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Fyodor Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment and Vladimir
Nabokov's Lolita**

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Doppelgängers and Doubles in Literature

A Comparison of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*
and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*



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COLLEGE HONORS PROGRAM THESIS, MAY 2021

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Abstract

This thesis is dedicated to the concept of the double character in literature and how such characters were utilized by authors Fyodor Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment* (1866) and Vladimir Nabokov in *Lolita* (1955). First, this thesis discusses the theoretical aspects of the double—a villainous character who mirrors another character in some way, whether in appearance or in their actions— and the religious, psychological, philosophical, and societal roots of the concept of a double in literature. Then it explores how double characters in Dostoevsky and Nabokov’s works serve a crucial role in their novels by mirroring the worst traits of each story’s protagonist, giving the protagonists introspection into themselves and their own failings. From this interaction, the protagonists are motivated to either better themselves to avoid becoming like their double, or conform to the wicked example set by their double. By analyzing this trope and these novels in particular, this thesis looks to explore these protagonists’ relationships with their doubles—and through them their own dark nature—and to compare how these two artists employed the same character concept in their works, showing both the differences and similarities between the two.

Chapter One: The Origins and Uses of the Doppelgänger Motif in Literature

The double or doppelgänger motif is connected to a person's ability—or lack thereof—to truly know who they are. The double is a character that forces the protagonist to deal with the uncomfortable realities of their identity, and can be a tool for them to gain introspection, or to run further away from the truth their double reveals about their character. In this thesis, I look to understand how the doppelgänger is used in two specific works by authors Fyodor Dostoevsky and Vladimir Nabokov, but will first look at the roots of this trope across disciplines and significant uses of this trope in the global literary canon. The doppelgänger trope finds its roots in the fields of psychology, religion, and philosophy, and in the pressures created by society because, as the doppelgänger is rooted in uncomfortable feelings of self-doubt and existential dread, moral pressures to conform or fit a certain norm can lead to pressures that can be processed through a double. Then, I will analyze how the doppelgänger motif was specifically used in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955), and how these two different authors used the same trope in vastly different ways, respectively showing a character's potential for growth and self-reflection, or a character's capacity to avoid self-reflection and become worse, based on the example set and lessons learned from their double.

The doppelgänger or double is disturbingly similar to another character—usually the protagonist—in either appearance or mannerism, and:

“The conventional double is of course some sort of antithetical self, usually a guardian angel or tempting devil. Critics oriented toward psychology view the diabolic double, which predominates, as a character representing unconscious instinctual drives. Despite the intriguing features of these anti-social doubles, the device has been used so often that the double in literature as it is usually

understood borders on being a stereotype, yet the term “double” provokes confusion.”¹

The double has come to be the generalized, umbrella term for any character that acts as an exterior or replicated version of the protagonist. There are a number of other terms that either fall under the umbrella of, or are used synonymously with, the term “double.” One such term is the German concept² of the “doppelgänger,” which is a double that mirrors the protagonist internally and externally via their appearance. A “doppelgänger” is a literal reflection and clone of the character, and therefore there is often an element of the supernatural in them.³ A foil character on the other hand, rather than being a reflection of the protagonist, is their complement. A foil may not resemble in any way the other character, but their narratives are interwoven and contrasted against each other. Like the double character, the protagonist is meant to learn from and react to their foil, but the element of the supernatural and an unnatural similarity between the two is not necessarily present.⁴ There are many other analogous terms—such as an alter ego, where one character embodies or becomes two people in different situations, or a clone, which is an exact copy—and there are also double characters that can be seen as speaking for or connected to the author. Many of these distinctions in terminology come down to whether or not this character is distinguished by “doubling by multiplication or doubling by division.”⁵ An alter ego is the splitting of one character into two separate parts, while a

¹ Robert Rogers. *A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature*. Wayne State University Press, 1970, pp. 2.

² The idea of the doppelgänger—and even the word itself—is very much linked to German works and authors. The word was coined and credited to German author Jean Paul Richter, and E.T.A Hoffman’s use of the character trope is widely studied and mentioned when discussing the Doppelgänger, and is at the center of Freud’s work on the double.

³ *Literary Devices*. “Doppelgänger.”

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Rogers, pp. 5.

doppelgänger is a duplicate who exists entirely outside the protagonist. The protagonist's personhood outside of their relationship with the double determines the dynamic of their relationship a great deal, as two characters supernaturally connected via their split selves will have a different dynamic than two characters who exist separately and are just uncannily similar.

The double character is prevalent across literature and culture, and stories including doppelgängers can often feature similar elements and patterns. Scholar Andrew Webber discusses and establishes what constitutes a doppelgänger narrative and what the typical structure of stories that include the doppelgänger trope entails. Webber describes the doppelgänger as being a “vicarious agent and a frustrating usurper of the subject's pleasures,”⁶ who confronts the protagonist both in resembling him similarly and presenting some sort of competition or challenge to the protagonist's goals. The double is often a force of negativity in the life of the protagonist, no matter if they be a better or worse version of that character as, “even as it is disavowed, it demands to be recognized as a projected symptom of profound anxiety in the host subject and the order of things.”⁷ The existence and presence of the double raises uncomfortable questions for the protagonist regarding their identity and sense of self-worth, and this kind of self-reflection triggers anxiety and distress. The double “troubles the temporal schemes of narrative development and literary history,”⁸ as even in stories that are grounded in reality, the double carries with it a sense of fantasy and the supernatural.

⁶ Andrew J. Webber. *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature*. Clarendon Press, 1996. pp. 8.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 9.

⁸ Ibid, pp. 4.

This connection to the supernatural and the fantastical is prevalent in many doppelgänger narratives, and these supernatural elements often carry with them a feeling of dread and terror. The double is also often associated with the uncomfortable and unnatural distortions of nature itself. A doppelgänger is often linked with death, especially throughout the folklore of many cultures. “It was commonly believed that any man who saw his double, or ‘wraith’ was about to die.”⁹ The idea of a second version of one person is a perverse and disconcerting notion, representing a break from nature and reality, and running counter to more comfortable ideas of every human being in some way special and individual. So, doubles can often appear as harbingers of another natural yet uncomfortable reality, death, making that person’s last sight their twisted self. Many doppelgänger narratives end with the death or downfall of one or both characters in the work, as “the impulse to rid oneself of the uncanny opponent in a violent manner belongs, as we saw, to the essential features of the motif; and when one yields to this impulse...it becomes clear that the life of the double is linked quite closely to that of the individual himself.”¹⁰ If the doppelgänger is an affront to nature, it stands to reason that by the end of the story one or both of the characters must perish in some way for nature to be restored again. So, tragedy is often the outcome of a doppelgänger meeting their other half in a work of fiction.

The topic of the doppelgänger—and particularly how the doppelgänger is used in literature—is discussed in depth in the field of psychology, as the doppelgänger is often the personified embodiment of one character’s psyche, making them poised for

⁹ Robert Rogers. *A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature*. Wayne State University Press, 1970, pp. 9.

¹⁰ Otto Rank. *Double: A Psychoanalytic Study*. Translated and edited by Harry Tucker. E-book, University of North Carolina Press, 1971, pp. 31.

psychological inquiry. Notorious psychologist Sigmund Freud discussed them in depth in his essay “The Uncanny.” In it, Freud discusses the uncanny—a term that the idea of the double would fall under—saying of it that “the subject of the “uncanny” is a province of this kind. It undoubtedly belongs to all that is terrible—to all that arouses dread and creeping horror”¹¹ once again connecting doubles to a feeling of unease and discomfort. The doppelgänger and this sense of discomfort can also be connected to some of Freud’s other theories, such as his idea of the “Oedipal Complex” where a child and their same sex parent implicitly resent each other. Through this connection, a child could be seen as a doppelgänger to their parent, who—in a morbid view on parenthood—looks startlingly like their parent and is being raised to replace them, as a living reminder and embodiment of their parent’s aging.¹² The child-parent relationship is then defined by a feeling that one will inevitably replace the other, creating a tension that is similarly found in double narratives.

Freud built off the work of psychologist Otto Rank, who wrote extensively on the subject of the doppelgänger and what their portrayal in literature says of psychology. Rank connects the idea of the double to a kind of narcissism, and to the mythological figure by which the disorder gets its name, as: “look first for an explanation of why the idea of death in the Narcissus legend, associated with the sight of the double, should have been masked especially by the theme of self-love, then we are compelled next to think of the generally effective tendency to exclude with particular stubbornness the idea of death,

¹¹ Sigmund Freud. “The Uncanny.” Translated by Alix Strachey. *Imago*, reprinted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1919. pp. 1.

¹² Eugene J. Mahon. “The Spit and Image: A Psychoanalytic Dissection of a Colloquial Expression.” *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, vol. LXXX, no. 2, pp. 337-355, 2017, pp. 350.

which is extremely painful to our self-esteem.”¹³ Narcissus saw his reflection in a mirror and perished, just as the sight of one’s double in many narratives leads the protagonist to an over-interest in their self and to disaster. Through this connection to reflections, mirrors too are also—self-explanatorily—connected to or used as imagery along with a double character. A mirror reflects a contained image of oneself, while the doppelgänger figure has been freed from the confines of the mirror and often has its own autonomy and own capacity for evil, making them a foreboding and unwelcomed figure in many narratives. Rank also describes how in “in a number of instances this situation [interaction with a double] is combined with a thoroughgoing persecutory delusion or is even replaced by it, thus assuming the picture of a total paranoid system of delusions.”¹⁴ Adding to the feeling of dread attached to the double is the feeling that the double represents the future and the dread of being replaced—as in the parent-child dynamic. The doppelgänger is a threat to the other character’s place in society and own livelihood, so interactions with a doppelgänger can lead the other character to act paranoid and feel oppressed by their potential replacement. The doppelgänger’s dissection in the field of psychology shows how a double is a projection and reflection of the inner workings of a character’s mind and ego, revealing their particular fears and inciting a sense of dread in them.

The idea of the double also finds its roots in ancient conceptions of human understanding in philosophy as well as psychology. Plato discussed a dual-being in his work *The Symposium* (385-70 BCE), where he describes a story about the birth of

¹³ Otto Rank. *Double: A Psychoanalytic Study*. Translated and edited by Harry Tucker. E-Book, University of North Carolina Press, 1971, pp. 73

¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 42.

mankind. He states that early man had: “one head with two faces, looking opposite ways, set on a round neck and precisely alike; also, four ears, two privy members, and the remainder to correspond.” Then Zeus, believing the humans to be too powerful in this form said: “methinks I have a plan which will humble their pride and improve their manners; men shall continue to exist, but I will cut them in two and then they will be diminished in strength and increased in numbers; this will have the advantage of making them more profitable to us.”¹⁵ This famous passage mythologizes and personifies a person’s lack of total internal or external knowledge. It plays on an innate human belief in a soulmate or other half who would complete them, and without this other half of them, they are in some way left hollow and without their whole power. The double carries with it both an innate discomfort with the notion of a second self, along with the inverse desire to discover that other self, no matter who that is or how morally good they are. Plato’s story describes the intrinsic desire to know one’s double, which conflicts with the dread and terror a discovery of that nature would most likely entail.

Doubles are also often connected to religious themes, as they find their literary roots in religious fears surrounding evil and sin. The idea of a duplicitous double is present throughout many strands of mythology and belief across the world. Many belief systems are centered around the binary between good and evil that drive moral conflict:

“Many systems of age-old beliefs are based on a dualist conception of nature. For the Taoist tradition, based on the philosophy of Lao Tse, the Chinese philosopher from the 4th century B.C, all human beings are born with the opposing principles of the “yin” and “yang.” In Mesoamerica, we find a dualist view of the world in many pre-Columbian cultures. Some primitive beliefs about the soul may also be classified as dualist.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Plato, *The Symposium*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. E-book, The Internet Classics Archive, 2009, pp. 12.

¹⁶ Javier S. Macías and Rafael V. Núñez. “The Other Self: Psychopathology and Literature.” *Journal of Medical Humanities*, vo. 32, no. 4, pp. 257-267. 2011, pp. 258.

When morality is determined on a binary, it is hard to exist in the gray between good and evil. This leads to the metaphysical split between the boundaries of good and evil explored by doubles. The double then can exist on one side of the moral divide while the protagonist exists on the other, putting them at odds—or both can exist on the same side of the moral spectrum but to different degrees, showing man’s ranging propensity for either good or evil.

Certain kinds of evil-doing in myth and religious stories—especially when done by a hero—causes a split in personality to maintain the purity of the original figure, allowing them to remain compelling and morally justified as a hero while their double runs amuck. This way they can still be revered and celebrated as being good and worthy of praise, as their evil deeds have been separated from them in another entity. The rage and evil that caused the Greek hero Heracles to murder his family was brought on by the Gods¹⁷, and while his myth is about atoning for that crime, the evil in that action is divorced from him as a moral figure. The Hindu goddess, Kali, was also born out of the rage of the goddess of war Durga.¹⁸ While Kali is an aspect of Durga—and not inherently her “evil” version—Kali’s rage and propensity towards violence in war is pointedly separated from the more levelheaded Durga, allowing them to be worshipped in different respects. The Greek God of War Ares too road into battle with the separate Godly entities of fear and hate beside him,¹⁹ signifying that while they are a part of war, they are separate from his identity as a God. Godly tales of this nature represent a human compulsion to fully sort out evil into its own separate entity. It is easier to conceive of a

¹⁷ Livius. “Heracles.” 2003.

¹⁸ H Rodrigues. “Origins of the Goddess Kali.” *Mahavidya*. 2008.

¹⁹ *Theoi Project: Greek Mythology*. “Hippi Areioi.” 2017.

purely evil being and a purely benevolent being as separate, rather than grapple with a single, complicated being who is capable of great good and monstrous evil. Separating the two into separate and binary good and bad people is a more palatable way for humans to process the specter of evil and mankind's capacity for it.

This presence of both great good and evil in one person is then heightened by the diametrically opposed understanding of heaven and hell taught by the Abrahamic religions. The conflicting relationship between God and the Devil, and their warring battle for the souls of men pits an individual's best instincts against itself. "Men make gods in their own image. And if the Deity was an image of their better selves, the Devil was an image of their worse selves."²⁰ Men strive to emulate God in their better actions, and in all their failings, in turn, they resemble the Devil. The path of God leads to enlightenment and peace, while the path of the double leads to sin and evil. In looking to follow these two separate paths and emulate these two diverging Deities, a split between these two opposing conceptions of morality is inevitable. Christians seek to expunge the sin of the Devil from their lives but that also begs the question, where does that sin go? Practices like exorcisms deal with the duplicitous nature of the soul, as the guilt for the evil within is no longer blamed on the sinner themselves, but on the invading demon, who must be cast out and separated from the soul of the one being exorcised. This transfers blame from the Christian in question to the amorphous and vile Devil, making the sin easier to process and forget. Such tenets of Christian belief casts away evil into a separate entity, and the idea of the double forces the reader to consider the evil that has

²⁰ Reay Tanahill. *Sex in History*. Vanguard PR, 1954, pp. 122.

been set aside. When that evil is not merely washed away but personified in another person, that confrontation is taken to another, more frightening level.

Christians also have different ways of processing the idea of sin and evil, and how that is both expunged from a person and how that sin relates to a Christian's identity. This idea of identity comes from understandings of the Rapture, in "the final resurrection of the body, a body different in substance from the physical body, and the appearances of Christ after the Resurrection in a form that was somehow not immediately recognizable, could not fail to be richly suggestive."²¹ If the body is unrecognizable once saved and without sin, that raises questions on what sin does to the body, soul, and one's own identity. Beliefs like this once again call for the expulsion of all that does not fit a binary understanding of "good," causing internal strife between the two halves of the soul exemplified by the literary split of the double. Other sects of Christianity would build upon such notions, such as the Calvinists, who dealt with the idea of predestination, where some are simply born destined for heaven while others born evil, once again dividing mankind into the good and the bad on a strict binary.

A landmark work at the intersection of both Christian ideas of man's duplicitous nature and the literary double is Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* (1808). This work, divided into two parts, is the seminal tale of the evil Devil—in this story referred to as Mephistopheles—encouraging the worst parts of a man to come forward. In this tale, the Devil makes a deal with God that he can tempt God's favorite mortal, Faust, away from the light. Mephistopheles accomplishes this goal rather easily, and Faust's deal for his soul hinges upon his own gluttony, with Faust stating that: "until, self-pleased, myself I

²¹ John Herdman. *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. St. Martin's Press, 1991, pp. 3.

see, / Canst thou with rich enjoyment fool me, / Let that day be the last for me! / The bet I offer.”²² Mephistopheles offers and reflects Faust’s worst traits, and leads Faust to become more like him, his dark double, as he strays from God towards sin. The question becomes for the reader whether the Devil made Faust an evil man or if that evil was within him all along and needed only be called on for the depths of his inner contemptibility. Mephistopheles persuades his counterpart Faust by appealing to their similarities and shared depravity, thus using the harsh binary between heaven and hell—that leaves no room for middle ground—to drag Faust towards evil by emulating his double.

Doubles are often also a reflection of a writer’s society, with the double representing the specific vices of that day and that age. One such age where society was reflected in the double character—and where double characters were to be found in abundance—was during the nineteenth century, especially in, for example, Victorian era England. “Victorian Britain was a deeply classed society; everyone was aware of class, admitted that it was a meaningful social reality, and identified themselves as a member of a class.”²³ Society was rigidly stratified, and each class carried with it an expected behavior and manner that would determine one’s reputation. The comportment of oneself was of the utmost importance and each person was the caretaker of their own reputation. Societal pressures to present an idealized and refined image of oneself to the world and

²² Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Faust*. Translated by Bayard Taylor. E-book, The World Publishing Company, 2015, pp. 30.

²³ Steinbach, Susie L. *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture and Society in Nineteenth Century Britain: Politics, Culture and Society in Nineteenth Century Britain*. Taylor & Francis Group, 2012, pp. 114.

internal desires not to conform to rigid societal expectations created in many a feeling of division between their outer appearance and internal reality.

This sense of confusion and a desire to repress one's inner self defined this time period and its literature. "The confusion, the perplexity, the deep unease of the English nineteenth century are impressed on all who study the period."²⁴ These societal expectations led British Victorian writers to project these feelings of division and self-inadequacy into literary double characters, who represented the splintering of the soul that is caused by any rigid society. The Victorian double therefore represented for writers the "self-division endemic to their times and [they] gave expression to it in their writing."²⁵ When society forces a person to present a very narrow view of themselves outwardly, and the other, less ideal parts of the soul are meant to be hidden away and repressed, a person can feel splintered between the hidden and external self. The double character represents all that must be hidden when repressing oneself, and often, stories involving the double in this manner contemplate the evil of self-repression with the double being the malicious consequence of a controlling society.

One Victorian author to explore the idea of the double—who also happened to be one of the key inspirers of Dostoevsky—was Charles Dickens. In his works, such as *Great Expectations* (1861), characters are trapped and confined by the social hierarchy and are forced to change to adapt to a more confined societal role, thus losing their sense of self in the process. *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) employs the double theme more literally and is built around doppelgänger characters, with the protagonist, Sydney Carton

²⁴ Masao Miyoshi. *The Divided Self: A Perspective on the Literature of the Victorians*. New York University Press, 1969, pp. ix.

²⁵ *Ibid*, pp. ix-x.

being the more sinful one in their relationship. “Charles Darnay and Sidney Carton are, however, doubles in a real sense: strikingly alike in appearance but divergent in character.... their destinies are inseparable, and it will be Carton’s fate to give up his life for the other to whom he is so ambiguously related.”²⁶ The more debauched half of the two in this relationship gives his life for the other, sacrificing himself for his double and for a final moment of redemption.²⁷

Another example of how Victorians used the double trope—and perhaps the seminal example in the western literary canon when referring to the idea of the doppelgänger—is Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). The trope of the doppelgänger becomes allegorical in this work, with Hyde having been engineered by Jekyll as the personification of all his vices. Wanting to be able to act on his worst impulses while still maintaining his good reputation, Jekyll created Hyde from his repressed evil, and that “sinister power he has unleashed from within his own being.”²⁸ While Jekyll intends to control his transformations into his doppelgänger, he finds he cannot truly repress Hyde now that he has been created and let loose, and to contain Hyde’s evil, Jekyll is forced to kill himself and Hyde along with him. Hyde is the literal personification of Jekyll’s repressed and socially unacceptable vices, and Jekyll’s attempt to separate those darker impulses from himself to avoid their evil corrupts both his double and himself.

While Jekyll and his ilk continue to live their lie of respectability, the ‘idealized’ double who is Jekyll’s joy boy must carry the burden of disguise. Jekyll fears disclosure of the Hyde who is his true identity in the same way that the Puritan

²⁶ John Herdman. *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. St. Martin’s Press, 1991, pp. 18.

²⁷ This compares, in some regard, to what will be seen with Dostoevsky’s use of the double for, in *Crime and Punishment*, Svidrigaylov’s death will enable his double to improve himself and live a happier life, but Svidrigaylov’s death is not heroic and does not bring him redemption.

²⁸ Herdman, pp. 17.

fears disclosure of his secret sexuality, not for the reason primarily of shame but for fear of losing forever the exquisite pleasure of the second life.²⁹

Jekyll's attempts to avoid dealing with and accept the evil inherent in all people, and instead chooses to siphon off his darkness into his doppelgänger, which leads Jekyll to chaos and to tragedy, rather than to forgiving himself for his failings and remaining whole.

Other late Victorian stories that deal with the motif of the double include the likes of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). In *Dorian Gray* the titular protagonist's double becomes his own portrait, which slowly subsumes all his vicious deeds and internal evil, leaving him youthful and beautiful. As Hyde was for Jekyll, the double acts as an outlet to defer and segregate out the evil within the protagonist allowing them to live a charmed life with their evilness cast off onto something else. The double can therefore siphon out the evil within these protagonists that would prevent them from engaging with society and keeping their reputation intact. Yet for both protagonists, the double relationship cannot be maintained, and upon its collapse and their death, the vices they strived to keep hidden are brought to light. *Heart of Darkness* on the other hand uses the double to show the inevitable corruptibility of man, for as Marlow journeys further into the jungle in search of his double, Kurtz, he becomes more cynical and poisoned as he treads the same path that left Kurtz changed and disillusioned.

All these works deal with the inner and inescapable evil within humans.

“Darkness is the controlling metaphor for these narratives which, in their different ways,

²⁹ Masao Miyoshi. *The Divided Self: A Perspective on the Literature of the Victorians*. New York University Press, 1969, pp. 290.

have as their theme the phenomenon of two consciousnesses—the human ‘primitive’ duality...and the interconnectedness of genius and insanity.”³⁰ These protagonists battle against their inherent evil and in this struggle their very sanity is brought into question. The works of Dostoevsky and Nabokov both, respectively, preceded and followed these trends, for in both narratives, the troubled protagonist fights to preserve their reputation in society in spite of their crimes, even as their grip on their own sanity begins to slowly decay. These fights for societal normalcy are then exacerbated by the appearances of their doubles, the physical manifestations of their wrongdoings.

While the idea of a socially restrictive society fostering and developing the idea of the double in fiction was prevalent in Victorian England, this trend is not confined there—though it is a very straight forward historical example of this trend that produced an abundance of examples. American writer Edgar Allan Poe³¹ toyed with the idea of the double in a number of his works, which often deal in the macabre and the darkness waiting to subsume his characters. One such work is his short story “The Black Cat,” (1843) where a man “experiences a change in his character under the influence of the ‘Fiend Intemperance’ and becomes the tormentor of his formally beloved companion, the huge black cat, Pluto.”³² This narrator convinces himself the cat is an evil being and his dark double, and in doing so he becomes the evil double, brutally killing the cat. Poe here walks the fine line between good and evil in this double relationship, for the belief that he

³⁰ Samir Elbarbary. “Heart of Darkness and Late-Victorian Fascination with the Primitive and the Double.” *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 39, no. 1, pp. 113-128. 1993, pp. 115.

³¹ Edgar Allan Poe is named by Alfred Appel Jr. to be the most referenced author in *Lolita* (p. 330, note 9/2), and Poe’s character Annabel Lee and his autobiographical link to Humbert—he married his young cousin—connects him to *Lolita* and makes Poe’s use of the double significant.

³² John Herdman. *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. St. Martin’s Press, 1991, pp. 93.

is being persecuted by a dark double leads this protagonist to become the evil double himself.

Another author who, in an abstract way, dealt with the idea of the double in his works and whose portrayal of the double was shaped by his society was Lewis Carroll with *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1872).³³ Wonderland itself acts as a double for the real world, allowing young Alice to explore a world that is entirely contrary to and an inverted reflection of her own reality. All of the characters within Wonderland are doubles of adults she would expect to meet in her world, who do not behave as authority figures but as agents of chaos. By experiencing this inverted reality, Alice is able to explore the stranger parts of her nature before realizing the virtue of normalcy and returning to her true reality. Nabokov would later use references to Carroll's world to create a duplicitous world in which his conniving main character exists, and where Dolly Haze is the lost Alice. In *Lolita*, "time and space move backward, doubles proliferate, language fractures into new combinations. At the same time, within Humbert's story itself, there is a concurrent dramatization of Humbert's struggle to penetrate the looking glass."³⁴ The mirror is a recurring—and most sensical because of what it does—representation of a double relationship or a duplicitous

³³ The works of Lewis Carroll (pseudonym for Charles L. Dodgson) are particularly important to Nabokov as a point of reference throughout *Lolita*. *Lolita* was shaped by the works of Carroll in a number of ways. One of Nabokov's early works was a translation of Carroll, in which he took considerable liberties in translation, resetting the story in Russia and recontextualizing it for a Russian audience. Nabokov was therefore familiar with his works and referenced them throughout *Lolita*. He also used some of the negative aspects of Carroll as a person in drafting *Lolita*, as he was also believed to have had a similar obsession with young girls during his college years at Oxford University. As Nabokov described it, "I always call him Lewis Carroll Carroll, because he was the first Humbert Humbert." (American Vogue 1966) Carroll is thereby one of the seminal authors that shaped *Lolita*.

³⁴ Elizabeth Prioleau. "Humbert Humbert through the Looking Glass." *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 428-437. 1975, pp. 428.

character, and both narratives use the image of the mirror in worlds that flip typical conventions of sense and reason on their heads.

The conception of the nineteenth century double and its connection to society's rejection of any failing or vice was a trend across world literatures, including in the works of the great Russian writers, living at the same time as the Victorians, though shaped by different cultural and societal experiences. The instrument of social constraint in these stories came from an actual hierarchy that determined one's worth within their place of work, and through this position their quality of life and reputation, "the table of fourteen ranks established by the emperor Peter the Great in 1722."³⁵ The table of ranks was created to organize the sphere of civil service, and to provide mobility between ranks, yet the ranks often made social mobility a more challenging feat. One of the most famous stories involving the Russian table of ranks, and specifically the low-middle ranking of the titular councillor, was "The Overcoat" (1842) by Nikolai Gogol. A clear successor to this work is also one of the clearest references to the double in Russian literature, Dostoevsky's novella, *The Double* (1846).

Dostoevsky's novella *The Double* centers around a titular councillor, Yakov Petrovich Goliadkin—who is socially inept and depressed with his lot in life—who then comes into contact with his doppelgänger at a time of social insecurity and weakness. This second version of Goliadkin is more amiable and better received by virtually everyone in Goliadkin's social sphere, and slowly begins to edge Goliadkin out of his own life. Goliadkin remarks of his double that he:

“Supplanted me, the scoundrel!” thought Mr. Goliadkin, flaring up like fire with shame. ‘He’s not ashamed in public! Can’t they see him? Nobody seems to

³⁵ Fyodor Dostoevsky. *The Double and The Gambler*. Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. Everyman's Library, Random House. 2005, pp. 331.

notice...’ Mr. Goliadkin flung down the silver ruble as if it burned his fingers, and, not noticing the significantly impudent smile of the counterman, a smile of triumph and calm strength.”³⁶

Goliadkin’s insecurities are manifested in his double, and instead of learning from the skills his double possesses, he is only made to feel more inadequate and more unstable. While Goliadkin is initially put off and mystified by his double, he soon begins to feel that he is the lesser half of the relationship rather than the primary version of his own self. He then begins to hallucinate other doubles and realizes that there could be more and more versions of him out there who are better than him and ready to subsume his existence. The knowledge of these potential doubles drives him to insanity.

Dostoevsky’s *The Double* deals not with the idea of their being a devilish version of the protagonist lurking, but a superior version. This double plays on Goliadkin’s feeling of inferiority in his work and in his life, as he struggles to feel at ease and respected within a social chain of command that does not respect him or allow for mobility. His double’s ability to thrive in society and to gain the respect that Goliadkin never could leaves him feeling cast aside and despondent, as his better double’s arrival confirms for him all his inadequacies. Goliadkin is also unable to learn from or better himself from the example that his double sets. All the double can show Goliadkin is his inadequacy and his small position within both the universe and his own life. After this experience he is no longer able to cope with his reality, and is led to insanity due to his inability to deal with the inferiority he feels in comparison to this better half and doppelgänger.

³⁶ Fyodor Dostoevsky. *The Double and The Gambler*. Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. Everyman’s Library, Random House. 2005, pp. 93.

In *The Double*, Dostoevsky plays with the motif of the conventional double, and shows the connection between the double and psychology, as Goliadkin's double is the manifestation of his insanity. Dostoevsky's use of the double is "the most moving, and psychologically the most profound, treatment of [the double] The novel describes the onset of mental illness in a person who is not aware of it, since he is unable to recognize the symptoms in himself, and who paranoically views all his painful experiences as the pursuits of his enemies."³⁷ Goliadkin's double is the personification of all his insecurities, and with Goliadkin approaching a mental breakdown throughout the novella, his double could very well be a projection of his broken mind, showing the thin line between the supernatural and the psychological with the double.

While in *The Double*, Dostoevsky uses the double as it is conventionally seen in literature, Dostoevsky also uses the double in his own unique manner in many of his other novels. It is so prevalent in some of his later fiction that a term was devised expressly to refer to this sort of Dostoevskian double. "Quasi-doubles" are "characters that exist in their own right, but some reflect internal aspects of another character in strengthened form."³⁸ They do not physically resemble the protagonist, but are very similar to them in a crucial and distinguishing way. This similar trait between the two is often at the center of their personal conflict or in some way tied to the plot. So, through this quasi-double, the protagonist is able to see reflected in the double a particular trait or characteristic, and by seeing that manifested in another, can either approve of the trait in practice or learn to abandon it. While this sort of double does not fit the classic mold—as

³⁷ Otto Rank. *Double: A Psychoanalytic Study*. Translated and edited by Harry Tucker. University of North Carolina Press, 1971, pp. 38.

³⁸ Joseph Frank. *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt 1921-1849*. Princeton University Press, 1977, pp. 311.

physical resemblance is not a necessity—these sorts of doubles fulfill all the other qualifications of a double and are often present within their stories to encourage the protagonists towards a particular aim or lesson. Quasi-doubles are also made to showcase the psychology of the character, as Dostoevsky expressed through a character: “What then precisely is the ‘double’? The ‘double,’ at any rate according to a medical work by an expert which I read for the purpose is nothing but the first stage in some serious mental derangement which may lead to a bad conclusion, a dualism between feeling and willing.”³⁹ The quasi-double is a literary tool to narrow in on the psyche of a character and focus on a very specific trait of theirs in different forms and context. It is the opportunity to dissect a character’s subconscious via direct comparison, and to predict that character’s future by looking at how the quasi-double’s life has been. They are also often a being shrouded in the supernatural, while also a character in their own right who points out the madness within the protagonist. This sort of double defines the works of Dostoevsky and are an area of focus in this thesis, as this sort of double is to be found in his work *Crime and Punishment*.

While the doppelgänger motif has seen a wide range of use across literature and can be credited to a number of roots in its conception and the emotions it conveys and relates, the particular interest of this thesis is how the trope was used by Fyodor Dostoevsky and Vladimir Nabokov. Dostoevsky’s character, Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov, is able to grow through the interactions he has with his double, by seeing the darkness inherent in him in another person and watching how that darkness destroys him. Nabokov’s Humbert Humbert runs farther away from the truth of himself through

³⁹ Fyodor Dostoevsky. *The Raw Youth*, as cited in Edward Hallett Carr. *Dostoevsky 1821-1881*. Routledge, 2016, pp. 199.

his interactions with his double, Clare Quilty, by projecting his own faults onto someone he portrays to be the more wicked version of him, thus avoiding dealing with some of his own wrongdoings. These two uses of the double trope show the complex ways this character can be used, and how the double adds depth to each narrative and to each of these protagonists.

Chapter Two: Self Improvement and Reconciliation through the Double in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*

Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoevsky is a novel about a student named Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov, who plans to murder an old pawnbroker to whom he is indebted. As he commits this crime, he kills the innocent sister of the old woman, who he did not believe would be there, and steals her riches, promising to himself he will use this money for the betterment of society. As the plot progresses, it becomes clear that Raskolnikov did not commit this crime for his supposed noble ends, only to attempt to prove true a theory that would designate him as special and able to commit cruel acts without remorse. As he grapples with his guilty conscious and whether or not he should confess and accept his punishment, he meets two individuals, a young woman named Sonya who has suffered a great deal and clung to her Christian faith, and a man who is the embodiment of Raskolnikov's theory that a great man can do terrible things without guilt. This man is Arkady Ivanovich Svidrigaylov and he acts in this novel as a dark reflection of Raskolnikov in this story, leading him away from absolution and from Sonya. While Raskolnikov is internally divided, and his internal duplicitous nature can find its roots in an Alexander Pushkin protagonist and in Nikolai Gogol's fantastical objects, that act as personified doubles for the protagonists, neither of these root stories has a character that fulfills that role Svidrigaylov does in *Crime and Punishment*. The character of Svidrigaylov in this narrative is an intriguing yet crucial departure from its literary predecessors in how a "double" character or the concept of a double is used in storytelling. Svidrigaylov acts in the narrative as a cautionary moral tale for Raskolnikov and is a pivotal aspect of the story because of Raskolnikov's response to their similarities and how he learns from them.

Alexander Pushkin's short story *The Queen of Spades*, (1833) is one of the core inspirations⁴⁰ for Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment." The similarities between the two works are evident, as both involve a young man who causes the death of an old woman in the hopes of using her fortune to jumpstart their lives. There are a great number of similarities between Pushkin's protagonist Hermann and Dostoevsky's protagonist Raskolnikov. Both never achieve their lofty ambitions, and both are punished in some way for their wicked aims. Both also compare themselves or are compared to Napoleon, with Napoleon acting to both as a role model for those looking to achieve greatness through pure ambition and self-interest. Hermann is described as having "the profile of Napoleon and the soul of Mephistopheles"⁴¹, and Raskolnikov's theory justifying his murders—that extraordinary men can do monstrous things in the pursuit of their goals or destinies—holds Napoleon as the prime example of the success of this theory. The two plots also involve a young woman who is in some way attached and attracted to the protagonist, and through this connection are roped into the murderous schemes of the two men. Both women are also in some way related to the victims of the two men—Sonya was friends with the pawnbroker's sister, and Lizaveta was related to and living with the old countess—and both women attempt to lead the protagonists towards better and moral choices. Both stories walk the line between realism and the fantastical, with the dreams and guilty consciences of the two protagonists often manifesting themselves in ghostly visits from their victims. Both stories also deal with the unstable sanity of the protagonists as their guilt haunts them.

⁴⁰ Gary Rosenshield. *Challenging the Bard: Dostoevsky and Pushkin, a Study of Literary Relationship*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2013, pp. 120.

⁴¹ Alexander Pushkin. *The Queen of Spades and Other Stories*. Translated by Anthony Briggs. Pushkin Press, 2012, pp. 43.

While *Crime and Punishment* and *The Queen of Spades* are both third person narratives that center around their protagonists, in *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov is the core of his plot and the reader is privy to his thoughts and deliberations on the crime. The reader of *The Queen of Spades* on the other hand takes in the events of the story as an outside observer alongside the innocent Lizaveta. The reader knows more about her than it does its protagonist for most of the story, and the story is largely told from her perspective, as she is kept in the dark as to the nature of Hermann's crime. Hermann is an outsider to the characters of the book—as is inferred from his German name and heritage—and his intentions are a mystery to both the reader and to Lizaveta. For a majority of the story, she sees Hermann as a romantic suitor who wants to enter her house to see her. Like Lizaveta, the reader witnesses Hermann staring intently at Lizaveta's window and passing her notes as a sign of affection, and only realizes later that he is watching her house not with fondness, but with greedy intent. "So, those passionate letters, the ardent demands, this bold, and determined pursuit of her—had nothing to do with love. Money! That's what his soul was aching for!"⁴² Lizaveta is a tragic bystander to Hermann's crime, as she lets him into the house where he causes the death of the Countess, and while she rebukes him upon finding out what he has done, she does nothing to bring him to justice. Pushkin's Lizaveta is more analogous to—and perhaps even a double for—Dostoevsky's Lizaveta than to Sonya—who Raskolnikov murders when she accidentally returns home too soon—as both Lizavetas are the innocent victims to the misdeeds of the protagonist, though the harm Raskolnikov inflicts on the Lizaveta of that story is far grimmer and grizzlier.

⁴² Alexander Pushkin. *The Queen of Spades and Other Stories*. Translated by Anthony Briggs. Pushkin Press, 2012, pp. 45.

In *Crime and Punishment* on the other hand, the reader knows full well that Raskolnikov is planning on doing something horrid from the very first pages, and is given only Raskolnikov's perspective as he slowly grapples with and comes to terms with what he believes he must do. He only meets Sonya after he has murdered both an old woman and her sister, and while Sonya is initially fooled—as Lizaveta was in Pushkin's story—into believing Raskolnikov to be a simple and kind benefactor to her family before she is told the awful truth of what he's done, the audience never sees Raskolnikov through her eyes.⁴³ *Crime and Punishment* immerses the reader in Raskolnikov's perspective as he commits the murder and his guilt after the fact. The reader only truly begins to understand Hermann when he stands before the Countess asking for her secrets. Once the reader is provided with Hermann's thought process, it is evident that Hermann is a man of duality. He is torn between his reason and his passion. His reasonable side is why he lives in squalor, and is a shrewd saver of expenses. While the other part of him is willing to break into an old Countess' house based on a mystical rumor that she was once told the secret to win a card game. These two conflicting selves within Hermann and his contradictory desires to live conservatively and to strive lead him down a dark path.

Hermann's crime is also not of the same caliber of Raskolnikov's, as Hermann murdered the old Countess by accident, while Raskolnikov deliberated and murdered the pawnbroker with intention. While Hermann did threaten the Countess with a gun, thus causing her heart attack, he had no intention of inflicting any real harm on her. He tells Lizaveta: “‘I didn't mean to kill her,’ replied Hermann. ‘The pistol wasn't loaded.’”⁴⁴

⁴³ The only time Sonya is allowed to reflect on Raskolnikov to the reader is in her letter from Siberia, which is written after Raskolnikov has turned himself into the authorities.

⁴⁴ Alexander Pushkin. *The Queen of Spades and Other Stories*. Translated by Anthony Briggs. Pushkin Press, 2012, pp. 45.

While his intentions were still malignant and cold, Raskolnikov committed a gruesome double murder with very similar justifications as Hermann. And while both men are punished for their actions, Hermann does not repent or redeem himself for his crimes. He is punished by what may be the ghost of the Countess, who convinces him to bet all his earnings on a card game, which he is supernaturally destined to lose. This mystical irony drives him insane, and while this is a tragic fate for any man to come to, he does not face justice for his crimes, or demonstrate his guilt. There is no hope for Hermann's future at the end of the novella, as he will now most likely live out the rest of his days in an asylum fixated upon the mystical cards. Raskolnikov on the other hand confesses his crime to the police—which was also committed more violently and with more intention than Hermann's crime—and is then sent to prison. He is an active participant in his own redemption. And while Sonya is a vital part in helping him redeem himself—unlike Lizaveta who fails to help Hermann—Raskolnikov accepts and faces his punishment and is able to move past his crime as a redeemed member of society.

The Queen of Spades also lacks an equivalent to the character of Svidrigaylov in *Crime and Punishment*. Hermann is the vilest character in his narrative, while Raskolnikov's crime seems trivial to the glib way Svidrigaylov regards the many accusations of violence and murder leveled his way. The presence of a more wicked double in *Crime and Punishment* forces Raskolnikov to grapple with how similar he would like to be to Svidrigaylov, and when Svidrigaylov commits suicide near the end of the novel, he decides to move away from the part of his nature that is like Svidrigaylov and become better through absolution. As Hermann never sees a dark reflection of himself in someone else, he is not as introspective as Raskolnikov is and never comes to

terms with his own guilt or strives towards redemption. While Hermann is divided between his realism and his passion, Hermann never sees the darkness of his own chaos outwardly manifested in another person. As Hermann never comes to terms with his own identity within himself or in comparison to another person, his story ends in darkness, while Raskolnikov's tale ends with hope and light.

Crime and Punishment also finds inspiration in the works of Nikolai Gogol, a contemporary to Alexander Pushkin, as Dostoevsky is often quoted as having said that all of Russian literature "came out of Gogol's "Overcoat."⁴⁵ Dostoevsky succeeds Gogol in his grim tone and suspenseful prose, rather than following in the writing style of Pushkin, whose rhetoric is flowery and his stories are, on the whole, more lighthearted. Gogol also employed doubles in his story, but unlike Svidrigaylov acting as Raskolnikov's double, Gogol's doubles come from unlikely sources with examples being the personified nose of the short story "The Nose" (1836) and in the story of "The Overcoat," "the prize coat of Akaky Akakievich becomes his 'companion,' a kind of extension of his self, and hence a rudimentary double."⁴⁶ Both are a reflection of each story's protagonist and both lead that character on the path of self-discovery, for better or for worse.

In Gogol's "The Overcoat" the overcoat is emblematic of the success that Akaky Akakievich desires for his life; he saves to be able to purchase it, and feels his luck and fortunes turn when he puts on the coat. "At each instant of every minute he felt that there was anew overcoat on his shoulders, and several times even smiled from inner

⁴⁵ There is a great deal of scholarly contention over whether or not Dostoevsky truly said «Мы все вышли из гоголевской «Шинели». While recent findings lean away from Dostoevsky having said that, the sentiment is at the very least, truthful about the Russian authors. It is further discussed here, <https://citaty.su/vse-my-vyshli-iz-gogolevskoj-shineli>

⁴⁶John Herdman. *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. St. Martin's Press, 1991, pp. 99.

satisfaction.”⁴⁷ While wearing the coat his confidence is boosted and he becomes the best version of himself, asserting a newfound authority and confidence in his work and social life. Yet when his coat is robbed, he becomes again the former Akaky Akakievich who is ruthlessly and coldly dressed down by his superior. The shock of losing this second better version of himself that was only possible through the overcoat leads Akaky Akakievich to decay and die. Then, in a supernatural moment in a story that had so far been fairly realistic, Akaky Akakievich himself returns as a ghost to haunt his superiors who had tormented him, shouting at them “you didn’t solicit about [my overcoat]...now give me yours!”⁴⁸ While Raskolnikov and Hermann are haunted by the ghosts of those that they have wronged, Akaky Akakievich is the wronged party who seeks retribution by stealing overcoats. Akaky Akakievich’s experiences with the better version of himself created by the overcoat leads him to despair and death, while Raskolnikov’s encounter with a darker version of himself in Svidrigaylov leads him away from his double’s darkness.

Raskolnikov is not only confronted by darkness through a character external to him, but is confronted throughout the novel by the darkness of his own duplicitous nature. Dostoevsky gave his protagonist the name “Raskolnikov” with intention, as the word “раскол” means “schism” in English, finding its root in the 11th century schism⁴⁹ of the Orthodox church.⁵⁰ This name literally conveys the division that exists within

⁴⁷ Nikolai Gogol. “The Overcoat” in *The Collected Tales of Nikolai Gogol*. Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. Vintage Classics, 1999, pp. 409.

⁴⁸ Ibid, pp. 423.

⁴⁹ There have been a number of schisms of the Christian faith in Russia. The first key schism took place in the years surrounding 1054 between Eastern and Western Christianity. The term “раскол” has been used to describe the aforementioned 17th century schism, where the Orthodox faith was internally divided. This division created the Russian Orthodox Church, who distinguished themselves from so-called “old believers” who opposed their religious views. This split was orchestrated by Patriarch Nikon with the support of Tsar Alexei Romanov.

⁵⁰ Fyodor Dostoevsky. *Crime and Punishment*, edited by George Gibian. Translated by Jessie Coulson. W.W. Norton and Company Inc. 1989, pp. 466.

Raskolnikov, as he struggles to choose between the better and moral side of his nature, and the wicked side that leads him to hubris and murder. From the first pages of *Crime and Punishment* onwards, it is evident that Raskolnikov is mired by his own indecision and inability to heal the divide in his soul. He often goes back and forth between extremes, even when attempting to accomplish simple tasks. He walks across the city to his school friend Razumikhin's⁵¹ home uninvited, only to leave in anger claiming to have been bothered by the man he chose to visit.⁵² Out of sympathy for Sonya and her family, he leaves money on the windowsill, only to make a derisive and jeering comment about her circumstance as he walks away. As he doubts whether or not he should have given some of the little money he has to this family, he remarks "'besides, of course Sonya needs rouge,' he went on with a sarcastic laugh as he walked along."⁵³ Through this he counters his act of kindness with a malicious remark, as he argues with himself as to whether or not he should have done this good deed. Raskolnikov is constantly grappling between the two sides of his personality; one side looks to do good and wants to help and connect with others, and the other side is looking to commit a murder.

Throughout the novel Raskolnikov tries to escape imprisonment and his own guilt for having murdered an old, cruel, and wealthy pawnbroker—who he had accumulated a number of debts to—and her younger sister, a kind and innocent woman who walked in

⁵¹ The name Razumikhin—like the names of Raskolnikov and Svidrigaylov—also carries significant meaning that helps solidify his character. The name “Разумихин” derives from the Russian word for reason or intellect, accentuating his intelligence and astuteness as a student and when assessing the evidence of Raskolnikov's crime. This name distinguishes the fractured and unstable Raskolnikov from his reasonable and kindly friend. Other main characters also carry significant names; Sonya's full name, “София” derives from the word for wisdom, and her father's surname, “Мармеладов,” comes from the word for jelly, implying his weak will.

⁵² Fyodor Dostoevsky. *Crime and Punishment*, edited by George Gibian. Translated by Jessie Coulson. W.W. Norton and Company Inc. 1989, pp. 93.

⁵³ *Ibid*, pp. 22.

as he was attempting to escape. And while he tries to justify his crime by aligning his motivations with the better part of his soul—that he is committing the murder to better his family’s financial standing and help them in their hour of need—his true motivations are selfish and align only with the darkest aspects of Raskolnikov’s divided nature. Raskolnikov claims that he will use the money to do good by the world or to save his family from destitution, but Raskolnikov chooses to kill to satisfy the selfish urge within himself and prove that he is a great and important person, who can kill without remorse in the pursuit of some greater destiny.⁵⁴ This selfish urge to prove he is a “Napoleon,” comes from the darkest part of his soul.

The schism within Raskolnikov leads him to act rashly and without proper forethought. He only succeeds in committing the murder and escaping undetected because of a number of fortuitous coincidences. For instance, the axe was left in the porter’s lodge, a “load of hay”⁵⁵ provided a cover for him as he enters the old woman’s lodging, and as he escaped the crime scene, the neighbors were in the right place at the right time for him to be able to hide and make a quick getaway. While the darker part of his nature led him to commit his crime, it also leads him to self-sabotage. The more chaotic side of his split nature causes him to nearly admit his crime a number of times to policemen—including the chief investigator of his murder, Porfiry Petrovich—even in situations where he is not being put under pressure. He is internally conflicted by the divide within himself, and between pursuing his darker impulses and his illusions of

⁵⁴ Fyodor Dostoevsky. *Crime and Punishment*, edited by George Gibian. Translated by Jessie Coulson. W.W. Norton and Company Inc. 1989, pp. 232.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 63.

grandeur, and his genuine propensity for goodness. This conflict leads him to act chaotically and violently without the help of outside forces.

Yet the manipulations and pleas of others exasperate the divide within Raskolnikov, forcing him to grapple with the internal struggle he has between his better and darker nature. These two opposing forces are Sonya Marmeladova and Arkady Ivanovich Svidrigaylov. They both act within the story as the personified halves of Raskolnikov's soul, with Sonya representing his capacity for good and redemption, and Svidrigaylov representing his capacity for evil and apathy. These two characters' roles as the conflicting angels on Raskolnikov's shoulders is more pronounced in Dostoevsky's original drafts of *Crime and Punishment*. Initially, Dostoevsky had intended for Raskolnikov to commit suicide at the story's end, with his narrative ending in his bleak death, with no hope of redemption. Dostoevsky writes in his notes:

“(Raskolnikov goes to shoot himself.)
Svidrigaylov: ‘I’m happy to go to America now, but no one really wants to.’
Svidrigaylov: (To Raskolnikov on Hay Market Square.) ‘You will shoot yourself, and I will also perhaps shoot myself.’
‘Have you noticed that recently more strange things have been happening? Two women drowned themselves; someone closed the cash box and threw themselves out of the window. The times have become capricious. It’s like the spiders, isn’t it?’
Svidrigaylov is despair, the most cynical. Sonya is hope, the most unrealizable. [Raskolnikov himself should express this.] He became passionately attached to both.”⁵⁶

This ending is bleak and dominated by Svidrigaylov's perspective of the world. Svidrigaylov is largely apathetic to notions of morality or to the concept of a hereafter, and those bleaker views prevail in Raskolnikov's point of view. Sonya's religious beliefs and her reading of the story of the resurrection of Lazarus are beautiful and hopeful to

⁵⁶ Fyodor Dostoevsky. *The Notebooks for Crime and Punishment*, edited by Edward Wasiolek. University of Chicago Press, 1967, pp. 243-4.

this Raskolnikov, but are unattainable. Svidrigaylov and Sonya are explicitly stated to be the diametrically opposed conceptions of hope and despair; two emotions that are at war in Raskolnikov's soul. Raskolnikov chooses the path of nihilism and apathy through Svidrigaylov, and it leads him to nothingness and a tragic end.

While Svidrigaylov and Sonya still represent these two concepts in Raskolnikov's life, and help him to explore and mend the schism within his soul—though it is not presented as overtly as it is in Dostoevsky's notes—in the final novel, a number of changes are made. First, Raskolnikov follows the path of hope shown to him by Sonya and finds redemption, rather than death. He confesses his crime and is accompanied by Sonya and his family to Siberia, and upon his release in ten years' time, it is suggested he will live a happy life with his sister, brother-in-law, and partner, Sonya. Svidrigaylov instead is the one who meets a grizzly fate, succumbing to his apathy and committing suicide. Raskolnikov hears of Svidrigaylov suicide as he grapples with turning himself into the police, and this information helps convince him to confess to his wrongdoings. Svidrigaylov's death has such a profound effect on Raskolnikov because, for much of the story, Svidrigaylov plays the role of a dark, quasi double to Raskolnikov, and the personification of the darker half of the schism in Raskolnikov's soul.

Svidrigaylov asserts his presence in the narrative a number of times before his first true appearance. Svidrigaylov does not meet Raskolnikov until part four of the novel, and as the story is centered in large part on Raskolnikov's point of view, the reader is not introduced to Svidrigaylov until that moment either. Yet Svidrigaylov is mentioned multiple times before this crucial meeting with Raskolnikov, and his presence

is felt in the story through subtle yet intentional references to this future character.⁵⁷ The first mention of Svidrigaylov comes in the letter Raskolnikov receives from his mother in one of the first chapters in the novel. Raskolnikov's mother—Pulkheria Alexandrovna Raskolnikova—is writing him this letter to inform him that his sister has gotten engaged to a man that could potentially reverse their family's abysmal fortunes. Raskolnikov learning this information from the letter is the main catalyst that pushes Raskolnikov to take his nefarious plan—to kill the wicked pawnbroker and use her money to somehow improve the world—from an idea to a reality. Learning that his sister is willing to marry a vile man to, in his view, save him from a life of destitution provides Raskolnikov with high enough stakes to justify, in his mind, carrying out the murder. Yet his mother's letter also gives a great deal of expository information to Raskolnikov on his sister's life outside of her new engagement, and in the seemingly extraneous parts of the letter, the reader first hears mention of Svidrigaylov.

Pulkheria Alexandrovna speaks of Svidrigaylov both on the tangible facts she knows of his relationship with Raskolnikov's sister—Avdotya Romanova Raskolnikova or Dunya—and what she has heard of Svidrigaylov from town gossip. Svidrigaylov is defined in this letter with an air of mystery and rumor; his justifications are not clear to Pulkheria Alexandrovna, and in her story he lurks in the shadows with strange yet malicious intent. Pulkheria Alexandrovna describes to Raskolnikov that Svidrigaylov took an interest in Dunya and pursued her, yet Dunya denied his advances as she was an

⁵⁷ Eric Naiman. "'There was something almost crude about it all...': Reading *Crime and Punishment's* Epilogue Hard Against the Grain." *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 62, no. 2, pp.123-143, 2020, pp. 128.

employee of Svidrigaylov's wife, Marfa Petrovna.⁵⁸ This encounter tarnished Dunya's reputation which was then amended by Svidrigaylov—who had allowed rumors of their interaction to fester and become pernicious. This anecdote is a long and strange inclusion in this letter to a first-time reader of this novel, yet it sets up initial and important characteristics of Svidrigaylov for both the reader and Raskolnikov: he is a mysterious and potentially violent man, he is obsessed with Raskolnikov's sister, and is capable of shocking acts of good or evil at a whim.

Svidrigaylov is also mentioned in brief moments that only become important to the reader after they are introduced to his character. While Raskolnikov is still deliberating on the murder, he sees a man accosting a woman in the street and yells out to him: “hey, you Svidrigaylov, what do you want here?”⁵⁹ This is a reference to the origin of Svidrigaylov's surname, as in 19th century journalistic fiction, the Svidrigaylov character was a “man of obscure origin with a filthy past and a repulsive personality”⁶⁰ known for scandalous and grotesque relationships with women. Dostoevsky's Svidrigaylov is emblematic of another trope character who lurks in popular stories as an antagonist, just as he is lurking in the beginning pages of this novel. This encounter reminds the reader of the Svidrigaylov of Pulkheria Alexandrovna's tale, and reinforces his status as an antagonist to both Dunya, and later Raskolnikov.

Svidrigaylov then tangibly appears as an unnamed man on the street, who watches Sonya leave Raskolnikov's flat. He lurks behind Sonya in a vaguely threatening manner,

⁵⁸ Fyodor Dostoevsky. *Crime and Punishment*, edited by George Gibian. Translated by Jessie Coulson. W.W. Norton and Company Inc. 1989, pp. 27.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 40.

⁶⁰ Boris Tikhomirov “Lazarus! Come Forth:” *F. M. Dostoevsky's novel Crime and Punishment Read in the Light of its Time: A Commentary*. Sere-bryanyi vek, 2006, cited in *Crime and Punishment*. Translated by Oliver Ready. Penguin Books, 2014, pp. 528, note 46.

and “not taking his eyes off her... he crossed again to Sonya’s side of the street, caught her up and followed five paces behind her.”⁶¹ He then realizes that this woman knows Dunya’s brother, and he states suddenly to her that: “‘We are neighbors,’ he continued with a certain peculiar gaiety. ‘I have been in the town only two days. Well, goodbye till we meet again.’”⁶² This interaction is bizarre and unsettling to both the reader and to Sonya, as a strange man has taken a peculiar and unfounded interest in her. This connection between the two also becomes very significant later on, as Svidrigaylov hears Raskolnikov confess to his crime while eavesdropping on his neighbor’s room, which draws Svidrigaylov further into Raskolnikov’s life. In these early and brief appearances, Svidrigaylov is a haunting and threatening figure of mystery; his motivations are vague and his very presence in the novel is mysterious and unclear. There is also some element of fate and random luck tied to Svidrigaylov, as the reader will soon realize that he acts in large part solely on his own whims and still comes into contact with advantageous information. He just so happens to live next to Sonya, a woman he could not have guessed would become so crucial to Raskolnikov’s life as to be privy to his most private secrets. From his first small appearances in the novel, Svidrigaylov asserts a presence as a man of power, apathy, and unpredictability, and these traits become more pronounced once he officially introduces himself to the story’s protagonist in a meeting that is as surreal as these small first introductions.

Svidrigaylov appears as if out of a fog as Raskolnikov wakes up from a harrowing and guilt driven nightmare. He has let himself into Raskolnikov’s room and appears to

⁶¹ Fyodor Dostoevsky. *Crime and Punishment*, edited by George Gibian. Translated by Jessie Coulson. W.W. Norton and Company Inc. 1989, pp. 206.

⁶² *Ibid*, pp. 207.

have sat there and watched them as Raskolnikov slowly regains consciousness. Raskolnikov asks himself “is this still the dream, or not?”⁶³ as the sight of a strange man staring down at him disturbs and unsettles him in the same way his horrifying dream just had. This first meeting with Raskolnikov is once again shrouded in mystery, as Svidrigaylov appears before Raskolnikov in such a bizarre and haunting manner. His conversation with Raskolnikov does not elucidate Svidrigaylov’s character either, as his points of conversation are frantic and often morbid. He discusses the recent death of his wife and his suspected role in her passing in a glib manner, and he switches between laughter and great intensity rapidly. He speaks of ghosts and talks with certainty that his dead wife has recently visited him, and he speaks to Raskolnikov with a frankness that feels out of place between two men who have never met. “Svidrigaylov enjoys shocking Raskolnikov, who is both a murderer and a prude.”⁶⁴ Svidrigaylov is the first character in the narrative thus far that rivals Raskolnikov’s instability. Until this point in the novel, Raskolnikov has been the only character who is outwardly manic and violent, as his friends and family all appear to be fairly supportive and reasonable people. For Raskolnikov to be the voice of reason and normalcy in a conversation is unsettling for the reader, as thus far Raskolnikov’s sanity has only been measured against characters such as his good-natured friend Razumikhin and the astute and calculating Porfiry Petrovich. Svidrigaylov and Raskolnikov mirror each other in this scene through their shared mania and fixation on death and the supernatural.

⁶³ Fyodor Dostoevsky. *Crime and Punishment*, edited by George Gibian. Translated by Jessie Coulson. W.W. Norton and Company Inc. 1989, pp. 236.

⁶⁴ Katherine Tiernan O’Connor. “Rereading *Lolita*: Reconsidering Nabokov’s Relationship with Dostoevsky.” *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 64-77. 1989, pp. 68.

Svidrigaylov also brings up bizarre and philosophical notions without a care for social etiquette or normalcy, stating:

““what if there is nothing there [in hell] but spiders or something like that? [Svidrigaylov] says suddenly. *This is a madman*, thought Raskolnikov. ‘Eternity is always presented to us as an idea which it is impossible to grasp, something enormous, enormous! But why should it necessarily be enormous? Imagine, instead, that it will be one little room, something like a bath-house in the country, black with soot, with spiders in every corner.’”⁶⁵

This observation is very strange and unnerves Raskolnikov in an already off-kilter conversation. It demonstrates Svidrigaylov’s nihilistic point of view on life, as Svidrigaylov does not concern himself with conceptions of heaven or hell, but only if the hereafter will be an anti-climactic and dull room. “Instead of elaborate Dantesque images of physical torture...eternity might offer a worse fate than bodies racked with pain and corporal suffering—it might be unspeakably boring!”⁶⁶ While in Raskolnikov’s first in depth conversation with Sonya, she fixates on and stresses the importance of religious faith and the salvation and resurrection of the soul, Svidrigaylov seems to find such notions tedious. Svidrigaylov seems uninterested in grappling with any sort of religious repercussions for the wrongdoings he has committed in his life—many of which he confesses to Raskolnikov in this first conversation. While Raskolnikov cannot escape his guilt for his actions and is made to acknowledge his wrongdoings by Sonya, Svidrigaylov worries not of any punishment for his actions, due to his ambivalence to his immorality.

The extent of his crimes is discussed further when the Raskolnikov family and Razumikhin meet with Peter Petrovich Luzhin to discuss his potential marriage to Dunya.

⁶⁵ Fyodor Dostoevsky. *Crime and Punishment*, edited by George Gibian. Translated by Jessie Coulson. W.W. Norton and Company Inc. 1989, pp. 244-5.

⁶⁶ R. E. Richardson. “Svidrigaylov and the Performing Self.” *Slavic Review*, vol. 46, no. 3/4, pp. 540-552. 1987, pp. 545.

Once again, the topic of Svidrigaylov arises through rumors, yet these rumors are troubling and further substantiated in the light of Svidrigaylov's strange behavior and attitude toward punishment for wrongdoing. Luzhin describes rumors that Svidrigaylov assaulted and abused a young girl until it led her to suicide and may have abused another man and led him to the same fate.⁶⁷ These rumors solidify a pattern of Svidrigaylov being attached to crimes that are committed in an apathetic manner. Svidrigaylov did not actively murder these people, nor is he suspected of actively murdering his wife, but his cruelty and abuse contributed substantially to their deaths. This difference in execution distinguishes Raskolnikov's crime from the many crimes of Svidrigaylov. Raskolnikov's crime was actively done with forethought, and his guilt for committing such an act plagues him. And while Svidrigaylov is not attached to his crimes, as they were committed indirectly, his role in these deaths does not appear to bother him. He is the embodiment of the indifference Raskolnikov wishes he possessed as he deals with his guilt.

Svidrigaylov also comes to embody the theory by which Raskolnikov justified his crimes, that truly great men, such as Napoleon Bonaparte, can act without reproach or without guilt as they move towards their great and important destiny. This sort of great man is not troubled by the harm they do to less important people on the road to greatness, and can act without fear of punishment or personal remorse. Svidrigaylov is not outwardly bothered by all of the things he has been accused of doing; he is motivated by a perfect sort of apathy that Raskolnikov wishes he could have towards his crimes.

“Svidrigaylov mirrors the elemental thrust of that egoism, concentrated in Raskolnikov's

⁶⁷ Fyodor Dostoevsky. *Crime and Punishment*, edited by George Gibian. Translated by Jessie Coulson. W.W. Norton and Company Inc. 1989, pp. 252.

monomania, which had ultimately led to the murders. He now confronts Raskolnikov as someone who has accepted the throughgoing egoistic amorality that, as Raskolnikov now has begun to realize, he had unwittingly been striving to incarnate himself.”⁶⁸ While both have committed crimes, Svidrigaylov feels nothing either from his conscience or from the rumors that surround him. This sort of apathy is more intimidating than the more standard sorts of villainy, and was done by Dostoevsky with intention, as “the decision to give Svidrigaylov some seeming good qualities apparently came late and was motivated by the perception that an amoral individual will do indifferently both good and evil acts.”⁶⁹ Whether he is saving the Sonya and her siblings from destitution in the wake of Katerina Ivanova’s death,⁷⁰ or beating his wife to death, Svidrigaylov feels nothing, which appears more inhuman than the actual act of committing a crime.

Raskolnikov begins to learn the flaws in his theory through comparison, and by talking through the plan with those around him. He learns the most from Svidrigaylov, for while Svidrigaylov is the embodiment of Raskolnikov’s theory on great individuals, being a great and unfeeling man does not lead to happiness, it leads to a bleak nothingness. Svidrigaylov takes a special interest in Raskolnikov, both because the one thing Svidrigaylov wants is Raskolnikov’s sister, and because he is the only other person privy to Raskolnikov’s confession to Sonya. While Sonya actively strives to help Raskolnikov and push him towards confession, Svidrigaylov is, once again, apathetic on the subject. Rather than acting on that knowledge in pursuit of justice, he attempts to use

⁶⁸ Joseph Frank. *Dostoevsky: A Writer in his Time*. Princeton University Press. 2010, pp. 550.

⁶⁹ Fyodor Dostoevsky. *The Notebooks for Crime and Punishment*, edited by Edward Wasiolek. University of Chicago Press, 1967, pp. 224.

⁷⁰ Fyodor Dostoevsky. *Crime and Punishment*, edited by George Gibian. Translated by Jessie Coulson. W.W. Norton and Company Inc. 1989, pp. 368.

it for his selfish gain to win over Dunya, the only person he seems to truly care for or want. Svidrigaylov displays his apathy and pension for violence to her in what is supposed to be an attempt to win her over.

“We hear this idea [Raskolnikov’s theory] dialogized exposition of it in his dialogue with Dunya. But here, in the voice of Svidrigaylov, who is one of Raskolnikov’s parodic doubles, the idea has a completely different sound and turns towards us another of its sides...Raskolnikov’s idea comes into contact with various manifestations of life throughout the entire novel; it is tested, verified, confirmed, or repudiated by them.”⁷¹

Raskolnikov begins to see the massive faults in his theory through moral discussions with Porfiry, by seeing the success of Razumikhin as he acts in contrast to the theory, and by speaking with and growing to love Sonya. But Svidrigaylov as the embodiment of his theory is the ultimate repudiation of it. Svidrigaylov is apathetic, without purpose in life, and is unsuccessful in achieving the only thing he seems to care about, which is Dunya. Like Napoleon himself, a life without accountability in the pursuit of glory and selfish desires, leaves Svidrigaylov empty rather than fulfilled. Svidrigaylov’s function as Raskolnikov’s double shows Raskolnikov who he would become if he were to abandon any feelings of guilt, morality, and love for his friends and family in the pursuit of his theory.

The final repudiation of his theory where Raskolnikov clearly steps away from the path of his evil double Svidrigaylov towards redemption through confession with Sonya, is when Svidrigaylov commits suicide. The build-up to Svidrigaylov’s suicide is disorienting and dreamlike, and Svidrigaylov’s dreams are troubling and disorienting.⁷²

⁷¹ Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Translated by Caryl Emerson. University of Minnesota Press, 1984, pp. 89.

⁷² One of these dreams involves him taking care of and then sexualizing a young child, which—when paired with his rumored assault of a young girl—can link Svidrigaylov to *Lolita*’s Humbert and Quilty. (see O’Connor).

After losing Dunya, and falling into a near hallucinogenic sleep, he then commits suicide publicly with his last words being the remark, “if you are asked, say I was off to America,”⁷³ meaning that he is off to an unknown place from which no one returns.⁷⁴ The moment Raskolnikov hears of the news is pivotal for his character development and the outcome of this novel, for after hearing it “Raskolnikov felt as though a crushing weight had descended on him.”⁷⁵ Immediately after this, Raskolnikov finds the resolve in him to confess for his crimes. When he hears “that Svidrigaylov had killed himself the night before, Raskolnikov is so overcome that he stumbles out into the courtyard without saying a word...and he returns to make a confession. His fate and that of Svidrigaylov thus form a continuous parallel up to the very end.”⁷⁶ Svidrigaylov’s grim fate and Raskolnikov’s acknowledgment of it are what lead Raskolnikov down a better path towards absolution. Svidrigaylov’s death is a clear repudiation of his theory, as a life led without feeling and remorse led Svidrigaylov to a bleak end. While Svidrigaylov chooses suicide—a sinful taboo in Christianity—Raskolnikov lowers himself and kisses the ground “a gesture of repentance typical of the *raskolniki*.”⁷⁷ ⁷⁸ Raskolnikov chooses Sonya’s path of faith and accountability for his actions, while Svidrigaylov chooses a dark and bleak path. Raskolnikov can then see that to avoid confession for his crime would be to start down the same path as Svidrigaylov, so instead Raskolnikov begins a

⁷³ Fyodor Dostoevsky. *Crime and Punishment*, edited by George Gibian. Translated by Jessie Coulson. W.W. Norton and Company Inc. 1989, pp. 433.

⁷⁴ In another connection to Humbert, “consider, for example, the one alternative to suicide which Svidrigaylov entertains, or rather pretends to, emigrating to America. He, of course, never makes it to America, but Humbert does.” (O’Connor, pp. 68)

⁷⁵ Dostoevsky, pp. 449.

⁷⁶ Joseph Frank. *Dostoevsky: A Writer in his Time*. Princeton University Press. 2010, pp. 634.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 634.

⁷⁸ This detail further connects Raskolnikov to the meaning behind his name, as Raskolnikov in this scene theologically breaks with those who caused schism in the church, and begins to fix the fractures in himself.

new journey towards resurrection and love, rather than following Svidrigaylov towards the abyss.

While Sonya acts as Raskolnikov's benevolent and moral advisor and is in the end the one who spiritually resurrects and loves him in Siberia⁷⁹, it is through his interactions with Svidrigaylov that Raskolnikov truly learns the error of his ways. As Raskolnikov's double in this story, Svidrigaylov holds up a broken mirror to Raskolnikov, showing who he could become if he gives in to immorality and depravity. While Raskolnikov is repulsed by Svidrigaylov, both men are continually attracted to each other by their similarities throughout the novel, as Svidrigaylov is intrigued by and looking to use to his advantage his knowledge of Raskolnikov's crime. Raskolnikov slowly begins to see their similarities and that Svidrigaylov embodies the theoretical great man who rises above morality and guilt that Raskolnikov always wanted to be. Then, when Svidrigaylov commits suicide, Raskolnikov comes to both a physical and metaphorical crossroads: he will either refuse to confess and become just like his double—and probably meet the same fate—or he can reject his double and confess to his crimes. Raskolnikov chooses to follow his conscience rather to emulate and replace Svidrigaylov as the reviled man of the city who many suspects of wicked deeds. Raskolnikov chooses a new path through Sonya and through his family, and, like Lazarus, he is reborn as a better man who now rejects everything that Svidrigaylov embodied to him. Svidrigaylov's role in *Crime and Punishment* as a quasi-double for Raskolnikov leads Raskolnikov to resurrection through his punishment, as by seeing his worst traits manifested in Svidrigaylov, Raskolnikov gains the strength to reject those

⁷⁹ Christopher Cowley. "Understanding Another's Wrongdoing." *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 35, no. 1, pp.79-90. 2011. <https://doi.org/10.1353/phl.2011.0007>. Accessed December 2020, pp. 87.

traits in himself, thereby forging a new path instead of facing a fate similar to the one of Svidrigaylov.

Chapter Three: Shrouding Identity and Shirking Guilt with the Doppelgänger in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*

Before he gained worldwide fame as the author of *Lolita*, Vladimir Nabokov was a writer and critic known for his biting wit and harsh criticism. A good deal of his ire was in fact leveled at Fyodor Dostoevsky, as he “was long one of Nabokov’s primary targets.”⁸⁰ Nabokov seemed to take pleasure in ridiculing Dostoevsky as a poor writer of banal stories, calling *Crime and Punishment* “crude and so inartistic.”⁸¹ He seemed to revel in taking personal jabs at the writer and his legacy, speaking and writing on him as a blight on the canon of Russian literature as a whole. While some of his criticisms of Dostoevsky are not unfounded—such as Dostoevsky’s characterization of Sonya and equivocation of her crimes with Raskolnikov’s murder—Nabokov’s writing style and topic matter did not avoid Dostoevsky’s influence. Nabokov too scoffed at the idea of the double in literature, and stated that “the Doppelgänger subject is a frightful bore,”⁸² yet in his seminal work *Lolita*, there are a number of different double relationships that drive the plot, most notably between the criminal protagonist Humbert Humbert and his antagonist, Clare Quilty. While Raskolnikov stumbles upon his double and uses the experience to better his behavior and start on a new path with Sonya, Humbert Humbert manifests and distorts his double, Clare Quilty, so as to justify and excuse his evil behavior to the court he is addressing. This double relationship is significant within the narrative because Quilty is a plot device in the narrative of Humbert’s life to justify his

⁸⁰ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 368, note 70/3.

⁸¹ Vladimir Nabokov. “Fyodor Dostoevsky.” *Lectures on Russian Literature*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1981, pp. 110.

⁸² Stacy Schiff. *Vera (Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov)*. Random House, 1990, pp. 168.

crimes, and his presence and depiction further solidifies to the reader Humbert's wrongdoings and guilt, as both a child abuser and a murderer.

The double relationship between Humbert Humbert and Clare Quilty underlies and drives a good deal of the plot in *Lolita*, and is connected to the deeper meaning of exploring and giving voice to a man such as Humbert. *Lolita* is often remembered for its sensational subject matter, rather than its actual content and message. Nabokov knew before the manuscript was even distributed that it would be judged and condemned based on superficial readings of it and its premise; he even attempted to destroy the manuscript to avoid the controversy.⁸³ His wife, Vera, instead saved the text and fought for its publication, telling publishers: "it's not pornography at all but an incredible, most subtle prose to the depths of a horrible maniac and explores the tragic fate of a defenseless young girl.... Don't judge it until you reach the end. It's frightening. *But it is a great book.*"⁸⁴ Despite his wife's efforts, five American publishers rejected the novel for being pornographic,⁸⁵ despite their very consciously being no vulgar language within the text. Nabokov was also clear that the focus of the book was not to sensationalize Humbert's crime, as with the book's cover, he wanted "pure colors, melting clouds, accurately drawn details, a sunburst above a receding road with the light reflected in furrows and rust, after rain. And no girls."⁸⁶ Nabokov did not want readers to assume that *Lolita* was about the sexualization of young girls,⁸⁷ and he fought against such perceptions to get his book

⁸³ Julian Connolly. *A Reader's Guide to Nabokov's Lolita*. Academic Studies Press, 2009, pp. 5.

⁸⁴ Stacy Schiff. *Vera (Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov)*. Random House, 1990, pp. 200.

⁸⁵ Connolly, pp. 5.

⁸⁶ Vladimir Nabokov. *Vladimir Nabokov: Selected Letters 1940-1977*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009, pp. 256.

⁸⁷ Many modern editions have gone against Nabokov's wishes for the cover, and the discussion of *Lolita* is still mired in scandal, due in part to movie adaptations and marketing that capitalize on assumptions about the novel. The most recent Penguin edition of the book—which is most accessible in US stores—features a pair of lips, implicitly priming its reader to view the narrative as sexual.

published. *Lolita* was not written to sensationalize or glorify a sexual predator, on the contrary, *Lolita* is the dissection of the mind of a criminal, showing how his warped psyche and eschewed moral code led him to make despicable choices. Through Humbert Humbert, Nabokov lets his reader see the world as Humbert does, and engages the reader in his compelling story of crime and abuse, showing how far a person can be persuaded, and led against their good morals, by a convincing storyteller.

While *Lolita* is written from the mind of a criminal, Humbert Humbert is not immediately granted full control of his narrative. The novel starts with a foreword, that is critical in framing how the reader should interpret and read the rest of the novel. The foreword is written by John Ray Jr., Ph. D, who has been asked to edit the writings of a recently deceased prisoner. He writes of the text—which was also titled *Confession of a White Widowed Male*— “‘Humbert Humbert,’ their author had died in legal captivity, of coronary thrombosis, on November 16, 1952, a few days before his trial was scheduled to start.”⁸⁸ From this the reader knows that the author of the story is no longer living, and died while awaiting trial for grievous crimes, for which he felt a confession was due. This tells the reader before Humbert is allowed to give his perspective that his actions and his way of viewing the world led him to prison. Any impulse the reader has to sympathize with him is therefore contextualized with the knowledge that his actions would have led him to a jail cell. Also, the timing of his writing is crucial, as he has not yet had his day in court and is writing this with the knowledge and the hope that his lawyer may pass along his writings to the judge, the jury, or even simply the public at large. His motivations as a writer are now clear: he is writing to garner sympathy from the court in the hopes of

⁸⁸ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 3.

alleviating or reducing his sentence. He knows he has done wrong and has professed his guilt, and as is evidenced by his writing style and his educational history he is a learned man. He knows the only way to avoid life imprisonment or worse is to convince the court he is owed a modicum of sympathy. The reader is now primed to know that every claim he makes should be taken with a grain of salt, as he is an unreliable narrator looking to make his evil deeds seem reasonable and deserving of some sympathy.

Nabokov also tells the audience explicitly through John Ray Jr. that this is not Humbert's sympathetic story. Rather, it is a cautionary tale told from the perspective of an abusive and evil criminal. Ray tells the reader explicitly that this book "warns us of dangerous trends; they point out potent evils. '*Lolita*' should make all of us—parents, social workers, educators—apply ourselves with still greater vigilance and vision to the task of bringing up a better generation in a safer world."⁸⁹ This story was not written to glorify Humbert or his actions, it was made to educate the world on the mindset of a pedophile and a murderer, and what leads them to both commit their crimes and then later justify them. The reader is now immediately clued in to be suspicious of Humbert and to read his recounting of events with a scrupulous eye.

However, while John Ray Jr. warns the reader of the intentions of this book, Humbert Humbert—or more aptly Nabokov himself—is a compelling and tricky writer who sets about convincing his audience to sympathize with him with a deft hand. Even John Ray Jr. says of Humbert, "but how magically his singing violin can conjure up a tendresse, a compassion for Lolita that makes us entranced with the book and its

⁸⁹ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 5-6.

abhorring author!”⁹⁰ Through his power as a writer and knowledge of his audience, Humbert—and through him, Nabokov—is able to trick his reader into sympathizing with him against all odds. From his first page of text, Humbert shows his hand, and that he is trying to present his case to the court for leniency, referring to the reader as the “ladies and gentlemen of the jury, exhibit number one is what the seraphs, the misinformed, simple noble winged seraphs, envied. Look at this tangle of thorns.”⁹¹ He is not hiding his intentions from his audience nor is he feigning innocence for his misdeeds, and this selective and calculating honesty gives Humbert enough credibility to warp his story for his reader. He is a man who seemingly has nothing to lose, and he is able to garner credibility and sympathy through strategic honesty.

He also implies subtly to his audience that he is the one to be trusted in more superficial ways. He takes special care to point out that he is a handsome and cultured man, almost to the point of narcissism. “Let me repeat with quiet force, I was, and still am, despite mes malheurs, an exceptionally handsome male; slow-moving, tall, with soft dark hair and a gloomy but all the more seductive cast of demeanor.”⁹² Whether or not the audience means it to or not, this changes the way the reader views Humbert, as he is no longer in their minds an ugly and disgusting creature capable of such actions, he is a beautiful man that no one would ever suspect of committing wrongs of this caliber, and this knowledge works in his favor when retelling his story. He is as well very particular in his rhetoric on his crimes, subtly twisting the readers’ perspective. Both Nabokov in promoting his book and John Ray Jr. in the text stated explicitly “not a single obscene

⁹⁰ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 5.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 9.

⁹² *Ibid*, pp. 25.

term is to be found in the whole work.”⁹³ This seemingly small choice of diction profoundly affects the way the reader perceives Humbert’s actions. Instead of being violently put off by vulgar descriptions of his interactions with his “nymphets,” especially Dolly Haze, his use of language makes his sexual assaults and pedophilic behavior appear abstracted, thus softening the blow of his actions. Using flowery metaphors to describe having relations with an underage girl shrouds the gruesomeness of the actual crime and shields from the reader just how monstrous Humbert is. Even his disturbing descriptions of his defined “nymphets” imply him to be somewhat above the typical criminal. He is not the caricature of a monster who is a threat to every child he passes, he is interested in one specific and almost mystical child⁹⁴, and is fully willing to own up to his sins in desiring her and a certain category of others who resemble her. He is an artful, beautiful, and demented criminal, and this makes him compelling and in a twisted sense, likable.

He also depicts Lolita in a skewed and warped light for his own benefit. Nabokov said of himself as an author “I am the perfect dictator in that private world insofar as I alone am responsible for its stability and truth” and that “[his] characters are galley slaves.”⁹⁵ So, in giving Humbert full narrative control of the story as the only character allowed to present his thought process and state of mind, Dolly Haze’s perspective is ignored in the story, as she is displayed and represented only through Humbert’s narrow view of her. The reader is only allowed into the mind of Humbert, and it is therefore hard

⁹³ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 4.

⁹⁴ Lance Olsen. “A Janus-Text: Realism, Fantasy, and Nabokov’s *Lolita*.” *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 115-126. 1986, pp. 121.

⁹⁵ Vladimir Nabokov. *Strong Opinions*. Vintage Books, 1990, pp. 69 and 95.

to empathize with or know anything about any character who is not him. Instead of giving Lolita any power or voice, Humbert “has forced her into a fantasy and thereby zapped her of her identity. By doing so, he has transformed her into ”the youngest and frailest of his slaves.’ And here we also find Dolores Haze, whose prosaic name conjures both the Spanish for sorrow (what she must live in) and the German for rabbit (a conventional, and here ironic, symbol for fecundity).”⁹⁶ Dolly Haze is the true casualty both of Humbert’s actions—due to her short and tragic life—and of his narrative as she must be silenced for him to be heard and believed by his jury.

There are very few moments where Humbert allows his reader even a glimpse into what Dolly Haze’s understanding of her situation is and the trauma she is experiencing, yet when he does it is powerful and heart-wrenching. One significant moment of honesty being after Humbert and Dolly have relations at the Enchanted Hunters hotel, where Humbert glibly reveals to a panicking Dolly that her mother has been dead for some time, and that he knew this when he took her to the Enchanted Hunters. After this, “in the middle of the night she came sobbing into [his room], and we made it up very gently. You see, she had absolutely nowhere else to go.”⁹⁷ Humbert here, in one of his only fully honest moments, admits us into Dolly’s mind, and the utter hopelessness of her situation, as she has no route for escape and no one who can help her. This small inclusion is stirring and tragic for the reader, and is one of the biggest hints within Humbert’s narrative that shows the flaw in his self-centered view and his manipulative and cruel tendencies. Yet in spite of moments like this, Humbert still reigns

⁹⁶ Lance Olsen. “A Janus-Text: Realism, Fantasy, and Nabokov’s *Lolita*.” *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 115-126. 1986, pp. 121.

⁹⁷ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 142.

supreme in his narrative, and masterfully turns the reader toward his side, and to do that, he must turn them against Dolly Haze.

Humbert describes Dolores Haze as being both his great love and the center of his universe, but he also depicts her throughout his recounting of events as an ungrateful and irritating brat who takes for granted his “generosity.” She is vapid and pop culture obsessed and, in Humbert’s view, constantly making his life difficult in spite of his love for her. Initial critics fell directly into Humbert’s trap of demonizing his victim, which Nabokov’s wife took ire with:

“Vera’s one gripe with *Lolita*’s reception was something a New York Post critic had noted early on: ‘Lolita was attacked as a fearsome moppet, a little monster, a shallow, corrupt, libidinous and singularly unattractive brat.’ Where the novel’s reviewers inclined toward pitying Humbert, she fixed instead on Lolita’s vulnerability, stressing that she had been left alone without a single close relative in the world.”⁹⁸

Everything about Humbert’s depiction of Dolores Haze is skewed toward his perspective, down to the very title of the book, as he is the only person who calls her Lolita. In warping the narrative to make himself appear better, Humbert further moves the audience towards his side, and Nabokov further shows the extent to which a person could be made to sympathize with the most unsympathetic criminal. This warping of reality affects the way the reader sees Humbert and by the end, how they may even view themselves, as perhaps “the outrage expressed by many of *Lolita*’s readers over the past fifty years may be due, in part, to the discomfort they feel at finding themselves taken in by the narrator’s rhetoric, at realizing they have unwittingly accepted—and even identified with—Humbert’s perverse desire.”⁹⁹ In a way, Humbert himself is doubling Dolly Haze,

⁹⁸ Stacy Schiff. *Vera (Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov)*. Random House, 1990, pp. 235.

⁹⁹ Ellen Pifer. “Introduction.” *Vladimir Nabokov’s Lolita: A Casebook*. Oxford University Press, 2002, pp.10.

dividing her between the sensuous Lolita—his private nickname for her—and the hurt and traumatized Dolly Haze he does not want to see. In creating the Lolita identity for Dolly, making her an ethereally beautiful girl who in a twisted way is complicit in her own abuse, Humbert does not have to grapple with who she really was and how he affected her before his reader. By siphoning her off into many different doubles with many different names— “...Lola in slacks. She was Dolly at school. She was Dolores on the dotted line. But in my arms she was always Lolita”¹⁰⁰—Humbert manipulates the facts of his situation and shrouds his wrongdoing by recharacterizing those around him to make himself appear justified and rational in a terrible situation of his own devising.

Along with contextualizing himself by doubling Dolly Haze into Lolita, Humbert is also able to recharacterize himself through his double, Clare Quilty. Quilty is the central double of this narrative, but Nabokov does employ other double characters to further both Humbert’s agenda and his own. The first double relationship is between Dolly and Annabel Leigh. Annabel is named for Edgar Allan Poe’s poem “Annabel Lee,” who like Humbert’s Annabel, met Poe when they were both youths “in a kingdom by the sea”¹⁰¹ and whose tragic early death left its mark on Poe. Poe is one of many authors—others being Dante Alighieri and Petrarch—who Humbert associates himself with, as they too had written about and professed their love for young girls.¹⁰² This comparison

¹⁰⁰ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 9.

¹⁰¹ Edgar Allan Poe quoted in Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, 1991, pp. 329, note 9/1.

¹⁰² Humbert’s references to Poe, Dante, and Petrarch are both a tool on his part to convince the reader of his reasonableness, and a subtle nod from Nabokov that Humbert’s logic is faulty, as Humbert misrepresents the lives of these authors. For “he conveniently omits the fact that Dante was nine when he saw eight-year-old Beatrice in 1274. Moreover, Petrarch’s ‘Laura’ was probably not twelve when Petrarch saw her.... Even more important, though, is the fact that these loves were indeed ‘poetic;’ there is no evidence that were sexually consummated.” (Connolly, pp. 33) Humbert is therefore once again skewing the facts to lead the reader towards his side.

once again makes Humbert appear cultured, artistic, and part of a long pattern of brilliant men being infatuated with young girls, rather than a singular monster. Humbert tells the reader of his Poe-esque Annabel Leigh on the first page of his narrative; it is the first anecdote of his life he chooses to tell. He also connects his Annabel—who he had his first sexual encounter with before her early death—with his Lolita and to his obsession with nymphets. He says of the experience: “I am convinced however, that in a certain magic and fateful way Lolita began with Annabel. I also know that the shock of Annabel’s death consolidated the frustration of that nightmare summer, made of it a permanent obstacle to any further romance throughout the cold years of my youth.”¹⁰³ By making Annabel Lolita’s double, Humbert starts his retelling by immediately attempting to justify his misdoings by presenting himself to the reader as a troubled patient riddled with Freudian trauma and poised to be analyzed.¹⁰⁴ He continuously resurfaces the idea of Annabel as the double to Lolita, most significantly at the first moment he sees her, saying of this encounter that: “a little later of course, she, this *nouvelle*, this Lolita, *my* Lolita, was to eclipse completely her prototype [Annabel].”¹⁰⁵ This double relationship paints Humbert not as an evil man, but a broken one, led to a life of depravity by his tragic childhood, making him the perfect damaged genius that a reader can empathize with despite all signs to the contrary.

Humbert is constantly demonstrating both his insanity and his genius, making himself, in a way, his own double. Even his name, the repetitive “Humbert Humbert,” is

¹⁰³ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 14.

¹⁰⁴ Teckyoung Kwon. “Nabokov’s Memory War against Freud.” *American Imago*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 67-91. 2011, pp. 69.

¹⁰⁵ Nabokov, pp. 40.

duplicitous, just as his actions and his own psyche both are. For instance when he is telling his reader he had been sent to an asylum after the implosion of his marriage, he did so with grace and cunning, for he “discovered there was an endless source of enjoyment in trifling with psychiatrists: cunningly leading them on never letting them see that you know all the tricks of the trade.”¹⁰⁶ Humbert’s own insanity is made into a farce, as “*Lolita* parodies psychoanalysis, but for Nabokov, psychoanalysis must seem like a parody of art.”¹⁰⁷ He is a mad man who is self-aware, and the first to insult himself and his evil tendencies, and in that manipulative frankness, the reader finds something endearing and sympathetic. His awareness of his own evil softens the blow of it, making it appear less selfish and intentioned and more like an innate psychological response that he has no way to stop or prevent.

Another minor double in *Lolita* is Vivian Darkbloom, who is in fact a sort of double for Vladimir Nabokov himself—with her name being an anagram for Nabokov’s.¹⁰⁸ Darkbloom appears a number of times throughout the novel, most notably in the “Foreword,” where she is said to have written an account of her experience with this situation entitled “*My Cue*,”¹⁰⁹ making her the third author attached to this circumstance—along with Humbert and her alter ego, Nabokov. It is also notable that she is linked to and her tell-all book is centered around Humbert’s double, Clare Quilty, as though Nabokov is recounting and watching Humbert, while his alter ego watches and

¹⁰⁶ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 34.

¹⁰⁷ John Ingham. “Primal Scene and Misreading in Nabokov’s *Lolita*.” *American Imago*, vol. 59, no. 1, pp. 27-52. 2002, pp. 30.

¹⁰⁸ Nabokov. pp. 323, note 4/9.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 4.

writes about his double. Darkbloom appears a number of times throughout the novel, representing the deft hand of Nabokov as the orchestrator and god of his literary world.

While these doubles are intriguing and showcase the persuasive storytelling methods of both Humbert and Nabokov, the true double of interest is Clare Quilty. Like Dostoevsky's Svidrigaylov, Quilty seems to be constantly haunting Humbert's story, lurking behind every corner as the villain within a villain's story. In structuring this narrative Humbert is clearly priming the audience to see Quilty as evil, bringing him up and mentioning him before he is in any way pertinent to the story. The first reference to Quilty is in a transcription of a page of authorial references that lists "Quilty, Clare, American dramatist. Born in Ocean City, NJ in 1911."¹¹⁰ The simple reference page is littered with literary allusions. Quilty's reference is between two other references, one who's author's name—Pym—is another allusion to an Edgar Allan Poe character, and an actress whose name, like Dolly, is uncoincidentally Dolores. One of the authors was trained at the "Elsinore Playhouse,"¹¹¹ a reference to the castle where Shakespeare's *Hamlet (1609)* is set. *Hamlet* notably revolves around the fallout of one man murdering another so he can marry the dead-man's wife. This foreshadows Quilty later convincing Lolita to run away from Humbert with him after she saw his play—which Nabokov revealed was one of the plays listed in Quilty's reference, co-written by Ms. Darkbloom—and was drawn in by Quilty after being cast in another of his plays, titled

¹¹⁰ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 31.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 31.

The Enchanted Hunters.¹¹² In his anger at him for being complicit in Dolly leaving him, Humbert murders Quilty.

Humbert for the most part does not discuss Quilty directly, mentioning him indirectly both out of discomfort with Quilty and his history with him, and to cast himself in a better light for his “jury.” Referencing his murder of Quilty would remind his reader of his many misdeeds, so he speaks about Quilty in the abstract, dealing more with his allegations against Dolly Haze and attempting to nullify his readers misgivings about that. But immediately after this reference page, Humbert mentions for the first time his crime. When looking through the works of the actress Dolly he sees a play called “*the murdered playwright*. Quine the swine. Guilty of killing Quilty. Oh, my Lolita., I have only words to play with!”¹¹³ He is here both admitting his crime and connecting the rhyming words “Quilty” and “Guilty” together, which will be repeated a number of times, especially in the lead up to Quilty’s murder. So, while Humbert here is admitting so of his wrongdoing, he is also showing the power his words hold, by manipulating the audience to his side, even as he admits his guilt.

There are a number of other small references to Quilty littered through the text. Humbert mentions—once again while emphasizing his attractiveness—that he resembles “some crooner or actor chap on whom Lo has a crush,”¹¹⁴ that actor being Quilty. Humbert begins to connect the two as reflections of each other and as each other’s

¹¹² The Enchanted Hunters is the hotel where Humbert rapes Dolly Haze for the first time and, as was mentioned, it is also the name of Quilty’s play, which he casts her in, so as to gain access to her and convince her to run away with him. It carries mythological significance tying it both to the hunters of Artemis, who swore a vow of chastity, and to figures like Daphne, who was hunted by Apollo—who lusted for her—and turned into a tree to evade his advances. Both at the hotel and in the play, the youthful Lolita is hunted and caught by her two obsessed predators, Quilty and Humbert.

¹¹³ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 32.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 43.

doppelgängers through both their appearance and depravities. There are numerous other mentions as well in the buildup to Quilty's first scene.¹¹⁵ The Haze's dentist is Quilty's uncle who speaks of his indecent nephew, Lolita attends Camp Q, Lolita cuts out an ad that reminds her of Humbert and puts it next to a cut out of Quilty, among other such allusions to him. In none of them is he mentioned by name; he is either referred to indirectly as the relation of the dentist, as a playwright, or as Dolly's crush. Many of these references plant the seeds of Quilty's indecency, whether by attaching his name to town gossip, or simply through Dolly's infatuation with him as a sort of celebrity. Humbert both conceals Quilty from the reader through subtle references, and keeps Quilty at the center of his audience's mind as a specter who will inevitably make his appearance.

However, even when Quilty does finally and tangibly appear, he is no less ghost like and mysterious than before. His first appearance is surreal and bizarre, and many scholars believe it may be some sort of hallucination on Humbert's part, or perhaps a willful manipulation of what would be a pivotal moment for his court case. Humbert leads the reader to wonder "does [Quilty] exist at all on the fictional plane of reality?" Or "it is only Humbert the author who casts him as a possible hallucination, as Quilty begins to take on the characteristics of a Doppelgänger."¹¹⁶ Quilty enters the narrative in a mysterious and unrealistic manner, adding credence to the connection between the supernatural and the doppelgänger.

¹¹⁵ Alfred Appel, Jr. catalogues all of Quilty's appearances—even the more minute ones—in his *Annotated Lolita*. pp. 349, note 31/9.

¹¹⁶ Priscilla Meyer. "Lolita and the Genre of Literary Doubles: Does Quilty Exist?" *Selected Works of Priscilla Meyer*, Wesleyan University, 2009, pp. 6-7.

When Humbert first meets Quilty, he has been, up to that point, fighting against the urge to commit any physical act against Dolly, and has been staving off his evil desires through other means. Humbert demonstrates for his reader his misgivings at any such physical relationship with Dolly, attempting to show a conscience behind his disturbing attraction, for “Humbert Humbert tried hard to be good.”¹¹⁷ But now, Humbert has taken Dolly to the Enchanted Hunters, where he has unprecedented access to her, and the temptation builds for Humbert. The room they stay in has a number of mirrors, surrounding Humbert with his literal doubles as he prepares to commit a great wrong against Dolly. Mirrors both create literal doubles, and are a recurring image of Humbert’s duplicitous nature, as “mirrors are a major symbol for solipsistic imprisonment in Nabokov, especially in rooms, and it is appropriate that Humbert's perverse lust, which at last defeats his restitution of time, should be first reflected through the mirror of a Parisian hotel with a pubescent prostitute,”¹¹⁸ and now in this specific hotel. He begins to construct a scheme where he will drug Dolly and take advantage of her without her knowledge, then flees to the lobby, where he has this interaction with a strange man mysteriously sitting in the room, where the man asks:

“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 was hot. Where’s her mother?”
“Dead.”

¹¹⁷ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp.19.

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Prioleau. “Humbert Humbert through the Looking Glass.” *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 428-437. 1975, pp. 430.

“I see. Sorry. By the way, why don’t you two lunch with me tomorrow. That dreadful crowd will be gone by then.”
“We’ll be gone too. Good night”
“Sorry. I’m pretty drunk. Good night. That child of yours needs a lot of sleep. Sleep is a rose, as the Persians say. Smoke?”
“Not now.”¹¹⁹

This unnamed man is Clare Quilty, and this interaction is one of his most significant appearances in the story before his conversation with Humbert preceding his murder. The interaction between the two is bizarre and significant on a number of levels. Quilty appears like a ghost in the corner of the room; he is neither identified directly nor is his presence there explained. Humbert appears surprised and put off by him from his tone in the conversation, but Humbert does not justify why this conversation would be a notable inclusion when retelling this significant moment in his relationship with Lolita.

The conversation, like the speaker in question, is shrouded in mystery. Quilty seems to know precisely what Humbert is hiding and what his weaknesses are—by bringing up his daughter and the recent death of Charlotte—and he immediately obfuscates his knowledge with clever wordplay and rhyme. He also takes an immediate interest in Dolly, foreshadowing his later interest in and abduction of her. He also makes a notable mention of Dolly needing sleep, right as Humbert is considering drugging her. Quilty dances around the truths of Humbert’s situation, bringing them to the forefront of his mind as he deals with the pressure of his impending situation.

In the chapter where this conversation takes place, Humbert is cognizant of his audience, the “gentlewomen of the jury! Bear with me! Allow me to make just a tiny bit

¹¹⁹ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 127.

of your precious time! So this was *le grand moment*.”¹²⁰ This is him confessing to and describing his first tangible crime. While his previous behaviors towards her have been immoral and appalling—especially his encounter with her asleep in the living room—this is the first physical crime he commits against her. While he knows he cannot truly hide the evil nature of the action, every passage leading up to him assaulting her carefully frames and contextualizes his wrongdoing, allowing his audience to understand his reasoning, even if they cannot empathize with him. Preceding his conversation with Quilty, Humbert describes the temptation she presents to him and his stress and self-hatred in considering this action. Then after his conversation, he returns to Dolly, where she informs him that she has had sexual encounters in the past before she pursues him. And while she cannot give consent to him—as she is a minor and he is a grown adult who knows the moral thing would be to stop her—Humbert here is attempting to paint the situation as having been morally gray, where the ideal temptation was presented to him, a self-professed sinner, and he could not refuse. Quilty’s presence in this scene is therefore significant because Humbert manifests his double into the narrative for the first time when he commits his most evil act, and while Quilty does not directly encourage him to assault Lolita, he prods and encourages him subtly. If “Humbert assumes Adam’s place in the primordial relationship,”¹²¹ then Quilty is brought into that analogy to serve his role as the devil on Humbert’s shoulder. Like Mephistopheles is to Faust, Quilty’s presence alongside Humbert implies to the reader that Humbert is not alone in his evil; there is an evil, darker version of him lurking in the wings, who has the potential to do

¹²⁰ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 123.

¹²¹ John Ingham. “Primal Scene and Misreading in Nabokov’s *Lolita*.” *American Imago*, vol. 59, no. 1, pp. 27-52. 2002, pp. 33.

more harm to Dolly than Humbert. Quilty's inclusion in the lead up to this scene and the implication that this conversation could have contributed to Humbert's inevitable choice to harm Dolly is Humbert deflecting the guilt he feels and some of the culpability for his action on to his dark reflection and doppelgänger.

Throughout part two of this novel, Humbert describes the myriad ways he harms Dolly, even as he professes to love her. Yet in spite of him presenting evidence of his own evil, he still masterfully attempts to convince his audience that his evil double Quilty is worse than he is, and painting her as ungrateful and himself as pitiful in his love of her. Quilty's reentry into the story is therefore a disruption of the tragic lie of a relationship he is attempting to craft with Dolly, and a result of both Quilty's malicious interest in Dolly, and Dolly's "betrayal" of Humbert.

Once the three are brought in close proximity, Humbert leaves Dolly alone for a short length of time for a visit to a barber in the town of Kasbeam, in a scene that Nabokov referred to as "the nerves of the novel."¹²² In it the barber talks at Humbert for a great deal of time—leaving both Dolly and Quilty with time away from Humbert—with Humbert neither registering what the man is saying or realizing that the man is telling him personal information about his now deceased son. This "scene illustrates once again Humbert's deafness to the cares of others"¹²³ in the same way that he has been deaf to the actual wants and humanity of Dolly. And while the reader is not in this scene privy to the thoughts and desires of Dolly, it would not be a stretch to assume that perhaps in pursuing Quilty, Dolly is looking to gain freedom from Humbert no matter how or with whom she finds it. Humbert returns from the barber to find Dolly "sat, hands clasped in

¹²²Julian Connolly. *A Reader's Guide to Nabokov's Lolita*. Academic Studies Press, 2009, pp. 116.

¹²³ Ibid, pp. 116.

her lap, and dreamily brimmed with a diabolical glow that had no relation to me whatsoever.”¹²⁴ This “diabolical glow” was of course caused by the devil of Humbert’s own story, who has now physically invaded the sanctity of Humbert’s relationship with Lolita.

They then stay at the motel of an aptly named Mrs. Hays, showing a reflective irony in that “Humbert originally found Dolly in the care of a widow named Mrs. Haze, and he would now lose Dolly while staying at a place run by a widow with a name that is phonetically identical.”¹²⁵ This new Mrs. Hays could be seen then as a double to Dolly’s deceased mother, as this Mrs. Hays encourages Humbert to take Dolly to a hospital when she is running a fever, giving Dolly the means to plot and successfully escape Humbert with the help of Quilty, removing Dolly from Humbert as Charlotte had tried to in her last moments. Upon realizing that he has been duped by Dolly and his double, Humbert is thrown into a jealous rage, after having been spurned by his lover and connived by a man who seems to have beaten him for her affections. He notably says as he leaves the hospital that: “to myself I whispered that I still had my gun, and was still a free man—free to trace the fugitive, free to destroy my brother.”¹²⁶ Humbert here acknowledges Quilty as both being uncannily like him and his kin in their similar perverse desires, who was able to entice and seduce the young girl he has been obsessed with for the past few years, and he is willing to commit any crime to find her and have his revenge.

Humbert spends the next years searching for Dolly and expressing his ire for Quilty, living a monotonous life in these interim years after her departure. Humbert

¹²⁴ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 214.

¹²⁵ Julian Connolly. *A Reader's Guide to Nabokov's Lolita*. Academic Studies Press, 2009, pp. 118.

¹²⁶ Nabokov, pp. 247.

remains fixated on Quilty, and begins to imagine that Quilty is following him at every turn, and even switching between cars in an effort to taunt him. The omnipresence of Quilty once again makes him appear to be a ghost following and haunting Humbert, and calls into question Humbert's sanity as he begins to see Quilty at every turn.

Then, by chance, Humbert is given information on Dolly's location, learning that she has married and is in need of money. Humbert first is consumed by the idea of revenge, repeatedly mentioning the character Carmen—made famous from the eponymous Georges Bizet opera, who was killed by her scorned lover after leaving him for another—but upon seeing her grown up and pregnant, with a man who seems to genuinely care for her in a constructive relationship, his plans for revenge fade. In this scene he is able to recognize both how he has wronged her, and how much he loves her, even though she is no longer the ideal “nymphet” he saw as a possession for his own pleasure. As he comes to this epiphany, she also describes to him how she escaped him at Elphinstone and what exactly transpired between Quilty. “Crazy things, filthy things. I said no, I'm just not going to [she used, in all insouciance really, a disgusting slang term which, in a literal French translation, would be *souffler*] your beastly boys, because I want only you. Well, he kicked me out.”¹²⁷ She describes to Humbert Quilty's “Duk Duk Ranch” where he coerced young people into sexual situations, and wanted to film Dolly in such a situation, and at her reluctance she was cast aside. He also sees, in this moment of clarity with Dolly, the great harms that both he and Quilty caused her. As he asks her to run away with him, she says:

‘No,’ she said. ‘No, honey, no.’
She had never called me honey before.

¹²⁷ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 277.

‘No,’ she said, ‘it is quite out of the question. I would sooner go back to Cue. I mean—
She groped for words. I supplied them mentally (‘He broke my heart. *You* merely broke my life.’)¹²⁸

Humbert begins to see just how similar he is to his double, as both he and Quilty have broken this young woman in some way, whether that be emotionally, physically, or mentally. They have done irreparable harm to her that no one can ever take back, and equally contributed to the destruction of her childhood and of her future. Humbert has now truly seen the error of his ways—to whatever capacity he is able to reflect honestly on himself through the veil of his own psychosis and narcissism—and how he ruined the life of this young woman beyond repair.

Yet rather than contemplating his misdeeds or turning himself in for his crimes against Dolly, Humbert sets off to find the true villain in his mind, Quilty. He thinks to himself while leaving Dolly, “yes, I was quite sure I had to go. I had to go, and find him, and destroy him.”¹²⁹ Humbert could not dwell in his own guilt before he manifested for himself a stronger evil that he could vanquish in his double Quilty. Quilty, to him, is a greater threat than himself, who also abused Dolly along with countless other children, and did so with a vast array of resources and in spite of public knowledge and rumor of his activity. In casting Quilty as the greater evil—even though in the microcosm of Dolly Haze’s life, Humbert is her great evil—Humbert can both shirk some blame on to him and give himself a chance for redemption by vanquishing the inhuman monster that is Quilty, his dark reflection and more evil double.

¹²⁸ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 279.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 280.

Humbert tracks Quilty's location down to Grimm Street in a house he calls "Pavor Manor"—Latin for panic or terror¹³⁰—signaling to the reader that they and Humbert are entering into a nightmare situation. And the surreal nature of the scene lends credence to these names, as Humbert's dramatic encounter with Quilty becomes less and less realistic and even farcical. Both men are drunk—Quilty from medications and Humbert in an effort to steel his nerves—and are having trouble even perceiving what is happening. They begin to tussle on the floor and Humbert remarks, "I felt suffocated as he rolled over me. I rolled over him. We rolled over me. They rolled over him. We rolled over us."¹³¹ The two doubles are slowly becoming one, as Humbert attempts to kill his worse self in Quilty. And in his last moments Quilty demonstrates why he has been given the title of the worse self for both Humbert and the reader. He attempts to entice Humbert to spare him by offering him every sinful thing he could procure, seeming to know that he is speaking to a man with the same twisted tastes as him:

Melanie Weiss, a remarkable lady, a remarkable work—drop that gun—with photographs of eight hundred and something male organs she examined and measured in 1932 on Bagration in the Barda Sea, very illuminating graphs, plotted with love under pleasant skies—drop that gun—and moreover I can arrange for you to attend executions, not everybody knows that the chair is painted yellow—
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With that last vile offer from Quilty, Humbert begins to shoot at him wildly, finally slaying his wicked double. In this final plea, Quilty demonstrates himself to be the worse of the two, with both the desire for and ability to get more debaucherous and evil things than Humbert would ever even consider. As "several commentators have remarked that

¹³⁰ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 446, note 292/2.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 299.

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 302.

when comparing Humbert and Quilty, the latter, with his collection of erotica, his interest in physical freaks, and his connections with executions, should be considered a more debased version of the former.”¹³³ This is both a result of the way Quilty is described, and the way Humbert wants the reader to see it. Humbert’s murder of Quilty and Quilty’s confession of his guilt comes after Humbert’s most sympathetic moment, where he admits to the reader all his selfishness and his wrongs. Then he immediately goes to seek out Quilty, and his depiction of these events are surreal and perhaps even implausible. Quilty is gluttonous and evil, and the only person who when compared to Humbert, makes Humbert appear to be benign and sympathetic. By pairing his crime with a redeeming and heartfelt scene of self-realization, then depicting Quilty as a monstrous man who deserved the death that Humbert gave him, Humbert is once again able to assuredly control the narrative on this situation, convincing the members of the jury he is addressing of his supposed change in heart and vindication as the center of his own narrative.

As was mentioned in the Foreword—though in Nabokovian style, the names are somewhat shrouded—the three people at the center of this narrative, the two doubles and the object of their desire, are all deceased. The only thing that will survive their confrontation is this account of the story, and this story swings largely in Humbert’s favor. Humbert has commandeered this narrative for his own benefit, and he says as much as he closes his work:

“And do not pity C. Q. one had to choose between him and H. H., and one wanted H.H. to exist at least a couple of months longer, so as to have him make you live in the minds of later generations. I am thinking of aurochs and angels, the secret

¹³³ Julian Connolly. *A Reader's Guide to Nabokov's Lolita*. Academic Studies Press, 2009, pp. 130.

of durable pigments, prophetic sonnets, the refuge of art. And this is the only immortality you and I may share, my Lolita.”¹³⁴

Humbert has resurrected both Quilty and *his* Lolita in this narrative, making them both exactly who he wants them to be for his own comfort and benefit. Their perspectives or personal complexities are now shrouded entirely by Humbert’s narrow and one-sided perspective of them. Lolita will forever be his version of her, who he loved purely and whose life he ruined, and Quilty is his double, who exists entirely in relation to him and to make Humbert appear better by comparison. Unlike Svidrigaylov, who challenges Raskolnikov’s understanding of himself and casts him in a negative light, Quilty’s role as a double is entirely for the benefit of Humbert, who has crafted his story for his own vindication in the eyes of history. Humbert shirks blame for his history of evil acts with the help of his doppelgänger Quilty, as Humbert’s self-centered portrayal of events leaves him feeling vindicated and justified in large part because he ensures that he appears morally superior to Quilty. Humbert’s double is therefore one of the main narrative tools through which Humbert shrouds his own wrongdoing and malicious intent from the reader.

¹³⁴ Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel. Vintage Books, Random House, 1991, pp. 309.

Conclusion

Fyodor Dostoevsky and Vladimir Nabokov are two very different authors who produced works in wildly different eras and under the pressures of differing life circumstances. Their writing styles, influences, and moral conclusions vary in many respects, and the later author of the two famously reveled in distinguishing himself from and disparaging Dostoevsky. Yet in comparing *Crime and Punishment* and *Lolita*, similarities begin to arise, as both grant narrative focus to an indisputably evil criminal, and delve into the dark mind of a man capable of gruesome actions. Both works also pair their protagonist with a double character, who acts as a darker, more sinister reflections of the main character. These two works show the versatility of the double trope in literature, for while both novels revolve around a similar protagonist and use this trope, each double is used in the story for different purposes.

Svidrigaylov in *Crime and Punishment* is a tool through which Raskolnikov can self-actualize and better himself. By seeing his dark reflection in Svidrigaylov, as an older man who has grown apathetic to the wrongs he has committed in his past, he is able to visualize and speak with what could become his future self. Then, when Svidrigaylov's meaningless life leads him to self-destruct and commit suicide, Raskolnikov is incentivized to change his ways and admit to his crime. Raskolnikov is therefore set on a better path by Svidrigaylov, who gives him a model of himself he can strive against becoming. And while Raskolnikov's double is a tool for his own self-improvement, Humbert uses and manifests his double to shroud himself and his audience from the truth. Humbert writes and creates a version of his double, Clare Quilty—a man who he has recently murdered, which has led him to recount his life's story from a jail cell—to be the

only man in the world who makes Humbert appear better than he is. Humbert's descriptions of Quilty are theatrical, making him the diabolical ghost lurking around every corner who is worthy of the death Humbert gives him. By making Quilty his malicious doppelgänger, Humbert avoids confronting his own wrongdoing because anything he has done, Quilty did first and in a more wicked way. Quilty is a tool Humbert uses to make himself appear better, but in reality, he is only obscuring himself from the awful deeds that have come to define him, and refusing accountability for his actions by shirking the blame to Quilty, which makes him the eviler man.

The doppelgänger character is a way for both a character and a reader to understand that character's psyche and their view of themselves. Both Svidrigaylov and Quilty reveal complex inner truths about Raskolnikov and Humbert, in their interactions with and reactions to their double. Both doubles play an integral role in the narrative, helping to better define the protagonist through comparison and allowing room for introspection or obfuscation. Both authors' different uses of the double trope show the versatility the doppelgänger has in literature and how they can add to and enrich a story and a character's growth within it.

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