the sound of her laughter comes to mind, it is because whenever anything was supposed to be understood, but would not, *instead* of explaining she was "going off with a great shout of laughter." (675)

### CHAPTER III

#### VLADIMIR NABOKOV AND THE "BLESSED EXILE"

"... memories not too pleasant, the hunger, the arrest  
..., and suddenly the blessed exile"

(Vladimir Nabokov, *The Defense*)

In Martin Tucker's view, Vladimir Nabokov represents the successful exile writer because he assumed the language of his adoptive home country. Looking at Nabokov's biography, however, one can observe that his life has been almost equally divided among four "home- countries"; around twenty years for Russia, around twenty years for "Europe" (four years in England, fifteen for Germany and three for France), around twenty years for America (nineteen actually) and around twenty for Switzerland (the last eighteen years of his life). Moreover, the first half of his work is in written in Russian (when he does not live in Russia anymore) and his first novel written in English is actually composed while again he was living in Paris. Even recent studies such as Pichova and Roullier's discuss Nabokov still within an evaluative paradigm.

In his exposing the two polar extremities of theories Jahan Ramazani wants to dismantle, he describes on one hand the “culture of birth determinism” (343) or the contradictory paradigm the “influence teleology” meaning that nationality is bestowed according to influence. “Some poets are born to Americanness, some achieve Americanness, and some have Americanness thrust upon them.” (344) Arguably Americanness was thrust upon Nabokov. Although one could take his opinion on Pushkin expressed in his article “Problems of Translation: ‘Onegin’ in English” as defining for his own genius and cultural formation. “I shall now make a statement for which I am ready to incur the wrath of Russian patriots: Alexandr Sergeyevich Pushkin (1799– 1837), the national poet of Russia, was as much a product of French literature as of Russian culture; and what happened to be added to this mixture, was individual genius which is neither Russian nor French, but universal and divine.” (75) Similarly, Stein’s view of author as genius transcends the national as shown with *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*.

Stein and Nabokov are both isolated with their new languages, with their projects of de-/re-territorializing English and this isolation might explain in part their view on authorship and writing as necessarily beyond the nation. However, both claim to think before a particular language and both claim as primordial mode of making sense the sensorial. Therefore, the actual key to their successfully transcending the exile experience as a traumatic one, of their transcending the nation is strong belief in an intuitive irresolvable question of language and thought. “I don’t think in any language. I think in images. . . and now and then a Russian phrase or an English phrase will form with the foam of a brainwave, but that’s about all.” (*Strong Opinions* 14) For Nabokov when asked if he would ever go back to Russia the answer is no because “all the Russia I need

is always with me: literature, language and my own Russian childhood. “ (*Strong Opinions* 10)

Nabokov does not consider himself an exile writer. Confident in his ability to adjust to many geographies he is amused by critics’ puzzled strive to assign him a national category. “I am an American writer, born in Russia and educated in England where I studied French literature, before spending fifteen years in Germany.” (*Strong Opinions* 26). Even if the first phrase is indeed a national category, he dismantles it immediately with an ironic gesture of compressing too many nationalities within one identity.

Nabokov writes expatriate characters in most of his novels, but he consistently views with pity or disdain any exiled character who takes shelter within the inherent binary native/ foreign. He disproves in fact just as much of any character claiming a higher degree of understanding simply because they belong to the adoptive country or the native tongue where the exile finds a new home. Rejecting these two perspectives, the one of the exile lamenting his situation, and the opaque pseudo-knowledgeable attitude of the adopting culture representative, Nabokov rejects in fact both American and Russian definitions/ clichés of exile and each nation’s version of the other nation.

I will read three of Nabokov’s texts *Lolita*, *Pale Fire* and *Speak, Memory*. All three manifest one of Nabokov’s chief strategies of writing about exile, misrepresentation, albeit with different subjects and styles. If the voice of the autobiography is unambiguously Nabokov, the two novels are spoken in a first person voice that has become as a recognizable Nabokov persona, a narrator that displays similar views with its author *mutatis mutandis*. Regarding exile, this narrator offers Nabokov the possibility of trying out, exploring and nuancing his views on exile and nation. This particular type of

narrator is the character who claims a similar situation with the authorial one. And in *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*, indeed the narrators are both authors of the texts the reader follows. They both complicate and they both resist conventional notions of exile and nation. They position themselves as impenetrable for American characters. In *Pale Fire*, the American characters perceive Kinbote as insane although his narrative is just as plausible as the other characters'. Likewise, the American Lolita escapes Humbert Humbert's authority that she obviously loathes and labels as perverted, only to accept his American counterpart. Lolita seems able to understand and to manipulate Clare Quilty the American equivalent of narrator, who is worse than Humbert Humbert for not actually loving Lolita. Nabokov through these narrators lays bare the resistance to American appropriation of the exile, the foreigner. At the same time, the reversal of this narrative, the impenetrable foreigner -which recalls Nabokov's Russianness automatically- cannot become accessible for non-American (particularly Russian expatriate) characters and audiences by extension. As mentioned before the Russian expatriate is more often than not a subject of parody, most famously in his novel *Pnin* and more accurately in *Speak, Memory* where expatriates are again if not parodies, than pitied such as Mademoiselle, Nabokov's nanny.

If *Lolita* may seem the least focused on the topic of exile, the novel immerses its reader in Europe vs. America dualities and their consequences. The main character however mis-understands and mis-represents reality complicating thus not only reliability on the narrative level, but also the representation of the American and European entities. In a much more explicit manner, *Pale Fire* sets up a binary between America and Zembla, an imaginary European country. Here exile is present as a theme, but the

narrator's unreliability revealed at the end of the novel, along with a permanent distrust in translation, subverts retroactively the perception of the two countries. Charles Kinbote's story is entirely mis-represented, mis-translated to the point of erasure. The "correct", the straightforward and explicative representation of exile in Nabokov's work should therefore be his autobiography. Nevertheless, *Speak, Memory* mis-represents not only the topic of exile, but the genre it belongs to as well. Written almost against narrative flow, cataloguing portraits and scenes in artful elaborate descriptions, Nabokov's autobiography mis-represents its main topic – Nabokov's life.

Nabokov writes many of his novels in the first person. Despite Nabokov's vehement disapproval, those narrators clearly belong to a type of character that resonates with the author himself, especially in terms of personality. By manipulating the conventional boundaries of the novelistic genre and the paratext, Nabokov in fact establishes and questions this association. *Lolita* is the confession of a man awaiting trial. But it is introduced by a fictional editor, who offers the key to reading *Lolita* just as its author (not narrator) would want it. John Ray, the author of the fictional Preface, describes Humbert Humbert and his text: "He is abnormal. He is not a gentleman. But how magically his singing violin can conjure up a tendresse, a compassion for Lolita that makes us entranced with the book while abhorring its author." (5) The overt strategy of making the Preface, a paratextual element, part of the fiction creates the unavoidable blurring between *Lolita*'s author (Humbert Humbert) and *Lolita*'s actual author (Nabokov.) *Pale Fire* complicates the strategy and its effects even further. The Foreword introduces the text of John Shade's poem that follows indeed, but the excessive text of the commentary, another paratext, becomes the actual narrative and displaces the poem as the actual text,



turning it into a secondary, almost paratextual entity. Finally, the autobiography disrupts conventional definition, by disproportionately resisting the narrative, displacing it and replacing it with profuse lyricism.

### Missed Representation in *Lolita*

While thematically Nabokov engages in a cosmopolitan view rather common for that epoch (in Jahan Ramazani's reading of Modernism,) language is at the heart of misrepresentation in *Lolita*. *Lolita* is the unavoidable text in any discussion on Nabokov. His most beloved novel is also his most abused text critically, since the perfect binary setting of the text –old/ young- allows for almost any type of Manichean interpretation focused on binaries such as normal/ abnormal relationship between children and parents; Old Europe and Young America; love/ perversion; polished or sophisticated or intellectual / rough, simplistic, stupid; profound/shallow; innocence/ corruption; man/ woman; beauty/ ugliness. As is the case with several of Nabokov's texts, in *Lolita*, the narrator first, exposes and dismantles the readily apparent critical temptations within the narrative itself. Humbert Humbert consistently satirizes “the Viennese medicine man” (the psychoanalytical reading) or the conspicuous perversion story (the literal reading) available for the “Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury.” The post- word of the Vintage International edition, “On a Book Entitled *Lolita*”, reveals Nabokov smiling at the already in print critical tendencies correcting them or dismissing them gent(eel)ly . “After Olympia Press, in Paris, published the book, an American critic suggested that *Lolita* was the record of my love affair with the romantic novel. The substitution ‘English language

‘for ‘romantic novel’ would make this elegant formula more correct.’ (316) Nabokov seizes the opportunity to amend not any reception of the book, but the American one, reproving thus the American initial refusal to publish the novel which will actually end up gaining him official American literary status.

As the story enacting the two main strands in Nabokov’s identity, the “Old Europe” and the “New America,” *Lolita* invites a symbolical or even a readily visible allegorical reading of the exile theme- after all Humbert Humbert’s crossing the Atlantic resonates with that of his author. Nabokov’s distaste for biographic critical tendencies of any of his texts, however, challenges these interpretations. But if the reader rejects Nabokov’s authorial intention as controlling the novel beyond publication, as it habitually happens, *Lolita* is the novel of obvious dualities. On the other hand, inquiring into Nabokov’s reasoning reveals his transcending these dualities. His manifest rhetoric proves thus an outlet rather than an impediment for interpretation. The fictional foreword shields the narrative on one side and employs the classical rhetorical strategy of distance – the manuscript belongs to a secondary narrator. The biographical author is thus doubly removed from the narrative. Still, some critics managed to read *Lolita* in connection to an autobiographical event of a young love and to probe the author’s biography with unavoidable psycho-logical/ -analytical speculations. On the other side, the text appended at the end of the novel reintroduces the author in a self-conscious, postmodern fashion. “After doing my impersonation of suave John Ray, the character in *Lolita* who pens the Foreword, any comments coming from me may strike one- may strike me, in fact- as an impersonation of Vladimir Nabokov talking about his own book.” (311) Nabokov frames and then questions the very frames of the narrative in order to gesture towards the

rhetorical instability of the obvious dualities and towards an unreliable narrator and an unreliable author as well. A rushed typical émigré reading of the novel reveals merely the evident dualities, but *Lolita* embodies both the deconstruction of these dualities and a beautifully orchestrated solution, a transcendence of this implicit disjunction.

Rather than following a simple trajectory towards a synthesis of binaries, however, *Lolita* complicates the structure. *Lolita* not only exposes the insufficiencies of such binaries, but it also creates a space where seemingly contradicting elements coexist without necessarily entering conflict; a locus that Postcolonial studies name with a range of metaphors involving notions of hybridity. Nabokov pushes the solution for the binary inadequacy beyond the hybrid type. His “salad of racial genes” describes metaphorically the actual narrative solution: Nabokov’s multilayered language that delineates the locus of formerly conflictual elements that eventually coexist paradoxically without incongruity.

In Nabokov, multiple languages and multiple territories coexist without hybridization. His own metaphor, in the beginning of *Lolita* approximates the solution: “My father was a gentle, easy going person, *a salad of racial genes*: a Swiss citizen (a country with four official languages! my note), of mixed French and Austrian descent, with a dash of the Danube in his veins (there were six or seven countries on the Danube at that time- my note again).” (9)

At first, *Lolita*’s strategy is complicating the issue of perception, or rather of misperception. The narrator describes the act of discerning a “nymphet” as a special talent. Only an “artist and a madman” can distinguish one; and “*she* stands unrecognized by them (the other children) and unconscious herself of her fantastic power.” (17)

Humbert Humbert creates the nymphet to fulfill a need in his life- life and art are inseparable for this narrator, as I will show later with the aid of Deleuze and Guattari. The nymphet's unique status is supposed to guarantee the reliability of the narration and to bestow in return normalcy upon its creator, but outside the narrator's art, she is just a little girl. The beginning of the novel places thus the reader in the face of a decision. The reader has to decide whether he/she wants to share the narrator's special nymphet discerning faculty, his perception; to participate affectively vicariously, and endorse thus the process of seducing a 12-year-old child, or to try and maintain an "objective", outsider's point of view which in turn denies the entire narrative process. The space of reading this novel is the space of unreliable perception.

The introductory part of the book assumes a didactic tone: "the student should not be surprised to learn that there must be a gap of several years, never less than ten I should say, generally thirty or forty, and as many as ninety in a few known cases, between maiden and man to enable the latter to come under a nymphet's spell." (16)-The narrator provides international comparative law analysis, and constant reminders that the great canonical, respected and beloved love stories of the world (Dante and Beatrice, Edgar Allan Poe and Virginia, Petrarch and Laura) are in fact if perceived through a real(istic) lens just as abominable as his own story would be. At this point, the reader, if reluctantly, trusts the narrator for judgment values, since the reader's own hierarchy has tumbled under the potent examples of law and culture sampled on such a large scale. By presenting many nations as proud of such heavy cultural emblems, among which the American Poe, the narrator pressures the American reader/ culture to align to such values.

The reader adheres to the narrator's mode of seeing in spite of early glimpses of later revelations. The second part of the novel though, slowly disintegrates the narrator's coherence of vision. Retrospectively, the reader recuperates an independent mode of seeing which in turn reinstates the incipient undecidability. Humbert Humbert has been mis-seeing, mis-reading and mis-interpreting all along. Nabokov is a naturally inclined deconstructivist. The bifold structure of the narrative is consistently undermined.

Humbert Humbert is the pervert who functions as a traditional main character, drawing sympathy from the reader through an intricate and persuasive rhetoric -and the reader in fact wants him to succeed in his pursuit, and suffers with him when Lolita leaves the narrator, and wants revenge against Clare Quilty. Yet Humbert Humbert is not quite the pervert (the ending finds him still in love with Lolita, in spite of her growing out of the nymphet phase), and Lolita is not the innocent child meant to establish the contrasting pole. Humbert Humbert describes the sexual, abusive relationship as a passionate, if unidirectional love relationship. All the constitutive poles are dismantled early in the novel and the entire series of binaries is in fact modified consistently under an overarching theme of mis- representation and mis-interpretation.

Lolita starts seducing him right after his picking her up from camp; the first kiss, although obviously inappropriate, he fails to understand as such: "I knew, of course, it was but an innocent game on her part." (113) He fails to listen to the girl's accurate account of camp and he prefers to understand only her mockingly repeating the slogans and the clichés. "I am thrifty and I am absolutely filthy in thought, word and deed." and his absent answer is "Now I do hope that's all, you witty child." (114) When asking for directions to the fateful hotel The Enchanted Hunters he "could not help but losing (his)

way in the maze of their well-meaning *gibberish* (my emphasis).” (116) His name starts a different trajectory, from the self-ironical labels (such as Humbert the Hound; Humbert le Bel; Humbert the Hoarse) to a self mis-naming. When he, irritated, tries to correct the hotel receptionist who mispronounces his name he himself misses. “My name is not Humberg and not Humbug, but Herbert, I mean Humbert.” (118) In the same manner, he loses control over language when Lolita embraces him after she sees all the gifts he had bought for her: ““What’s the katter with misses?” I muttered (word-control gone).” He loses control even over the language of his thoughts when and he switches the language of thought to pseudo- Latin. The morning that brings to reality Humbert Humbert’s ardent dream, Lolita wakes up and wants to initiate him in a game whispering the rules in his ear, but “for quite a while my mind could not separate into words the hot thunder of her whisper.” (133)

Misrepresentation contaminates different levels of the narrative. The narrator misrepresents time sequence-- at the moment of writing his text, he is presumably in jail for a murder already committed but he presents himself early in the novel as incapable of “serious murder.” (47) Then, the convoluted, carefully and intricately crafted metaphor which tries to prove his oversensitivity to the girl’s presence-- he describes himself as an enormous spider with the entire house as his web, having sensorial access to all the corners of the house at once- is dismantled abruptly when right after a long parasensorial search in which he concludes Lolita is not in the house at all, she appears at his door and talks to him. (49-50) Or the flagrant “I want my learned reader to *participate* (my emphasis) in the scene I am about to replay; I want them to examine its every detail and see for themselves how careful, how *chaste* (my emphasis) the whole wine-sweet event

is..." (57). Utter misrepresentation; the reader, even if viewing with the suggested "impartial sympathy", is lingering over a clearly perverted act of non-contact sexual satisfaction of which Lolita herself is unaware. A concerted singing of a barely remembered song provides the rhythm of the scene. Symptomatically, after the consummation of the act on Humbert Humbert's part, he attempts to "give the words of that song hit in full- to the best of my recollection at least- I don't think I ever had it right." The first of the two stanzas is however just as incoherent and missing words as it had been when the only important element was the rhythmic pulse: "O my Carmen, my little Carmen!/ Something, something those something nights, / And the stars, and the cars, and the bars, and the [barmen-..." (61)

Misrepresentation implicates language continually in a twofold method. The authorial language represents the narrator's speech. This allows Nabokov to set up from the beginning a deceptive frame. The represented speech becomes in turn an authorial one when Humbert Humbert is not only the main character but the first person narrator as well. Humbert Humbert's irony towards others' misunderstandings (particularly of foreign languages) resonates inadvertently with Nabokov's, and that confers heavier authority on the narrator subliminally. At the same time, when the narrator proves to be the one misunderstanding, the original authorial echo recedes, and this makes his fall more resonant. From the Russian taxi driver's ridiculed French- dismissed by the narrator as "gibberish" although he is "punctuating his movements with all sorts of mispronounced apologies" (27-29)- to the insertion of a recitative, incantational passage of actual gibberish, Humbert Humbert articulates all fragile linguistic points of intersection- English and French: standard and slang; intellectual and nonintellectual;

articulated and amorphous. At all times, though, Humbert Humbert projects himself as governing the entire process. The gibberish passage is the climax of his mastering languages that coexist within one mind- of languages that the reader does not have access to (it starts with French) and languages that do not exist. “*Seva ascendes, pulsata, brulans, kitzelans, dementissima. Elevator clatterans, pausa, clatterans, populus in corridoro. Hanc nisi mors mihi adimet nemo! Juncea puellula, jo pensavo fondissime, nobserva nihil quidquam.*” (120)

When Charlotte Haze, Lolita’s mother, attempts to connect with Humbert Humbert in French she fails, but the reader only has access to her failure in writing. “Dolores Haze, ne montrez pas vos zhambes’(this is her mother who thinks she knows French).” (44) Spelling semi-phonetically according to English phonetics a French word creates the perfect (mis)representation. Reading the word “zhambes” correctly implies not the reader who can read French, but the reader of incorrect French, the reader who can identify the distorted process of representation. “[Z]h” is the English representation of a sound that only makes sense in French; but the French representation should be “j.” Thus, the narrator conveys in writing an error perceivable only audibly describing a misuse of the French language in an exaggerated awkward manner.

French functions in *Lolita* not as an impediment (after all even readers who do not read French fluently can easily translate the fragments), but as part of Humbert Humbert’s personality and as part of Nabokov’s solution for conflictual binaries. The second part of the novel recounts Humbert Humbert’s disintegration. And it all starts at the verbal level- his French phrases become more frequent, better integrated within the narrator’s discourse and a clear sign of alienation. Lolita asks him at the hospital to “cut



out the French” because “It annoys everybody.” (243) If for the reader the French *is* rendered in italics and does function as a telling sign, for Humbert Humbert French fails to act as a clue. “In my youth I once read a French detective tale where the clues were actually in italics; but that is not McFate’s way—even if one does learn to recognize certain obscure indications.” (211) French functions in the novel as both the obstruction for correct representation and accurate reading, and as the cohesive element of the narrator’s character. It is the sign of his coherence as well as a sign of his collapse. French becomes more visible and French culture becomes an example, paradoxically a (mis)representation of American culture and landscape, as if he reverses psychologically to what is familiar to him and transforms the unfamiliar, the American reality into the familiar French, European reality.

As mentioned before, misrepresentation is frequently present at various points and levels of the narrative. Scattered details show him consistently missing the point. The beginning of Charlotte’s love letter makes him think it is written by Lolita(67); the wedding announcement in the newspaper has a misprint of her last name and a misrepresentation (intended by the narrator) of their relationship as having been longer than it actually had been ; the tense moments of truth almost revealed in mishearing what actually happened to Lolita’s mother “... something abdominal. Abominable? No, abdominal.”(112) or the comical moments with Mona asking Humbert Humbert about the famous French writer “Ball Zack.” But the main point he is missing is that of his own passion. He presents his relationship to Lolita as that of a pervert albeit one who seeks understanding from his readers. Despite all that, Humbert Humbert is actually in love not

with the nymphet but with Lolita. The end of the novel surprises him with the 17-year-old Dolores still the object of his love.

He fails to read/ see that his first wife is going to divorce him. The entire scene of his finding out is more than comical, playing exactly with these missed points: he is arguing with her and gets into a taxi “which had been invitingly creeping along the curb for some time” only to find out that the taxi driver is the new man in Valeria’s life. Valeria talks to Humbert Humbert at this point with “a volubility I had never suspected she had in her.” Valeria’s would be husband, “Mr. Taxovich” discusses practical aspects of this almost transaction. Humbert Humbert reserves the fate of poetic justice for the couple that arrives in America later on only to be (mis)”used there for an excellent salary in a yearlong experiment... [which] dealt with human and racial reactions to a diet of bananas and dates in a constant position on all fours.” (27-30) Then Humbert Humbert misrepresents himself in the process of psychological therapy (34). Clare Quilty appears early in the stage of the narrative in a cunning mis-leading of the reader’s attention within an ominous dialogue of misunderstandings (which at the end of the novel is deciphered as clearly intentional):

’Where the devil did you get her?’

‘I beg your pardon?’

‘I said the weather is getting better.’

‘Seems so.’

‘Who’s the lassie?’

‘My daughter.’

‘You lie- she’s not.’

‘I beg your pardon?’

‘I said: July is hot. ’ (127)

And at the end of the conversation the person in the shadow strikes a light but “the flame illuminated not him but another person, a very old man.” (127)

The apparent antithesis between the Old World and the New one in the two journeys across America display further the strategy of misrepresentation, which deems America new/ fresh/ young/ nymphet and Europe old (both meanings old age and old as opposite of new)/ stale/ faun. Even before Humbert Humbert’s arriving to America he describes it to his first wife as “the country of rosy children and great trees, where life would be such an improvement on dull dingy Paris.” (27) The image of America is superficial and intentionally primitive, fertile but uncomplicated and it gains false strength from being opposed to the cliché “dull dingy Paris”. Thus, the first image of America is a misrepresentation in French with Old World clichés about American landscape and reality. Humbert Humbert, the narrator, comes very close to Nabokov the author in manipulating clichés of national typicality. Lolita as a character is mastered by the clichés and by the narrator.

Continually, Humbert Humbert presents himself as “being a polite European.” Charlotte Haze, in her declaration of love, uses the same words “Your old- world reticence, your sense of decorum may be shocked by the boldness of an American girl.” (68) And unknowingly she represents correctly Lolita’s situation (still a misrepresentation). Despite the readily apparent ulterior motif for Humbert Humbert’s rant against a journey to Europe (he does not want to be away from Lolita), the use of the cliché system is still relevant. “I can well imagine the thrill that you, a healthy American

gal, must experience at crossing the Atlantic.... But I happen to be allergic to Europe, including merry old England. As well you know, I have nothing but sad association with the Old and rotting World.” (90) Europe is the site of ill-matched traits, useless politeness, and artificiality, old and sick. In a twisted move, Nabokov shows his resisting the nation through an ironic display of clichés. If Humbert Humbert’s reason is to refuse the journey to Europe is a selfish one, his presenting Europe is still symptomatic of the author’s views.

In the second part of the novel however, America is just as clichéd and is intentionally traversed that way. Lolita’s adventurous style is a touristy one; what “saves” the country is the narrator’s rich descriptive style which is intended as “European” after all. The characters’ automobile journey resonates syntactically with the lengthened, concatenated syntax and the attributive morphology. But the narrator’s style poses and uses European cultural samples. This fractures the reader’s perception and presents a *mélange* of European pre-made style snippets-, which refer back to the proffered artificiality of all things European- with a complexity of language, which becomes familiar, natural against the positive simplicity presented as specific American. “I would take a bed-and cot or twin-bed cabin, a prison cell of paradise, with yellow window shades pulled down to create a morning illusion of Venice and sunshine when actually it was Pennsylvania and rain. We came to know – nous connûmes, to use a Flaubertian intonation—the stone cottages under enormous Chateaubriandesque trees.” (145)

Lolita consumes America the way America is supposed to be consumed. “If a roadside sign said: VISIT OUR GIFT SHOP—we *had* to visit it, *had* to buy its Indian curios, dolls, copper jewelry, cactus candy.” Humbert Humbert, again as the typical

Nabokov narrator, is almost anti-national in these moments. He ironically points out to the American girl who cannot differentiate between genuine absorption of landscape and what could be termed as national culture. On the other hand, Nabokov does not offer a “better” variant in Humbert Humbert. The narrator’s assimilation of American landscape happens with European tools. What saves America from the cliché, tourist traverse is Humbert Humbert’s professed European style, the “Claude Lorrain clouds inscribed remotely into misty azure,” or “a stern El Greco horizon, pregnant with inky rain...” (152) His view reverses the cliché. Through European cultural imprints, America becomes familiar and culturally recognizable to the narrator and by extension to the reader as well.

By a paradox of pictorial thought, the average lowland North- American countryside had at first seemed to me something I accepted with a shock of amused recognition because of the painted oilcloths which were imported from America in the old days to be hung above washstands in Central-European nurseries, and which fascinated a drowsy child at bed time with the rustic green views they depicted-opaque curly trees, a barn, cattle, and perhaps a stonefence or hills of greenish gouache. (152)

However, again such “recognition” is a false one; a misrepresentation. What the narrator “recognizes” is a representation that in an ulterior moments overlaps reality.

This is the character Nabokov seems to favor. Humbert Humbert surpasses both realms, both (or many) languages. Humbert Humbert is geographically displaced and alienated culturally and his narrative certainly displays translocation (even if the bricolage technique is not as visible). His alienation and his distress however do not

emerge from spatial conditions. He dominates his geographical itineraries even when Lolita is in charge of the map. Space is not a source of discomfort for him. Thematically Nabokov transcends thus the readily available interpretations for *Lolita* - Humbert Humbert representing Europe as the old world whose imperial tendencies can only be regarded as perverse.

#### Translation without an original in *Pale Fire*

Translation is one of Nabokov's favorite devices of misrepresentation. If his multilingualism is a recurrent characteristic of many of his characters or creates occasional plot gimmicks, one of his novels is dedicated entirely to translation and its consequences. *Pale Fire* displays one of Nabokov's recurrent themes –the prolific relationship between language and identity. More specifically, the novel explores the leitmotiv's dual facet: identities construed within a particular language and the attempt to transfer identity into another language together with the consequences of this procedure. Translation functions in this novel at a metaphorical level. All processes involving transformation follow a similar pattern to the process of actual linguistic conversion.

Notwithstanding the difference between Nabokov's translation as a narrative, stylistic or even metaphorical device and translation in its traditional meaning, theories of translation are again valuable. Lawrence Venuti explores an insightful idea on authorship in a book-length study *The Scandals of Translation* how translation “creates identities receptive to cultural difference” (3) among other phenomena. This becomes important in reading Nabokov's manipulation of the reader exactly within this specific identity created in conjunction to the idea of translation. What I found useful in his text were discussions on definition of language and authorship that are colored in a particular way when

connected with translation. Thus, in an acknowledged Deleuze and Guattari manner, Venuti sees “language as a collective force, an assemblage of forms that constitute a semiotic regime” (9) (assemblage is the term borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari.) Nabokov and Stein decidedly write in a larger definition of language and the one Venuti proposes seems to encompass the width of their creative idiolects.

Venuti strives programmatically for “minoritizing translation” in order to undermine the hegemony of English. In his view, that is obtained by choosing texts that are already marginal within their native canon. Thus, the translator has to create a complex and varied language that “question the seeming unity of standard English.” in order to “promote cultural innovation as well as the understanding of cultural difference by proliferating the variables within English” (11) In *Pale Fire* Kinbote does exactly that. He brings into the English language the minor culture of Zembla.

Another useful observation is one at the beginning of the chapter on “Authorship” “translation provokes the fear that authorial intention cannot possibly control their meaning and social functioning. – They being “foreign linguistic and cultural constituents” (31) Hence, in a subtle Foucauldian manner the author is deconstructed, but within a logical reasoning. “Authorship is not *sui generis*; writing depends on pre-existing cultural materials, selected buy the author, arranged in an order of priority, and rewritten (or elaborated) according to specific values. “ (43) One of the more relevant tools when reading Stein or Nabokov is their approach to language as creative medium and if Venuti’s Deleuzian definition gauges the amplitude of their respective linguistic projects, then his definition of authorship is in contradiction with their declared aspirations. Each one strives for a *sui generis* authorship indeed. Venuti’s definition is

still instrumental in illuminating Stein and Nabokov's type of strategy. Their language construction dismantles and questions precisely the "pre-existing cultural materials" and of course, I do not mean the superficial preconceptions or expectations the reader might have, but the deeply embedded and structural cultural material; the material that guarantees the existence of that language in the first place. Particularly Stein pushes the reader outside the linguistic construction altogether in her writing a minor literature.

The main concerns of translation studies concentrate on the debate around the function of the language as communicative and/or constitutive. With Nabokov's own article "Problems of Translation: 'Onegin' in English" it becomes clear that the causes for un-translatability are the differences between the two languages involved.

I want translations with copious footnotes, footnotes reaching up like skyscrapers to the top of this or that page so as to leave only the gleam of one textual line between commentary and eternity. I want such footnotes and the absolutely literal sense, with no emasculation and no padding— I want such sense and such notes for all the poetry in other tongues that still languishes in "poetical" versions, begrimed and beslimed by rhyme. And when my Onegin is ready, it will either conform exactly to my vision or not appear at all. (83)

And it did appear. By many accounts however, his translation is unreadable. "It has produced a bald and awkward language which has nothing in common with Pushkin or with the usual writing of Nabokov." (Wilson) Many authors write about Nabokov's massive translation of *Eugene Onegin*. One of the first reviewers, Edmund Wilson, still Nabokov's friend at the time of the article's publication, is among the first to point out so bluntly and maliciously the insufficiencies of Nabokov's text. In time, the commentaries



focus more on the clear relationship between Nabokov as a translator and as a writer (*Pale Fire* is the most obvious thematic connection). Then critics categorize the overwhelming volume of paratextual apparatus as unavoidable and necessary provided the reader is professionally interested in the subject. Never as a “readable” text, but as a specialized tool.<sup>4</sup>

Wilson also declares at one point “Mr. Nabokov's most serious failure, however—to try to get all my negatives out of the way—is one of interpretation. He has missed a fundamental point in the central situation.” This statement seems particularly apt if one chooses to read *Pale Fire* in parallel of the *Eugene Onegin* translation project<sup>5</sup>. The narrator insists on everyone around him missing the point, but the end of the novel suggests the opposite. Both Nabokov and his main character obsess about accuracy. Eventually, it is the urge for exactitude, as discussed earlier with Stein, which deems the text impenetrable for the reader. Nabokov seems to transfer this vision upon the narrator in *Pale Fire*. Charles Kinbote’s fixation with the correct meaning of words, metaphors and innuendos becomes the actual text. But the actual text slowly departs from the poem, its initial referent, and becomes a regular text all the more fictional and unreliable since it deconstructs the original premise of explicating the poem.

The novel starts with a fictional Foreword, Charles Kinbote’s quite lengthy explanation for the compulsory attachment of notes to the poem *Pale Fire*. John Shade, the author of the poem, dies before acknowledging himself the influence Kinbote’s stories about a foreign country, Zembla, and its exiled king, have had upon the conception of the poem. The notes end up outweighing the poem that does not seem to incorporate any of the recuperated “cancelled readings” uncovered by the editor/ narrator/

main character. Instead, Kinbote recaptures his own story about meeting and almost stalking his neighbor, John Shade; about their walks; about Kinbote's insistence on Shade's incorporating the stories on Zembla into his poetry and about a progressively visible killer that sets out to murder the exiled king. It transpires early in the novel that Kinbote is actually the king and the intended target, but the killer shoots the poet instead.

The main character "reads" reality and translates into words. He is also providing his poet friend with the narrative of a mysterious foreign country to be "translated" into a poem. The narrator consistently discusses translation in its literal meaning, as well. Notwithstanding the presence of its two structural referents (the reality/ text *to be* translated and the translated one), the actual process of conversion fails at every level. The translated reality is consistently described in terms of corruption. Systematically, every substantive attempt to move from within the borders of one entity, be it language, reality, country/state, or identity, proves futile due to the same structural defect. All construction of concepts or of reality happens within one particular language and *Pale Fire* suggests that any attempt to transgress a nationally defined language is actually a categorical de-construction; Zembla becomes an imaginary/ un-real country from a presumably real one.<sup>6</sup>

Consequently, all trans-lation/ formation/gression while attempting to transfer one reality into another, concomitantly underscores the impossibility of achieving its purpose. Nabokov deploys a double layer of strategies to exhibit the dysfunction of the process. Conspicuously, the characters fail to grasp the impossibility of translation for various reasons and a set of metaphors of impotence and incongruity accompanies this particular nuance of translating. On the other hand, beyond the character's perspective, though in a

less visible manner, the narrative establishes a more conscientious layer of translation breakdown. While manipulating his main character and first person narrator Kinbote and his inability to grasp the cause for breakdown, Nabokov's distrust for successful translation emerges in the narrative's organization (Zembla and Russia are structured in a misleading relationship) - and the suggestion of translation breakdown seems accessible directly to the reader.

The narrative path takes the plot full circle- the imagined/ absent country Zembla is supposed to become the subject matter of John Shade's poem *Pale Fire* and when Charles Kinbote, author of the bulk of the text in the novel, recuperates the subject matter, he reinstates Zembla's reality and himself as the exiled king. However, every stage is inherently corrupted. For the first transfer (Zembla to story), Kinbote is both the referent (reality guarantor) and the object of translating. Nevertheless, his stories have from the beginning the frame of imagination rather than reality since he does not admit he is the king. Then, his stories about the exiled Zemblan king are translated presumably from reality to a story/ narrative intended to be inspiring for a poem. However, the entire time he misreads Shade's reaction. He misconstrues the poet's behavior, thriving under the delusion that his Zemblan story is undergoing a second distillation into the poem. The closer he gets to the poet, the more misguided he is in reading the "truth". He is convinced that Shade is "reassembling my Zembla".

Eventually, the third text to be translated is Shade's poem. Kinbote's purpose - "In my notes to the poem the reader will find these *cancelled readings*." (emphasis added) - is not only to recuperate *annulled* text, but also to reinstate *denied* reality: "Let me state that without my notes Shade's text simply has no human reality." (28). Ultimately, translation

stands for the main character's attempt to transgress his country's borders, his native language and his identity within those borders. Thus, Kinbote can only be read as an insane character. Once exiled- forced to abdicate actually, he is denied his identity as king, the kingdom itself which can be read as the king's geographical extension and, the very language that articulates his identity in valid, coherent terms disintegrates.

A set of metaphors of impotence, of absence or non-realization accompanies the breakdown of translation. The exiled king "translates' into a *foreign* professor in America. In a twisted way the main character's reality refuses to conform to the label (text) he has for his won identity. He is dissatisfied with his own homosexuality- his genuine love for Shade does not include a sexual component just as his genuine love for Queen Disa does not. At the same time, his sexual interests do not become romantic at any time. Similarly, Shade's daughter kills herself- but even before she is described as not "normal," so Shade at the moment of the narrative is childless. The would be killer is consistently described as *missing* either the point, or the target; his name is gradual (Jakob Gradus/Jack Degree/ Jacques de Grey...) and grey and related to wine- "the real origin of his name should be sought in the Russian word for grape" (77) - all three epithets emphasizing ambiguity and impossibility of focus. Read from a Derridean perspective, the entire discussion of the killer's non-Zemblan origin – so that no Zemblan will become a regicide- as well as the constant shift among his different versions of names signals, at the level of the narrative, the unattainable *original*. He tries to shoot a character twice and every time he misses- although the second time can be interpreted as Kinbote's own missing the point; his failing to understand that he was not the intended victim at all.

The topic of translation pervades the novel and by being so abundant on the surface level becomes misleading. Rendering reality becomes unachievable due to characters' impotence, but it is rather Nabokov's realization that outside any text there is no original referent. Nabokov seems to suggest that the reader of the novel does not have access to Russia- although he is invited to make the parallel. Russia exists in the novel under erasure. The reader inadvertently sets up an symbolic relationship between Zembla and Russia- and the author's context plays an supporting role. The change from kingdom to state of extremism seems a transparent metaphor. Nevertheless, Nabokov dismantles this construction. He allows the reader only the vicinity of it. Translation, as metaphor for the change from kingdom to police state, is performed by the speaker of a particular language, the Zemblan of the kingdom, but he is the unreliable guarantor of reality and he does not have access to the language of the state- the *new* Zemblan. Moreover, the reader (within and outside the novel) reads this in English, and that kingdom cannot be translated into English.

Nabokov sets up a misleading contrast in the description of the kingdom/ state of Zembla. The main character's epithets are nostalgic: "the dazzling Zembla burning in my brain", "Line 12 'that crystal land' perhaps an allusion to Zembla, my dear country." His construction is conspicuously utopian "Internally, until corruption, betrayal, and Extremism penetrated it, the People's Place (parliament) worked in perfect harmony with the Royal Council Harmony indeed was the reign's password ... Taxation had become a thing of beauty. The poor were getting a little richer, and the rich a little poorer... everybody in a word was content" (75).

On the other hand, the rebellion upturns the situation.

The Royalists, or at least the Moderns (Moderate Democrats), might have still prevented the state from turning into a commonplace modern tyranny, had they been able to cope with the tainted gold and the robot troops that a powerful police state from its vantage ground a few sea miles away was pouring into the Zemblan Revolution. Despite the hopelessness of the situation, the King refused to abdicate ... Somewhere in the mist of the city there occurred everyday disgusting outbursts of violence, arrests and executions, but the great city rolled on as smoothly as ever, the cafes were full, splendid plays were being performed at the Royal Theater, and it was really the palace which contained the strongest concentrate of gloom. Stone-faced, square-shouldered *komizars* enforced strict discipline among the troops on duty within and without. (119)

The new order is evidently described in terms of definite negative impact as “the streak of stupidity that fatally runs through the most competent tyranny.” And in a theoretical discussion between Kinbote and the poet, Marxism is considered the “end of the world.” Nabokov seems to translate here a double layer of historical realities. His family left Russia shortly before the 1917 revolution, but the political context of the years he was composing the novel (50s) was close to the allegorical descriptions of the New Zembla.

Charles the Beloved, however, slips in the persona of Charles Kinbote and undermines that positive image of Zembla. When he rents an apartment to follow his dream of literature and teaching, in *disguise*, the space set in opposition of this auspicious place is the very locus of his power. “How far from this limpid simplicity seemed the palace and the odious Council Chamber with its unsolvable problems and frightened councilors.” This disconfirming description actually concludes the utopian description in

counterintuitive mode. Actually, the king is corrupt, he does not have access to reality- he cannot read his country correctly and in order to fulfill his dream, he disguises himself even though he is the king.

Surpassing the characters' limited perspective, Nabokov ironically establishes a new insufficient point of view. The purpose for this opposition (old/new Zembla; positive/negative order; kingdom/ police state) is to actualize a connection with Nabokov's autobiographical Russia. The "old" Russia is the one of Nabokov's childhood, the kingdom, the secure space, whereas the "new" Russia is the one where Nabokov cannot return, the communist state. When naming the "unnecessary revolution" Nabokov seems to offer his own nostalgia for the kingdom he left- and to deplore the new order described in terms of extremism. However, Nabokov sets up a misleading contradiction. Once the helpful term in construing the non- literary correspondent of Zembla is predicated (Russia), Nabokov places it under erasure. A little knowledge of Russian establishes from the beginning the connection between Zembla and "zemlya" = land, in Russian. And despite his placing Russia in the novel as a real country neighboring Zembla, and discussing real Russian vocabulary in relation to the Zemblan one, Nabokov mischievously allows this connection to function up until towards the end of the novel when he negates it. "The name Zembla is a corruption not of the Russian *zemlya*, but of Semberland, a land of reflections, of "resemblers." He in fact dismantles all connections that seemed symbolical about the main character:

Professor Pardon now spoke to me

'I was under the impression that you were born in Russia, and that your name was a kind of anagram of Botkin or Botkine?'

Kinbote: ‘You are confusing me with some refugee from Nova Zembla (sarcastically stressing the “Nova”)’.

‘Didn’t you tell me, Charles, that *kinbote* means regicide in your language?’ asked my dear Shade. (267)

Zembla is not Russia. Zemblan is not Russian (there is a conspicuous effort in constructing a vocabulary of Germanic resonances). Thus, the reader is denied access to the new reality; the country imagined and crossed out even within the context of the narrative. “Twice removed” from Being as Presence, the linguistic sign supposed to restore meaning in a second language has in fact no referent outside its borders. In other words, the first reality, the one *to be* translated is not outside language, nor is it the center of meaning- it is the language as coagulating energy- holding reality together. Therefore stepping outside its limits annihilates both subject and object. For the reader of *Pale Fire*, stepping outside the English language, the reality within the novel, albeit conventionally constructed, is annihilated. He is left with the imaginary allusive Russia disguised and crossed out. The reason – is to contend that the reader does not have “real” access to the non- American realities. The lines in Shade’s poem are a lyric episode about an old exile man dying and “conjure[ing] in two tongues” (56), but Kinbote’s examples of what those two tongues might be place English as the first term in every duality culminating in “American” and conferring thus a clear geographical boundary to English. Always two realities, always “two tongues”:

“English and Zemblan, English and Russian, English and Lettish, and Estonian, English and Lithuanian, English and Russian, English and Ukrainian, English and Polish, English and Czech, English and Russian, English and Hungarian, English and Rumanian,



English and Albanian, English and Bulgarian, English and Serbo-Croatian, English and Russian, American and European.” (235) And while Kinbote introduces the note about the “two tongues” as a mere example, the strategy complicates the perception of two realities. Russian is repeated three times suggesting almost subliminally that the actual language the narrator has in mind is after all, Russian. Moreover, all these dualities are in fact hierarchical dichotomies in which English has literally the first place, the power position. Similarly, *Lolita* at the level of the narrative, Europe represents the negative pole and America the positive one. As we have seen, however, Nabokov complicates this dichotomy with strategies of misrepresentation. The national language in *Pale Fire* corresponds to the literary language of *Lolita*. In terms of nation, it is easy to recognize the imaginary, compensatory and utopian space of Zembla, as opposed to the American space that rejects the narrator. But in *Lolita*, the narrator appropriates the American space with his own, literary language, translating the American, nation space into a dystopia.

#### Memory Speaks on Behalf of Nabokov

Nabokov manipulating readers’ expectations within his fictional work belongs to a traditional pattern. His autobiography nevertheless displays similar tactics, this time against set expectations. The autobiography is supposedly the text of the “truth” where one would anticipate Nabokov to reveal at least the details of his departure and his emotional exilic journey: an explanation for his confidence in the transnational. But his autobiography and his interviews denounce relentlessly the cliché penumbra of the image critics and readers’ have about exile. Even if his characters display nostalgia for lost countries, Nabokov mercilessly denounces that longing as misguided. Moreover, in a reversed image, in the autobiography, after years of exile he finds his own Mademoiselle-

his Swiss nanny, who “spoke as warmly of her life in Russia as if it were her own lost homeland.” He has pity for those confused about their allegiance such as the “colony of governesses” he finds in Switzerland: “Huddled together in a constant seething of competitive reminiscences, they formed a small island in an environment that had grown alien to them.” (115) *Pnin*, for instance, is an entire novel to deride in an emphatic manner the exiles who cannot adapt, either because they lack knowledge or because they lack the will; the exiles who look back on their way out of the dark empire- Nabokov would not have lost Eurydice.

Nabokov’s assertions about his own memory are contradictory at times, but as with most authors’ meta-literary works (autobiographies and interviews), one needs to take into account context. In an interview, Nabokov declares he is an “ardent memoirist with a rotten memory” (*Strong Opinions* 140). On the other hand, in *Speak, Memory* he states “The act of vividly recalling a patch of the past is something that I seem to have been performing with the utmost zest all my life, and I have reason to believe that this almost pathological keenness of the retrospective faculty is a hereditary trait.” (75) His purpose is then literary. Nabokov is intentionally misleading to the reader. One of the characters appears first illuminated by the light of a match, in Nabokov’s childhood, only to reappear later again at lighting a match, when Nabokov is already an exile. He suggests that these patterns occur as such- no craft there; neither the author’s nor nature’s- and his writing an autobiography presupposes a distance outside his influence that actually means his purpose is literary. “What pleases me is the evolution of the match theme... The following of such thematic designs through one’s life should be, I think, the true purpose of autobiography.” (27)

Undoubtedly, his being a multilingual speaker and writer from a very young age serves not only to support an intuitive explanation for his seemingly composed outlook , but also to substantiate his stubborn refusal of any association between exile and psychological trauma. Even before leaving Russia, as a young child, Nabokov refuses categories. “They accused me of not conforming to my surroundings; of “showing off” (mainly by peppering my Russian papers with English and French terms, which came naturally to me).” (185) Scattered exiled characters debate and struggle to understand linguistic negotiation between native and adopted languages frequently in his texts. Language is one of his favorite themes not only in multilingual settings, usually in negotiating between English and European languages, but also even within national boundaries- the language games of cultural references, of puns and intricate syntax as well as eerily convoluted descriptions. He is a painter of atmosphere in his minute and perfectly concerted details. Nabokov’s perverse love for language games reflects his love for composing “elegant riddles,” his love for the scientific eye and practical jokes- elements that are, in his own account, the main descriptors for his personality.

Surprisingly, then, his autobiography scarcely manifests language as a subject. Long, seemingly autonomous descriptions are self-centered rather than participating in the overall view. Nabokov frustrates readers’ expectations. His autobiography should necessarily the appropriate space for a comprehensive account of his multi-lingual education. What transpires instead is the lack of negative emotion he associates infrequently with writing in a different language than his native tongue. This lack takes over “reality” as one would suppose appears in an autobiography. His life seems subordinated to artificial method rather than an “honest” narrative. Abundance of details

accounts for incidental episodes, not for crucial ones. While picking mushrooms extends for several paragraphs, his leaving Russia forever is barely mentioned.

I remember trying to concentrate, as we were zigzagging out of the bay, on a game of chess with my father – one of the knights had lost its head, and a poker chip replaced a missing rook- and the sense of leaving Russia was totally eclipsed by the thought that Reds or no Reds, letters from Tamara would still be coming, miraculously and needlessly, to southern Crimea...(251)

A series of discrepancies as such makes me read in Nabokov's autobiography yet another literary text (noted as such by many critics) with the purpose of misleading the reader. Pursuing this text for the trauma of having to have fled Russia, for a lament of having to have lived and written in foreign countries and languages, is bound to deceive. Nabokov denies access to his misfortune.

Nabokov's long lasting disdain for categories, alongside his adamant endorsing of a singular interpretative view on the amplitude exile takes in his literary work (his own opinion certainly) seems to subside deliberately only once. In the collection of interviews *Strong Opinions*, Nabokov names in an oddly sincere moment his particular stance "My *private tragedy*, which cannot, indeed should not, be anybody's concern, *is that I had to abandon my natural language*, my natural idiom, my rich, infinitely rich and docile Russian tongue, for a second rate brand of English." (my emphasis) (15) This singular lapse provides the crucial terms for evaluating what seems to be a delightfully arrogant and dismissive attitude for any type of psychological trauma, particularly one determined by exile. Despite the copious amount of texts that would claim the opposite, Nabokov

acknowledges in an exclusive moment, that exile is “tragedy” and that it is utterly “private.”

Otherwise, Nabokov projects the persona of a happy, well-adjusted émigré. Nabokov moves among languages knowing the impossibility of translation and the power of English. Moreover, although when asked, “What language do you think in?” he answers, “I don’t think in any language. I think in images.” We have already seen Gertrude Stein asserting, “I don’t hear a language, I hear tones of voice and rhythms” (*The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* 729) Hearing or seeing- both material aspects of the linguistic sign- for them precedes thinking. For both writers language serves for writing and writing literature implies resistance to national- language. Nevertheless, I want to argue that Nabokov is acutely aware of the process of thinking in particular languages. His own work reflects a typology of texts according to the language he uses -while writing novels in English, his diary notes are Russian. His characters consistently encounter the difficulties of thinking in one language and having to translate into another.

Nabokov refuses many categorizations, but that of public display of personal emotions is utterly out of limits for his readers because it is a “private tragedy.” However when reading *Speak, Memory* there is no sign of that private tragedy. Which in turn distorts the entire purpose of the memoir; after all- if this is not the story of the private life, what is? The conspicuous lack of intense emotion, particularly in connection to that “private tragedy” as well as the lack of intricate language games or complications corroborate to structure a nuanced reading. If the autobiography is a literature piece and the reader will take it for reality, then Nabokov will have reached his purpose to hide his private tragedy. He is again misleading the reader because the type of contract he

establishes with the reader is a fictional one. Memory is a tool in this text. Unimportant subjects minutely described are juxtaposed with laconic mentioning of crucial elements. Emotion is mismatched. The autobiography becomes a literary and creative text trying to pass for a realist account, mainly in order to hide Nabokov's personal tragedy- the abandonment of the Russian language.

Thus, Nabokov's autobiography is an external narrative. The author seems to keep himself to himself. The subject revolves around people in his life and scenes related to revelatory moments about those people. However, the auctorial eye is what makes sense of the canvas and not emotional resonances. His own character is described in sympathetic words as if the author would be a loving but distant father. Chapters start with clever connections or with witty short scenes and end with a fable like moral of the story. These are the only passages that reveal the novelist the reader is familiar with. Suddenly an entire chapter slowly lingering of details, whose purpose was not clear, reveals in the end an intricate design and the act of seeing is demystified as the look through a microscope- just like Nabokov's analysis of *Lepidoptera*. Lack of emotion is the staple of his memories. The only exception is wistfulness for particular episodes, or characters that position the author in a superior knowing position. His autobiography is a catalog rather than a true narrative- and this comes as a surprise at first for the reader of Nabokov, creator of the most exquisite, intricate, intelligent, labyrinthine narrative strategies.

His style is beautiful and labored; his description of certain feelings or images visibly gesture to his fictional style of extremely careful construction, of narratively pulsating significant details. However, they are left connectionless. He never outlines or prefigures

the bigger picture, the narrative thread. He takes his time with long descriptions and language stagnates within passive catalogs of attributive syntax, luxuriating within beautifying vocabulary rather than engaging into a narrative progression as would be expected in case of the autobiography. Thus, the story or the event becomes a pretext for language display rather than the other way around. This passage also renders one of the few clearly identified Russian/national traits, an involuntary physical aspect, but one of an imagined community nonetheless.

Rainy weather would bring out these beautiful plants in profusion under the firs, birches and aspens in our park, especially in its older part, east of the carriage road that divided the park in two. Its shady recess would then harbor that special bolteik reek which makes a Russian's nostrils dilate- a dark, dank, satisfying blend of damp moss, rich earth, rotting leaves. But one had to poke and peer for a goodish while among the wet underwood before something really nice, such as a family of bonneted baby *edulis* or the marbled variety of *scaber*, could be discovered and carefully teased out of the soil." (*Speak, Memory* 43)

Nabokov outlines types of readers for his texts and he frequently assigns modes of reading, usually divided into desirable or correct versus undesirable, incorrect. How delightfully arrogant in his relationship to the reader Nabokov continues! "On the bark of that birch tree, the stout one near the park wicket, I had found last spring a dark aberration of Sievers' Carmelite (just another grey moth to the reader)." (132) The "real" Nabokov, the one the reader comes to know so well from his novels in which the persona of the author is always a little condescending, and bordering rudeness --the persona of an arrogant intellectual- bursts within the autobiography only in one place, as we will see--

and one wishes he would have chosen this style however brutally honest or blunt, or opinionated to render his life.

The reader expects but cannot find a nostalgic description of Russia before the revolution; the reader wants to hear Nabokov's sarcasm mercilessly condemning communism—but somehow they are subtly there without fulfilling a prejudiced-prescribed role of emotional release. Even in his angry burst, Nabokov distances himself from any representativity: he is not the voice of a category. "The following passage is not for the general reader, but for the particular idiot who, because he lost some fortune in some crash, thinks he understands me." Dispossessed of the empathetic means traditionally used to understand and to participate in the narrative the reader, who undoubtedly does not want to be "that particular idiot", is compelled to choose the only other version allowed in Nabokov's categorization- "the general reader"; a much more comfortable position but with limited and guided access and understanding. Let us go on:

My old (since 1917) quarrel with the Soviet dictatorship is wholly unrelated to any question of property. My contempt for the émigré who "hates the Reds" because they "stole" his money and land is complete. The nostalgia I have been cherishing all these years is a hypertrophied sense of lost childhood, not sorrow for lost banknotes.... The general reader may now resume. (73)

Contrary to his obvious pleasure in lingering details that paint atmosphere, he deliberately refuses to describe, let alone discuss, the brutal events that forced the family to exile. Instead, Nabokov has very short, matter of fact episodes that he leaves to see if they are self-sufficient. "From that oriel, some years later, at the outbreak of the Revolution, I watched various engagements and saw my first dead man: he was being



carried away on a stretcher, and from one dangling leg an ill-shod comrade kept trying to pull off the boot despite pushes and punches from the stretchermen- all this at a goodish trot”(89).

There was a small public park on the north side of the square. In one of its linden trees an ear and a finger had been found one day—remnants of a terrorist whose hand had slipped while he was arranging a lethal parcel in his room on the other side of the square. Those same trees ... had also seen children shot down at random from the branches into which they had climbed in a vain attempt to escape the mounted gendarmes who were quelling the First Revolution (1905-06). Quite a few *little stories* like these were attached to squares and streets in St. Petersburg. (my emphasis) (184)

And these little stories are precisely what the reader anticipates and what the reader is denied. Undoubtedly, the perfect correlation between certain locations/ in Russia and formative, cultural stories exist in Nabokov’s memory, but he masters this tool (memory) against expectations. Yet another way to resist nation and its correlative narratives.

Accidental emotions rarely surface.

An exciting sense of *rodina*, “motherland”, was for the first time organically mingled with the comfortably creaking snow , the deep footprints across it, the red gloss of the engine stack, the birch logs piled high, under their private layer of transportable snow, on the red tender ... In result, that particular return to Russia, my first *conscious* return, seems to me now, sixty years later, a rehearsal-not of the grand homecoming that will never take place, but of its constant dream in my long years of exile. (97)

But “the pangs of exile” prove to be a misguided again or rather misinterpreted emotion “...until the writing of a novel relieved me of that fertile emotion, the loss of my country was equated for me with the loss of my love.” (245) Such confessional moments have a double rhetorical effect. On one hand, they obscure the real narrative, the autobiography- the return is the first manifestation of a dream, and one that is easily recognizable in many of Nabokov’s expatriate characters. On the other hand these moments reveal a connection between Nabokov’s art and his life- the loss of the country is veiled by again visibly narrative echoes in his fictional love stories.

As I have already argued, the autobiography scarcely displays language as a subject. “I learned how to read English before I could read Russian” – a phrase often quoted to underscore Nabokov trilingual childhood- is most of the time misread; for reading is not the same as speaking, and again, Russian was not primarily spoken in his household. However, one should not equate any quantitative measure or evaluation of Russian with degrees of importance. After all, Russian was the language of his relationship with his mother and father and it was the language of basic interactions; the language of the surrounding mentality. Thus, his primary language was Russian. He pretends “My medium happened to be Russian but could have been just as well Ukrainian, or Basic English or Volapük. The kind of poem I produced in those days was hardly anything more than a sign I made of being alive...” (217) Nabokov presents his first literary production as disconnected from an intrinsic national language which reinforces simultaneously his view on the arbitrary characteristic of the nation language and his belief that the writer chooses a language as a rhetorical device. If for the sake of consistency the reader remembers Nabokov’s assertion about thinking in images and not

in a particular language, then indeed conceptualizing the poem would precede the expression. However, Nabokov asserting that any language would have done for expression contradicts his other claims about his multilingualism as responsible at least in part for his equivocal status in terms of nationality. And he permanently describes the languages—not at all “basic” English, cultural French and German. Had he enumerated any of these one could indeed believe that any language would do for a sign of “being alive.”

*Speak, Memory, Lolita* and *Pale Fire* are clear signs of Nabokov’s changed views on artistic creation in connection to national language. The medium chosen does matter and the choice is complicated. The autobiography eludes the subject of such a choice. But it is precisely the conspicuous absence that becomes meaningful for the writer who can hardly avoid thematizing, exploring and dismantling clichés about exile, nation and language in most of his other works. *Lolita* investigates the dichotomy American/ European in the key of misrepresentation. The easily available interpretations predicated on this binary are deconstructed to highlight their fragile status in relation to its author. *Pale Fire*, the text more invested in the exile subject, is also the text that clearly points to the impossibility of translation as a metaphor of crossing nation boundaries. Such a conclusion indicates Nabokov’s resistance to conventional and clichéd view on exile and nation.

In postcolonial terms, Nabokov displays the privileged position. In his 2000 study, *Outlandish: Writing Between Exile and Diaspora*, Israel unequivocally describes this rhetoric as a “system of binary; hierarchically organized figures ... inside/outside, national/ extranational, center/periphery and East/West” (11). Within the Russian world

Nabokov left, his was the power pole. His recounting the historical events has an underlying conceit of nobility- nowhere does he say it was time for monarchy to die- even though the death it died brought more misery than it should have. His characters of lower social status are distant in exactly that way- they do not belong to his class- and automatically they are out of reach. The time he writes this is the time when all the postcolonial worlds are shaking, but Nabokov does not seem distressed. Exile writers would have an inherent ability to sympathize with postcolonial writers due to similar (if parallel) experience of spatial and linguistic dualities/ binaries. Again, his mastering the English language provides the pole of power. This is actually the most fascinating trait of Nabokov --his perfect coherence of spirit. His nobility is engrained almost genetically. And the discomfort that comes with reading his novels that do not allow the reader full access does not only come from Nabokov's refusal to acknowledge the world around as an emotional place, but from his refusal to give any of his character equal emotional status with the author. The emotions seem to remain a very private matter for Nabokov; they do not even seep into his autobiography. Emotions of displacement and exile are rare incidents in his work.

The language of severing haunts all telling moments in Nabokov's life: brutal voluntary severing. He slips into immediate hints of sadness or dissatisfaction when language is the subject. Otherwise, he is self-sufficient and his linguistic connection to the environment first of his Russian childhood and then the exile youth is rendered as coincidental. "The story of my college years in England is really the story of my trying to become a Russian writer. I had the feeling that Cambridge and all its famed features...

were of no consequence in themselves but existed merely to frame and support my rich nostalgia.” (261)

The autobiography is complete although spanning his life only up to his leaving for America. His account of the “meteoric” existence of the émigré writer Sirin “the loneliest and the most arrogant one”, encapsulates a complete destiny though not as meager as his modesty compels him to present his influence. Sirin (Nabokov’s pseudonym) passed “Across the dark sky of exile... like a meteor, and disappeared, leaving nothing much else behind him than a vague sense of uneasiness.” (288)

Vladimir Nabokov disrupts the traditional view of the émigré writer torn between two spaces and two languages. Although prominently present as a theme in his novels, exile does not carry a traumatic emotional weight anywhere in his work. An ever self-confident voice refuses the exile experience any association with pain even in his non-fictional texts. In fact, most of the time, Nabokov himself seems to live under his own telling phrase from *The Defense*, where the father of the child prodigy when reflecting upon his leaving his native country exclaims “The blessed exile.”

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Jahan Ramazani's main claim in "A Transnational Poetics" concerns in a way the same elusive category of exile writers that "transcend exile" in Martin Tucker's view. But this time they seem to be perfectly aligned with an entire mentality of the time. The rigid classification of writers into national categories causes more problems than it solves. Ramazani's solution in reading this period is "a translocal poetics" which does not focus on either the extremes of indigenous or universal, but emphasizes the juncture points among "of specific discourses, genres, techniques and forms of diverse origins." (350) The trans-national/ cross-cultural poetics is not a hybrid one but an imagined one, based on Anderson definitions, Ramazani identifies a community of writers and readers that complicate rigid borders "forging alliances of style and sensibility across vast distances of geography, history and culture." (333) However, this "cross-cultural poetics depends on the identitarian paradigms it complicates- depends on them to trace the literary cultures that are being fused, ironized and recast." (351) And for Stein and Nabokov the identity is complicated especially at linguistic level.

<sup>2</sup> Marjorie Perloff for instance mentions Ulla Dydo and Marianne DeKoven as critics who divide Stein's writings into "transparent" and "opaque" (96) and she herself focuses on Stein's language.

<sup>3</sup> One of the other critically discussed material aspects of Stein's texts is sonority. Eric S. Neel's, in his article "The Talking Being Listening: Gertrude Stein's 'Patriarchal Poetry' and the Sound of Reading", focuses on "Patriarchal Poetry" and he suggests that reading aloud is compulsory for the comprehension of this poem. "If patriarchal meaning-making requires consensus, "Patriarchal Poetry" calls for collaboration. It interrogates the familiar limits of patriarchal hegemony by recontextualizing its language and outstrips the apparently naturalized limits of that language because we "insistently" generate the sound of its not yet articulable alternative." (88) Clearly, the audible plays an important part in construing the emotion, and even in a mentally audible only reading, the rhythm and the accents belong to the physical aspect of the word. "...we generate an unpredictable and heterogeneous phonotext." (88) Stein manages thus to add a dimension to the linguistic sign- emotion generated by pure sounding. When emotion is predicated on the visual aspect of the text it becomes a signifying layer of the text, unlike any reading aloud where emotion is already set and added to the emotion of the text. In the above passage the emotion is contained in the word "such"- which is bound to evoke in the reader the process of appreciation and it is bound to evoke personal rankings of what "pretty" means.

<sup>4</sup> Wilson continues "I am sorry to say that, though Arndt is no great poet and that his effort to stick to the rhyme scheme sometimes leads him to a certain farfetchedness, his version is, in general, much closer to Onegin than any of the others I have sampled and is likely to give the reader a better idea of what the poem sounds like in Russian than Nabokov's so tortured version. ..." He gives a thorough account and exemplification for the "tortured" version in a tone that is evidently frustrated and exasperated. J. Thomas Shaw in his article "Translations of 'Onegin'" precedes Wilson's review by three months, but he establishes one of the trends in discussing Nabokov's translation "Five of the translations represent one theory of translation, and the sixth, Nabokov's, an entirely different one." (111) Even so, he feels compelled to admit that "Nabokov's own prose, in his creative works and in commentaries of this edition, is often pure poetry, but the poetry of his translation of Onegin is determinedly and defiantly - one is tempted to say gloriously—not even prose." (119) Clarence Brown in "Nabokov's Pushkin and Nabokov's Nabokov" summarizes the effervescent and injurious reviews of the text already within a mere two year period. "When this work appeared it was followed by a short silence, apparently prompted by disbelief. There was a preliminary article in the *New York Times Book Review* which, in the manner of that journal, apprised us at some length that a book had been published. Then the barrage began. In the *New York Times Review of Books*, the *New Republic*, *Poetry* and elsewhere there was a collective commotion probably best described in a phrase by Wodehouse: the raised eyebrow, the sharp intake of breath. To the virtual exclusion of everything else, the attention of the reviewers has been mesmerized by one thing: the incredible translation. It was preposterous, gauche beyond words, intentionally ugly, a travesty of a work of great art, sickeningly cute, incomprehensible. There was, to be sure, some other matter, but it was

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dreadfully boring stuff and would doubtless prove to be *insupportable even to readers* who were not, like the reviewers, limp from their exertions with the translation.”(my emphasis) (280-281) But Brown also initiates the trend of the translation be another facet of Nabokov’s creative unitary mentality. Judson Rosengrant’s much more recent article (1994) “Nabokov, Onegin, and the Theory of Translation,” recaptures the idea of a unique theory of translation.

<sup>5</sup> See previous note for discussion on Brown.

<sup>6</sup> Again, the typical Nabokov narrator recalls Nabokov’s own distrust in any translation that does not follow the strict rules of perfect fidelity between the two languages. Bruno Osimo analyzes Nabokov’s intentions and type of choices he makes regarding his own translation of *Lolita* into Russian. Evidently beneficial for translators of the novel in other languages, the article, “Nabokov’s Selftranslations: Interpretation Problems and Solutions in *Lolita*’s Russian Version,” presents in a significant gesture the two versions, the English and the Russian, as originals. Osimo’s states: “Nabokov has translated some of his own works, mainly from Russian into English and vice versa. *Lolita*, in particular, was translated into Russian. This novel therefore has two original draftings. This material was analyzed to verify, in the light of the most important authority (the author), the interpretative hypothesis of Nabokov’s translators into other languages.” Another article on the same topic is Mary Besemeres’s “Self-Translation in Vladimir Nabokov’s *Pnin*”. She claims, “Because Nabokov cannot reach his reading audience through Russian, he is forced constantly to translate himself.” (396) Translation and selftranslation mark again the impossibility of separating life from art as discussed before. They are frequent topics in Nabokov criticism and they slide from within the novels to Nabokov’s real preoccupation with the subject of translation.

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