NABOKOV'S NEW WORLDS OF WORDS

NEW WORLDS OF WORDS:
VLADIMIR NABOKOV'S
FAIRY TALES

By

ADAM OBERFRANK, Jr., B. A.

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AUTHOR: Adam Oberfrank, Jr., B.A. (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Joseph Sigman

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ABSTRACT

It was Vladimir Nabokov's contention that all fictional works are fantastic in nature, and that any novel can be considered a type of fairy tale. Emphasizing that aspect of his own fiction are the numerous allusions to tales such as "Cinderella" and Alice's Adventures in Wonderland that appear in his texts. Nabokov's novels portray characters who transform their lives into illusory fantasies. Ultimately, characters like Humbert Humbert, Van, and Kinbote are themselves artist-figures, who turn reality into fantasy through the process of writing.

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What I feel to be the real modern world is the world the artist creates, his own mirage which becomes a new mir ("world" in Russian) by the very act of his shedding, as it were, the age he lives in.

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INTRODUCTION

Like Vladimir Nabokov, Kurt Vonnegut often makes it unclear as to just where his actual 'novel' begins. A case in point is the 1966 edition of Mother Night, which includes an author's Introduction and an Editor's Note, both by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. In the Editor's Note, Vonnegut accuses his fictionalized playwright-character, Howard W. Campbell, of being a liar: "Campbell was a writer," and to "say that he was a writer is to say that the demands of art alone were enough to make him lie, and to lie without seeing any harm to it."[1] In a way, Vonnegut is suggesting that all novelists, playwrights, and creators are liars. They write about people who never lived, living in places that do not really exist. Yet, importantly, Vonnegut concludes his accusation by suggesting that "lies told for the sake of artistic effect... can be ina higher sense, the most beguiling forms of truth."

I introduce Kurt Vonnegut into my discussion of Nabokov's fiction because of some similarities in their attitudes towards writing. In alluding to Campbell as a liar, Vonnegut is suggesting that he himself is a liar, and that his novels have been a series of lies. Vladimir Nabokov thought along similar lines, for he often suggested that fiction can provide only untruths and versions of reality: "Literature is invention. Fiction is fiction. To call a story a true story

is an insult to both art and truth....Nature always deceives.... The writer of fiction only follows Nature's lead."[3] In fact, in his novels, in his literary criticism, and in his various commentaries and introductions, Nabokov has always called attention to the artifice and deception to be found in all fiction. As John Updike has suggested: "In any decade Nabokov's approach would have seemed radical in the degree of severance betweeen art and reality that it supposes."[4]

From 1941 to 1948, at Wellesley, and from 1948 to 1958, at Cornell, Nabokov taught a number of literature courses. His lectures on Masters of European Fiction have been preserved and were published in 1980. These lectures provide some insight into Nabokov's attitude towards fiction, as well as clear evidence that he continually tried to impress upon his students the wide degree of severance between art and reality. In the introductory lecture on "Good Readers and Good Writers," Nabokov told his students:

> We should always remember that the work of art is invariably the creation of a new world, so that the first thing we should do is to study that new world as closely as possible, approaching it as something brand new, having no obvious connections with the worlds we already know.[5]

He reiterates these sentiments in a subsequent lecture on Mansfield Park:

> An original author always invents an original world....There is no such thing as real life for an author of genius: he must create it himself and then create the consequences. The charm of Mansfield Park can be fully enjoyed only when we adopt its conventions, its rules,

its charming make-believe.[6]

There is evidence in the Lectures on Literature to suggest that, in order to emphasize further the charming make-believe of the original worlds under examination, Nabokov repeatedly alluded to novels as "fairy tales." In the introductory lecture, Nabokov maintains: "The truth is that great novels are great fairy tales--and the novels in this series are supreme fairy tales."[7] Likewise, in the Mansfield Park lecture, he suggests: "Mansfield Park is a fairy tale, but then all novels are, in a sense, fairy tales."[8] Further on, when he introduces Madame Bovary for the first time, Nabokov begins by informing the class: "We now start to enjoy yet another masterpiece, yet another fairy tale."[9] Even in Pale Fire, Charles Kinbote's incisive annotations to the word "Today" include a reference to his having reminded Sybil Shade that: "We decided once, you, your husband, and I, that Proust's rough masterpiece was a huge ghoulish fairy tale."[10]

In suggesting to his class that all novels are "in a sense, fairy tales," Nabokov was not trying to suggest that all novels possess some of the traditional fairy tale characteristics--the happy ending, the long-ago setting, or the magical triumph of good over evil, for instance. He meant only that since all novels are fictional, the worlds they portray are worlds of the imagination. He was employing the term "fairy tale" because it was a simple method of distancing a novel from reality. Thus, in his lectures, Nabokov

was using the term "fairy tale" in a way that had little to do with the actual genre of the fairy tale.

If Nabokov had had the opportunity to lecture on his own works of fiction, he would have had little difficulty discussing the various novels as fairy tales. Not only are his works frequently self-reflexive (thus, they comment on their own existence as art), but almost every one of the novels mentions the term "fairy tale." In addition, one finds many allusions to actual fairy tales in Nabokov's works. In a way, the frequent allusions to tales like "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," and Alice in Wonderland serve to emphasize the enchanting make-believe of Nabokov's fictional worlds, whose places never existed, and people never lived. But, in addition, the introduction of fairy tale elements into the contemporary world offers Nabokov the ideal opportunity for "ironies, incongruities, clashes of genre"--the same opportunities gained by Donald Barthelme when he composed Snow White (1967).[11]

This thesis, then, explores the preponderance of fairy tale allusions and motifs in Nabokov's fiction, with a particular focus on six of the novels in English. It is true, however, that there are occasional references to fairy tales in Nabokov's Russian fiction, and many of those references foreshadow the fairy tale allusions in the English novels. For that reason, the first chapter deals briefly with some of the Russian works. Chapter Two examines the importance of

the term "fairy tale" in six of Nabokov's novels in English--*The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*(1941), *Bend Sinister*(1947), *Lolita* (1955), *Pnin* (1962), *Pale Fire* (1962), and *Ada* (1969). Chapter Three and Chapter Four concentrate on the specific references to "Cinderella" and to Lewis Carroll's "Alice" books that are found throughout those novels.

In following the single theme of fairy tales through the course of Nabokov's literary career, it is apparent that I am studying Nabokov's *oeuvre* as almost a single work in itself. This critical approach is, I believe, necessary in order to explore fully the relationship between Nabokov's fiction and the fairy tale. Other critics have analysed certain isolated texts and discovered a wealth of fairy tale allusions. James Joyce, for example, has investigated the influence of Carroll's works on *Lolita*[12]; while Charles Nicol and William Rowe have both explored "Cinderella" themes in *Pnin*[13]. These studies, although they examine the various influences upon a single text, do not reveal the extent of Nabokov's interest in fairy tales. In contrast, this thesis examines the allusions and motifs which are found throughout Nabokov's prose fiction.

CHAPTER I

PATHS THROUGH THE FOREST

In 1923, after graduating from Cambridge, Nabokov moved to Berlin, where he lived until 1938, when he moved to Paris. In 1940, he emigrated to America, where he went on to publish the six novels which will be dealt with in succeeding chapters. In Berlin and Paris, however, from 1923 to 1940, he composed a variety of works of poetry, drama, translation, and short and long fiction. Although these works were originally published in Russian, Nabokov had either translated or supervised the translation into English of most of his writings by the time of his death in 1977. Although the inclusion of his translated fiction in the canon of English literature is a tenuous matter, it is at least true that non-Russian readers are fortunate in being able to study Nabokov's early work in 'author'-ized translations.

During the years in Western Europe, Nabokov composed a total of nine novels, and all of them were transformed into English by 1971. Those nine novels are Mary (1926), King, Queen, Knave (1928), The Defence (1930), TheEye (1930), Glory (1932), Laughter in the Dark (1933), Despair (1936), Invitation to a Beheading (1938), and The Gift (1952). Page Stegner alludes to those novels in his Introduction to Nabokov's Congeries (1968):

> Commentators are fond of talking about an author's 'early works'--those experimental preludes to the later masterpiece, but in regard to Nabokov such discussions seem rather artificial. There are better and worse novels, good stories and indifferent stories, but one never has the feeling the author is groping for his form and style....Lolita, which appeared first in 1955, may be his masterpiece, but Invitation to a Beheading, 1938, must also be considered a work of genius.[1]

Stegner is quite right to suggest that one never senses Nabokov is groping for form or style in his early fiction; on the contrary, he always does seem completely in command of his fictional world. But I question Stegner's doubts concerning the validity of studying Nabokov's early works as preludes to the later fiction. Nabokov himself was often inclined to make comparisons between his early and late compositions. In the Foreword to Invitation to a Beheading, for example, he suggests that there do " exist certain stylistic links between this book and, say, my earlier stories (or my Bend Sinister)."[2] Similarly, in the Foreword to King, Queen, Knave, he comments at length on "the story of [his] style."[3] He reveals that at the time of that novel's composition, he was "at a stage of gradual inner disentanglement, when [he] had not yet found, or did not dare apply, the very special methods of re-creating a historical situation that [he] used ten years later in The Gift." Likewise, he also admits that the " 'human humidity' permeating [his] first novel, Mashenka [Mary], was all very well but the book no longer pleased [him]."

So although Stegner is wise to suggest that the early works are not necessarily lesser works, it is still true that, in some ways, Nabokov's early works are preludes to the later fiction. For the purposes of this study, a reading of Nabokov's entire canon reveals that there are only occasional references to fairy tales in the Russian fiction, and that those references are primarily general in nature (that is, there are almost no allusions to specific fairy tales). Those occasional references do, however, prefigure Nabokov's extensive use of fairy tale allusions in the English fiction, and even a brief study of the Russian fiction will show that Nabokov's interest in fairy tales can be traced back to the very beginnings of his literary career.

In June of 1926, while living in Berlin, Nabokov published a short story entitled "Skazka." Nabokov himself has called the story a "rather artificial little affair,"[4] and he had not re-read it in forty-four years when he finally began to translate it into English in 1974. Before the translation became available, a few American critics had already noticed the short story. Andrew Field, in Nabokov: His Life in Art, and Alfred Appel, in The Annotated Lolita, both mention "Skazka," but transliterate the title as "A Fairytale." When Nabokov and his son Dimitri translated the story for the collection, Tyrants Destroyed, they chose to entitle it "A Nursery Tale."

Although "A Nursery Tale" is a little-known short story,

originally published in Russian more than fifty years ago, it is obviously an appropriate work with which to begin. The story concerns a young man named Erwin, who lives in the world of his fantasies, in "a fairy tale German town."[5] Erwin constructs fantasies around the various women that he spots on the streets, on the streetcars, and in the cafés. He is day-dreaming one day at a sidewalk café, when he is interrupted by a woman who claims to be an incarnation of the Devil. They enter into an agreement allowing lucky Erwin to enjoy the sexual favours of anyone he chooses. Despite the fact that the Flower Aria from Faust is playing on the café phonograph, the only condition is that Erwin must choose an odd number of women. Unfortunately for Erwin, he cannot even fulfil that single condition, for he accidentally chooses the same girl twice. At midnight he is left with twelve women and the agreement is annulled, forcing him to return to a life of solitary fantasy.

"A Nursery Tale" is relevant to this study because it bears a number of similarities with the long fiction which Nabokov composed between 1926 and 1969. As with his novels, the story involves a male figure whose habits, opinions, and idiosyncracies are central to the text. Most importantly, in this story and in the novels, that central male figure is living simultaneously in two different worlds. One world is the very real earthly world, where the character lives and interacts with other humans. In this case, Erwin apparently

lives in Berlin, although the city is not identified. The second world exists within the mind of the protagonist, and is that character's individual conception of the real world. In his fiction, Nabokov attempts to portray both the inner and outer worlds, but more often than not, his novels are dominated by the worlds which his protagonists create for themselves. In the English fiction, characters such as V., Humbert Humbert, Van, and Kinbote literally control the text. But even in the Russian fiction, Nabokov portrays characters who create their own interior worlds just as he creates original worlds by composing fiction. In the case of "A Nursery Tale," Erwin's real life revolves around his work at the office, and he is too shy even to engage in conversation with young women. Yet Erwin lives in a fairy tale world of his imagination, and we are introduced to that world in the first words of the story: "Fantasy, the flutter, the rapture of fantasy! Erwin knew these things well....Twice daily, from the tram he took to the office and back, Erwin looked out and collected his harem. Happy, happy Erwin, to dwell in such a convenient, such a fairy-tale German town."[6] In his imagination, Erwin transforms and reworks reality into a more acceptable version. He lives in a real city, with trams, cafés, and other mortals like himself. Yet he dwells in a fairy tale town, as well, because his fantasies transform it into such a place. Of course, a complicating factor in all this is the figure of Frau Monde. Her role in the story conforms to

that of the blue fairy or fairy godmother-- a supernatural emissary granting wishes (and even her name suggests another world). But if she is indeed a supernatural figure, then "A Nursery Tale" is different from most of Nabokov's long fiction, where fairy tale worlds exist only in the mind. In truth, however, Frau Monde may only be another figment of Erwin's imagination, or may herself be using Erwin in a bizarre fantasy, for nothing supernatural actually occurs in the story. This early story does, then, compare with Nabokov's later fiction, even though there are no allusions to specific fairy tales. There is an allusion to the genre of the fairy tale,[7] and as in his later fiction, Nabokov uses the idea of the fairy tale in his attempt to portray the intense and fantastic world of the imagination.

"A Nursery Tale" was originally published in 1926, and in that same year, Nabokov published his first novel, Mary. For obvious reasons, fairy tales have associations not only with imagination, but with childhood and the past. In his Russian fiction, Nabokov often uses fairy tale images in order to suggest the nature of some characters' memories. Nabokov was a Russian émigré, and his audience primarily consisted of other émigrés. Suitably, many of the characters in Mary and his other Russian novels are themselves émigrés living in Berlin. Thus, most of his characters share his memories of life in pre-revolutionary Russia. In an attempt to evoke that distant and irretrievable world, Nabokov often

associated pre-revolutionary Russia with fairy tales. As Max Luthi suggests, fairy tales portray "an imperishable, eternal world,"[8] as well as a world far away from our own. Thus, they perfectly suited Nabokov's intentions, for he and his audience were caught between the knowledge that things could never again be as they were, and the hope that someday they could return to a familiar Russia. In portraying life in old Russia as part of a fairy tale past, Nabokov was not only trying to suggest how immeasurably distant that period seemed, but he was also trying to preserve that past through the timelessness of art.

Two characters from Nabokov's Russian novels are particularly obsessed with their past. They are Ganin, in Mary, and Martin Edelweiss, in Glory. Ganin is, naturally enough, a Russian émigré living in Berlin who is obsessed with his past experiences in old Russia. Ganin lives in a boarding-house in Berlin, but he is forced to come to terms with his past, because the wife of a fellow boarder is finally arriving from Russia. That wife is none other than Mary--a character we never directly encounter-- but whose relationship with Ganin ten years previous symbolizes for him the joy of the past and the happiness of old Russia.

The action of Mary occurs over a six day period from Sunday, April 1st, to Saturday, April 7th, when Mary is supposed to arrive in Berlin. As in Pnin, specific dates and hours are continually emphasized in the novel. But Ganin is

somehow distanced from the present, and he lives primarily in the world of his memory. For Ganin:

> ...no discrepancy existed between the course of life past and life present.
>
> It seemed as though his past, in that perfect form it had reached, ran now like a regular pattern through his everyday life in Berlin. Whatever Ganin did at present, that other life comforted him unceasingly.
>
> It was not simply reminiscence but a life that was much more real, much more intense than the life lived by his shadow in Berlin.[9]

For the days preceding Mary's arrival, Ganin muses over the past, fighting to remember, gradually playing the role of "a god, re-creating a world which had perished."[10] He faces obstacles in the real people around him, who constantly interfere with his thoughts, interrupting his memory-world with the mundane matters of quotidian life. He must even combat the conflicting memories which some others have of Russia. One character complains: "It's terrible--oh, terrible--that whenever we dream about Russia we never dream of it as beautiful, as we know it was in reality, but as something monstrous...." Ganin counters this, however, by maintaining: "No...I only dream about the beautiful things. The same woods, the same country house,"[11] and Mary.

By the end of the novel, Ganin is forced to accept the reality of the present and realize that the past is ultimately irretrievable. Ironically, he does this by rejecting the chance to meet Mary again. Once, in the midst of his

musings, Ganin becomes frustrated with the present, and wonders at the remarkable manner in which the past has so quickly disappeared:

> "And where is it all now?" mused Ganin. "Where is the happiness, the sunshine, where are those thick skittles of wood which crashed and bounced so nicely, where is my bicycle with the low handle-bars and the big gear? It seems there's a law that says nothing ever vanishes, that matter is indestructible; therefore the chips from my skittles and the spokes of my bicycle still exist somewhere to this day. The pity of it is that I'll never find them again.[12]

The irony is that Ganin has the opportunity to go and meet Mary at the station, and thus encounter a very real manifestation of his memories, a person who <u>has</u> survived from the past into the present. Yet he does not, and only thus does Ganin re-enter the world of the living. At the end of the novel, as Ganin leaves the boarding-house, heading for "the frontier...France, Provence, and then--the sea," he is transformed out of the shadow-world of the past:

> Everything seemed askew, attenuated, metamorphosed as in a mirror. And just as the sun rose higher and the shadows dispersed to their usual places, so in that sober light the world of memories in which Ganin had dwelt became what it was in reality: the distant past.[13]

And for Ganin, "this lazy regular process had a curiously calming effect, [and] the yellow sheen of fresh timber was more alive than the most lifelike dream of the past."

Thus, at the end of <u>Mary</u>, Ganin learns to live com-

fortably with his past. He refuses to try to recover it by renewing a relationship with Mary, and instead accepts her, and Russia, as memories. In the Foreword which Nabokov added to Mary for its English translation, he suggested: "Readers of my Speak, Memory cannot fail to notice certain similarities between my recollections and Ganin's."[14] Nabokov perhaps jokingly maintained that this was because of the "beginner's propensity for obtruding upon his own privacy, by introducing himself, or a vicar, into his first novel, [thus] getting rid of oneself before going on to better things." Although Nabokov did go on to better things, he never did succeed in "getting rid" of himself. Nowhere is this more true than in Glory, for there are many similarities between the central character, Martin Edelweiss, and Nabokov. Indeed, there are so many that in the 1970 Foreword to that novel, he admonished: "The author trusts that wise readers will refrain from avidly flipping through his autobiography Speak, Memory in quest of duplicate items or kindred scenery."[15] But by disregarding the author's request, and avidly flipping through the autobiography anyway, it becomes clear that Martin is another of Nabokov's fictional creations who is obsessed with a past very much like the author's. But Martin is able neither to accept the past, like Ganin, nor to satisfy himself by writing about it like Nabokov. Instead, at the end of the novel, he sets out in search of a Russia that no longer exists, and is apparently consumed by his own past.

A brief comparison of passages in Glory and in Speak, Memory offers conclusive evidence that the magical St. Petersburg past which so obsesses Nabokov and his vicars is inexorably associated, oddly enough, with English fairy tales. In Speak, Memory, Nabokov reveals: "I learned to read English before I could read Russian,"[16] and he adds: "In the drawing room of our country house, before going to bed, I would often be read to in English by my mother."[17] English fairy tales were thus the first form of fiction he encountered as a child. Elsewhere in Speak, Memory, he writes:

> In an English fairy tale my mother had once read to me, a small boy stepped out of his bed and rode his hobbyhorse along a painted path between silent trees. While I knelt on my pillow in a mist of drowsiness ...I imagined the motion of climbing into the picture above my bed and plunging into that enchanted beechwood--which I did visit in time.[18]

One of Nabokov's metaphorical visits to a forest of enchanted beechwood was obviously through the pages of Glory, in which Martin Edelweiss tries himself to climb through a nursery picture into an extinct fairy tale world. In the first few pages of the novel, the narrator alludes to Martin's childhood, and it is unmistakeably familiar:

> On the bright wall above the narrow crib with its lateral meshes of white cord and the small icon at its head...hung a watercolor depicting a dense forest with a winding path disappearing into its depths Now in one of the English books that his mother used to read to him...there was a story about just such a picture with a path through the woods, right above the bed of

> a little boy, who, one fine night, just as he was, nightshirt and all, went from his bed into the picture, onto the path that disappeared into the woods.[19]

For both Nabokov and Martin, then, English fairy tales held associations with childhood in old Russia. Perhaps Nabokov was slightly disappointed that he had not been exposed to Russian fairy tales and fables, as well as the English. In Chapter One of Glory, we discover that Martin's mother refused to share Russian folklore with her son:

> Once upon a time there prowled marvelous beasts in our country. But [Martin's mother] found Russian fairy tales clumsy, cruel, and squalid, Russian folk songs inane, and Russian riddles idiotic. She had little faith in Pushkin's nanny and said that the poet himself had invented her, together with her fairy tales....Thus in early life, Martin failed to become familiar with something that through the prismatic wave of memory, might have addded an extra enchantment to his life.[20]

But as will be seen, however, Martin was not lacking in enchantments, and the English fairy tales adequately "awakened his imagination in childhood." In fact, the narrator even goes so far as to suggest that fairy tales provided "the gentle nudge that jars the soul into motion and sets it rolling."[21] The problem for Martin is that, once rolling, he becomes unable to differentiate between past and present, between fairy tale and reality. When "he recalled the past, he would wonder if one night he had not actually hopped from bed into picture, and if this had not been the beginning of the journey...into which his whole life had

turned."[22] Even at university, in Cambridge, Martin cannot think of his childhood without remembering it as a fairy tale. Other Englishmen of his age had relegated fairy tales "into the dimness of the past properly allotted nursery things." But:

> Martin's life at a certain point had made an abrupt turn and taken a different course, and for this very reason had assumed a certain fairy-tale flavor, and a book he had been fond of in those days was now more enchanting and vivid in his memory than the same book in the memory of his coevals.[23]

Thus, like Nabokov, Martin associates his childhood with fairy tales, reading, and with the vision of a painted path through an enchanted forest.

Martin's downfall is that he cannot distinguish between the fairy tale painting and the real world of the present. At the end of the novel, he concocts his own tale around the myth of old Russia. His cousin Sonia tells him that she had often imagined a "land where ordinary mortals were not admitted," and Martin immediately connects this with his memories of Russia. When he asks her: "What shall we call this land?" he is already "recollecting his games...on the fairy tale Crimean shore."[24] Together, they settle upon the name "Zoorland" and discuss the imaginary habits and customs of their wonderland, but while Sonia thinks of it as only a silly fantasy, Martin continually associates it with Russia. In the end, Sonia mentions Zoorland to her poet-friend Bubnov, and he fashions a novella around it (just as Nabokov had).

But Martin becomes more and more obsessed with the fantasy, and decides that he must return to Zoorland. He realizes the implications of what he plans to do, and tells a friend: "The fact is, I'm planning to cross illegally into Russia from Latvia,"[25] but the voyage is ultimately an attempt to recover the fairy tale world of his childhood, by walking through a painted path into Zoorland. Ultimately, Martin leaves for Zoorland-Russia and vanishes from the text. No one knows his fate, all we know is that Martin has attempted an "illegal crossing of the most perilous border in the world,"[26] and the novel ends with Martin's friend Darwin listening to the silence of Alpine woods, shaking his head.

Ganin and Martin can therefore be seen as having divergent reactions to their obsessions with the past. Ganin flees Berlin, Mary, and a "house of ghosts," and heads to an uncertain future, while Martin travels in the opposite direction. Ganin learns to accept his memories of the past, and at novel's end, seems firmly grounded in the reality of the present. Martin's fate is never made clear, for he disappears into his past, into his fantasy, and into the text itself. Thus, at the end of the respective novels, the two appear to be on opposite sides of the "perilous border" separating art and reality. As a character, Martin is probably killed by the very real bullets of the Soviet border patrol. But as a metaphor, crossing into Zoorland represents

Nabokov's own escape into the world of fiction, where memory, fantasy, and imagination are supreme.

It is evident from the Russian fiction that Nabokov alludes to fairy tales as a way of portraying the various ways in which the human mind reworks reality. Indeed, on two other occasions in the Russian novels, there is a simple distinction made between fairy tales and the real world. In Invitation to a Beheading, Cincinnatus has been thrust into jail, primarily for being intelligent in a land of ignorance. At one point, his jailer warns him against attempting to escape, by saying: "Only in fairy tales do people escape from prison."[27] Likewise, in The Gift, the narrator interrupts the tale of a great Kahn losing his way during a hunt, to say that: "thus begin the best fairy tales and thus end the best lives."[28] That interjection, in particular, subtly suggests the dangers involved in over-imagination. Characters such as Erwin and Martin are in some ways exaggerated versions of the artist figure, as John Shade says of the character in Pale Fire, "who thought he was God and began redirecting the trains."[29] But, as individuals, many of the characters in Nabokov's novels are overly obsessed with their memories or their fantasies. Certainly, Erwin's fantasy world is not as "happy" as the narrator would have us believe. Thus, while fairy tales can suggest the unique conception of reality which each character (or novelist) possesses, they

can also represent the over-indulgent reworkings of reality that are symptomatic of madness. Indeed, it will be seen that characters in Nabokov's fiction mythologize or transform their pasts and presents into fairy tales as a way of coping with reality. Thus, Erwin and Martin can be seen as precursors to Humbert Humbert, V., Van, and even Pnin, all of whom at some point think of their lives as fairy tales, and in doing so, inject irony, humour, and pathos into the various texts.

CHAPTER II

WAVERING PRINCE CHARMINGS

Nabokov's nine Russian novels are generally realistic in nature. One reason for this is that they have their settings in real places like Berlin and St. Petersburg. In Glory, for instance, it is clear that the imaginary Zoorland is only Martin's version of a very real Soviet state. Likewise, while Invitation to a Beheading is not set in any recognizable country, it is assumed that it does take place on our earth. The settings for the English novels, however, are slightly more ambiguous. They range from the realistically re-created Paris and Cambridge of Sebastian Knight to the fantastic amalgamations, Terra, Anti-Terra, Amerussia, and Scoto-Scandinavia of Ada. Even in Bend Sinister, which like Invitation involves a prototypical police state, there is a disconcerting mixture of the real and the imaginary, with references to Ekwilist philosophy, Budafok, the city of Padukgrad, but also to Rocky Mountain fir trees, Turkish cigarettes, and Stratford-on-Avon. Furthermore, whereas in Glory it is obvious that Zoorland is Martin's fantasy, the status of Zembla in Pale Fire is unclear.

The obscure nature of the settings only reflects what is true of each of the English novels: the frame in which each text is enclosed has very indistinct boundaries. Indeed, the beginnings and endings of the English novels are frequently

vague or uncertain. The Russian novels have various types of endings. They often end with the death of at least one character: at the end of The Defence, Luzhin leaps from a window; King, Queen, Knave ends with the death of the "queen," Martha; Albinus is murdered in Laughter in the Dark; and Cincinnatus is executed at the conclusion of Invitation. Even without a terminating death, the conclusions of other novels are just as conventional--Ganin leaves Berlin for points unknown at the end of Mary, and Smurov, in The Eye, is left to languish in his condition, trying to understand the nature of his identity. Although the conclusions of other novels are more ambiguous (The Gift and Glory for instance), most of the Russian novels end with their characters intact; that is, characters may be either dead or alive, but their status as individuals is not undermined. In contrast to this are the conclusions of Nabokov's six English novels. Krug in Bend Sinister, and V. in Sebastian Knight are actually dismantled at the end of their respective novels. In Pnin, Nabokov himself gradually materializes as a character, undermining the status of the title character. Finally, Lolita, Pale Fire, and Ada all take the form of edited documents, with introductions and forewords, all of which distance the characters, and blur the beginnings and endings of the novels. Thus, the central male characters must all, in the end, relinquish their power to other characters, death, editors, or Nabokov himself.

During their brief fictive lives, however, Nabokov's English characters are at least given the opportunity to speak for themselves. In four of the novels, we are allowed free access to the worlds of imagination within the central characters' minds, without either the benefits or the drawbacks of an intermediating narrator. Only in Bend Sinister and Pnin does Nabokov employ the services of a third person. The other novels are all variations on first-person narrative. Indeed, Humbert's confessions, Van's memoir, V.'s biography, and Kinbote's annotations are all forms of fictive autobiography, in that the act of self-consciously writing about their lives drives the central characters to mythologize and fantasize about their pasts. In the Russian fiction we observe both the reality of a character's situation or past, as well as the fantasies they create. But in Sebastian Knight, Lolita, Ada, and Pale Fire there are no real life referents, and we are allowed access only to individual illusions and fantasies. Thus the numerous allusions to fairy tales throughout those novels emphasize the fantastic nature of the characters' autobiographies. Unlike the Russian fiction, where fairy tale allusions are more often applied by an outside observer (when, for example, the narrator begins Laughter in the Dark with the words "Once Upon A Time"), the allusions in the English texts are integrated into the text by characters creating fictions about themselves.

It is evident, therefore, that the past and fairy tales

are intimately connected in Nabokov's fiction. One of the major reasons for this is that Nabokov himself associated the past with childhood tales. In Speak, Memory, he writes:

> The English word 'childhood,' which sounds mysterious and new...becomes stranger and stranger as it gets mixed up in my small, overstocked, hectic mind with Robin Hood, Little Red Riding Hood, and the brown hoods of old hunch-backed fairies. (26)

Many of his fictional characters share Nabokov's obsession with the past, and also associate it with fairy tales. One of the characters most obsessed with his past is Krug, in Bend Sinister, and for good reason, for his wife has just died, leaving him to live in a nightmare world of meaningless arrests and pointless violence. He is constantly ruminating on the past, like Ganin, and especially on his memories of his wife, Olga, whom he remembers as if in a dream, in familiar domestic situations: "bliss unvalued at the time, fiery hair, her voice reading of small humanized animals to her son."[1]

Just as Krug remembers his wife reading fairy tales to their son as an immortal image from the past, so too does Sebastian Knight's governess rekindle her memories of old Russia. As V. hunts all over Western Europe for clues to his half-brother's "real life," in order to write the authoritative biography, he searches out an ex-governess, Mademoiselle. He finds her in Switzerland, among a "union of old Swiss women who had been governesses in Russia before the revolution,"[2] and who now "lived in their past." V. finds Madem-

oiselle's recollections: "either hopelessly distorted, or so foreign to my memory that I doubted their past reality." (22) In the end, the distance in chronological terms between old Russia of the past and Europe of 1936 is too great, and the woman's memory transforms past reality into fairy tale. As V. goes to leave, Mademoiselle yells to him: "Write that book, that beautiful book...make it a fairy tale with Sebastian for prince. The enchanted prince...." (23)

For Mademoiselle and other Nabokovian characters, conceptualizing the past as a fairy tale is only one way of consciously or sub-consciously mythologizing and transforming events which have occurred previously. Pnin is a good example of a character who consciously re-organizes his past so that it is rendered comprehensible. Pnin's past is reminiscent of Nabokov's and is filled with as much turmoil. At the beginning of the novel, he is forced to leave a suitcase of clothing at a bus station, but he casually accepts the fact: "He would retrieve it on his way back. He had lost, dumped, shed many more valuable things in his life."[3] Elsewhere, we get another hint that Pnin has had a difficult past. When he acquires a small house for the first time, he realizes gratefully that "had there been no Russian Revolution, no exodus, no expatriation in France, no naturalization in America," (143) he would have been no better off than he currently was.

Pnin, therefore, seems quite resilient in terms of

dealing with his personal past. He does, however, have a difficult time coping with what has happened to the women he has loved in his life. In one case, he deals with his memories by rejecting them. This is true in the case of Mira Belochkin, whom he loved at the age of eighteen. Mira and Pnin were passionately involved as youths, but were separated by the Civil War, and each went on to marry someone else. In later years, Pnin discovered that Mira had been executed at Buchenwald, and this information had been nearly impossible to accept:

> In order to exist rationally, Pnin had taught himself, during the last ten years, never to remember Mira Belochkin -- not because in itself the evocation of a youthful love affair, banal and brief, threatened his peace of mind...but because if one were quite sincere with oneself, no conscience, and hence no consciousness, could be expected to subsist in a world where such things as Mira's death were possible. (133-134)

In Mira's case, then, Pnin tries to ignore his memories and continue living normally, but in the case of his ex-wife, Liza, the task is more complex. Pnin continues to love Liza, even after she has put him through a series of hardships. He cannot simply ignore his feelings or reject his memories of her, and when she comes to visit him at Waindell College, primarily to ask him for money, he still longs to "hold her, to keep her." In order to assimilate all of these various emotions, Pnin mythologizes his past with Liza, and deludes himself into believing that life

with her had been dream-like. The zenith of this self-deception occurs just prior to Pnin's departure for America. Liza had left Pnin for another man, but had returned, seven months pregnant, asking Pnin to take her to America with him. She conveniently fails to tell him that her lover will be travelling on the same ship, and that they plan to marry in America. Yet, ironically, under the impression that he is about to begin a new life with Liza in the United States, "those days were probably the happiest in Pnin's life," and as far as he was concerned "everything had a rich fairy tale tinge to it." (47) Upon arrival in America, Liza leaves the unfortunate Pnin, and in order to deal with the memories of his wife, his undying feeling for her and the reality of their separation, Pnin remembers the fairy tale times of the past. Thus, like Krug, who resurrects images of his wife reading to their young son, and Mademoiselle, who remembers Sebastian Knight as a fairy tale prince and ignores his death, Pnin mythologizes certain parts of the past in order to cope with the present.

While it is true that the past and the fairy tale are closely allied in Nabokov's Russian fiction, and the association continues throughout the English novels, there are certain aspects of the past/fairy tale relationship which appear in the English works only. In particular, I refer to the passages of reminiscence in Lolita and Ada

which link memories of a fairy tale past with memories of sexual experience. The next chapter examines the ironic juxtaposition of fairy tale motifs and sexual encounter as they pertain to the specific Cinderella figures in the English novels. At this point, however, I do wish to suggest that, while there are allusions to pre-revolutionary Russia, childhood, and fairy tale pasts in both the Russian and English texts, the fairy tale allusions in the English novels are more frequently associated with such themes as the inevitability of death and the pleasures of sexual gratification. This is not to imply that there is neither sex nor death in the Russian novels, for there is that and "much, much, more." In the English novels, however, those elements are ironically intertwined with fairy tale allusions to a greater extent than in the earlier work.

As mentioned, it is in Lolita and Ada that sexual elements and fairy tale elements are most frequently connected, but one can also see evidence of this unusual combination in other novels. In Pale Fire, one of the escaping King's adventures takes place near a mountainside farmhouse. He takes shelter in that farmhouse, inhabitated by "a gnarled farmer and his plump wife who, like personages in an old tedious tale, offered the drenched fugitive a welcome shelter ...and a fairy tale meal of bread and cheese."[4] As the King prepares to leave the next day, he discovers that he will be escorted some of the way by "lazy Garh," who he expectantly

hopes will be a "bare-kneed mountain lad." Unfortunately for the King, Garh is only a "disheveled young hussy," and as soon as they are alone, she pulls off her sweater, "revealing her naked back and blancmangé breasts" to the King, who, unimpressed, fends off her affection and flees.

This juxtaposition of fairy tale and sexual encounter is, however, most apparent in Lolita and Ada. Humbert Humbert begins his confessions by reminiscing about an "initial fateful elf," whom he calls Annabel Leigh. In Poe's "Annabel Lee," the narrator also reminisces about an intense love affair that is part of the past, for the object of his love has passed away. But Humbert, in ironic contrast to Poe's narrator, is not satisfied to remember a youthful relationship with Annabel, and instead tries to resurrect her in the person of Lolita. In fact, Humbert is convinced that: "in a certain magic and fateful way Lolita began with Annabel," and that "he only broke her spell by incarnating another."[5]

Thus, Lolita is from the beginning associated with magic, spells, enchantments, and other motifs from the fairy tale world, and these associations continue throughout. When Humbert first espies Lolita, he immediately connects her with Annabel, and he thinks himself "the fairy-tale nurse of some little princess (lost, kidnapped, discovered in gypsy rags through which her nakedness smiled at the King and his hounds)." (41) Later, he sees her name in the class

list (oft-studied by critics), and he refers to her as a "fairy princess between her two maids of honor." (54) On another occasion, he says that "nothing could have been more childish than her snubbed nose, freckled face, naked neck where a fairy tale vampire had feasted." (141) In this way, Humbert deludes himself into believing in the magic of their relationship, while on other occasions he seems plagued by the reality of the situation. Before experiencing the delightful charms of Lolita for the first time, he sees himself as a "comic, clumsy, wavering Prince Charming," and slips her a "magic potion," thus transforming her into a "Sleeping Beauty." (124) Even after the first night together, Humbert tries to imagine himself as a helpless character trapped by an enchanting spell, but Book One ends with Humbert caught in the perilous border between his fantasy and the reality of what he is doing.

In Book Two, Humbert's fairy tale world with Lolita gradually disintegrates and crumbles, despite all of his best efforts. He visits Magic Cave and Elphinstone with her, buys her The Little Mermaid by Andersen, and continues to consider himself an "enchanted traveller," held in thrall by the "mythopoeic nymphet." He is even enchanted by her tennis game, which "leaves him teetering on the very brink of unearthly order and splendor." He says: "Her tennis was the highest point to which I can imagine a young creature bringing

the art of make-believe, although I daresay for her it was the very geometry of basic reality." (232-233) Thus does Humbert attempt to keep himself immersed in a fairy tale fantasy, but Lolita refuses to play her part. She begins the second book as Humbert's "Frigid Princess," and by the end of the novel is a tired woman, old before her time, and grounded in the very real world. (275-280) Humbert tries to track her down after she escapes with Quilty and that quest takes up most up of Book Two. In the end, he discovers her, married, and living in a shack in Coalmont. Even then, in a display of resiliency that resembles Pnin's love for Liza, Humbert offers Lolita a fairy tale escape. As he leaves, he tells her: "From here to that old car you know so well there is a stretch of twenty paces. It is a very short walk. Come just as you are. And we shall live happily ever after." (280)

Of course, Humbert's fairy tale escape is refused. Thus, he is forced to invent another fairy tale, and he does so, for he intends to go and revenge himself on Quilty. He leaves Dolly Schiller to her life with Mr. Schiller, and goes to hunt down his adversary. He finds Quilty at Pavor Manor, on the Humbert-named "Grimm Road," which reminds one of "Hoffmann Street" in "A Nursery Tale." (I have not as yet found allusions to Place Perrault or to Andersen Road.) When he arrives, he shoves open the front door, and watches as it swings open "as in a medieval fairy tale." The entire murder scene, as Alfred Appel has pointed out, is fantastic

and fairy tale-like, and comes as the culmination of Humbert's entrapment within his own imagination.[6] After the shooting of Quilty, Humbert totally loses contact with reality, and drives off on the wrong side of the road, careening through red lights, and existing in a dream-like state, until he comes to a sudden stop, his car encountering some fragment from the real world.

Because Lolita is in the form of Humbert's confessions, it is difficult to discern completely the nature of the fairy tale allusions. Perhaps Humbert purposefully inserted fairy tale elements into his confessions to temper the seriousness of his actions. But the novel itself seems to undermine such a reading, for the thoroughness with which his experiences are associated with fairy tales suggests that Humbert did feel himself captive within a world of the fantastic. Ultimately, of course, Nabokov lies behind all of this, and it cannot be denied that he, at least, wished to portray Humbert as a man held in thrall between fantasy and reality.

As in Lolita, there are a number of fairy tale allusions in Van's memoir, Ada. Most of the allusions pertain to "Cinderella" or Alice in Wonderland, and will be examined in the next two chapters. But there are also a few general allusions to fairy tales in Ada, and an exploration of those allusions reveals how Nabokov comically weaves fairy tale patterns into the recounting of Van and Ada's relationship.

In examining the allusions to fairy tales in Nabokov's fiction, the fact that he uses fairy tales for comic purposes cannot be ignored, and in Ada the juxtaposition of sexual reminiscence and fairy tale memories reaches absurd lengths.

In Van's memoir, we are again faced with the recollections of an older gentleman, who recounts his past sexual relationships as if they were part of a fairy tale world. One of the prime examples occurs when Van describes one of his many afternoon escapades with his cousin-sister Ada. In this case, the characters are actually playing out fairy tale roles at the time, and this emphasizes the ironic combination of fairy tale and sexual awakening. Ada and Van tie younger sister Lucette to a tree, under the pretext of being dragon and knight, fighting valiantly over the captive princess.[7] They take this opportunity to prance off into the woods for the "few precious minutes" they need every day, and return to discover Lucette entangled in the cords. They are under the impression that Lucette had not yet extricated herself, but as is later revealed, Lucette had escaped and had seen Van and Ada making love in the dark grove. Thus, not only is Van and Ada's sexual awakening associated with fairy tales, but little Lucette's first encounter with such matters is actually under the guise of a "fairy tale damsel in distress." (143)

On another occasion, Van and Ada are referred to as

fairy tale characters immediately after a night together. The two children had met at night in an old tool room, where Van had unzipped Ada's dress "with such impetuous force that he nearly tore it in two to expose her beauty," and they had stayed "fiercely engaged" for the night. Yet, the next morning, they steal into the kitchen, and Van's memoir sets the scene in fairy tale perfection:

> They sat facing each other, at a breakfast table, munching black bread with fresh butter, and Virginia ham, and slices of genuine Emmenthaler cheese -- and here's a pot of transparent honey: two cheerful cousins "raiding the icebox" as children in old fairy tales, and the thrushes were sweetly whistling in the bright-green garden as the dark-green shadows drew in their claws. (191)

The perfection of the scene ironically offsets the truth of what the children were doing, and this fairy tale/reality dualism follows the pair throughout. The association culminates later in the text, when the two embrace for an "immortal moment...enjoying as they had never enjoyed before, the 'happy forever' feeling at the end of never-ending fairy tales." (287) Ada responds to the description of that moment (she occasionally interrupts Van's text) with: "That's a beautiful passage Van. I shall cry all night." On other occasions, however, the two of them look back over their affair with a more realistic perspective. In fact, the many fairy tale allusions can be seen as Van and Ada's attempt to create, in retrospect, a childhood they realize they never had. On one occasion, they

cut through the fairy tale shimmerings of memory and re-collection: "But I was only twelve," Ada would cry when some indelicate detail was brought up. "I was in my fifteenth year," Van would reply sadly.

In the end, the comic juxtaposition of fairy tales and juvenile sexual adventure is evidence of Nabokov's unique sense of humour, but is at the same time representative of Van's efforts to transform an anti-fairy tale youth into a "once upon a time" past. Certainly, it is true that Nabokov's English characters allude to childhood tales because they have vague connotations of a dreamy, distant, and fantastic past. But fairy tales, in the sense that they are "lies," also suggest the manner in which the mind and memory can re-organize the past by discarding certain elements and emphasizing others. In this way, fairy tales are an integral part of a defense mechanism which combats the horror of reality (as when Howard Campbell, in Vonnegut's Mother Night, describes Nazi machine-gunners as a "merry little band of steel-helmeted Robin Hoods"[8]). But what cannot be forgotten is that the English characters face various types of reality. Pnin's difficulties in Europe and Krug's nightmare state represent hardships imposed upon an individual by outside forces. In contrast, Van, Humbert, and Kinbote instigate their own problems, so their fairy tale fantasies are ways of dealing with situations that they themselves created. Ironi-

cally, of course, all of the fantasies exist within Nabokov's own fictional fantasies. As will be seen later, Nabokov's characters gradually come to learn that not only are they captive within their own imagination, but that they are trapped in someone else's fairy tale as well.

CHAPTER III

Return from the Ashes

The first two chapters concentrated on Nabokov's essentially generic use of the term "fairy tale." The term is frequently used for descriptive purposes, but it has so many connotations that meaning is often ambiguous or relative. For instance, when Martin Edelweiss, in Glory, experiences a "momentary urge to jump out and return to the happy, fairy tale farm," (165) it is because he is saddened at having to leave the farm that had seemed so timeless and comfortable. When Charles Kinbote recounts the King's captivity, he reports that the King "was caged in his rose-stone palace from a corner turret of which one could make out with the help of field glasses lithe youths diving into the swimming pool of a fairy tale sports club." (77) Here, the club is fairy tale-like because it is outside the walls of the castle and is thus unreachable, but the King's sexual predilections, and his strained efforts to catch a glimpse of the youths, add an ironic twist to the mythologization of the sports club.

As the above examples suggest, Nabokov often alluded to people and places as though they were from some vague "fairy tale" world. But, Nabokov was quite familiar with the genre itself, and in his English novels one encounters allusions to specific tales as well as to the ambiguous

"fairy tale" world. The novel which alludes most frequently to particular fairy tales is Lolita, where one finds mention of "Sleeping Beauty," "Hansel and Gretel," "The Little Mermaid," and "Rumpelstiltskin," among others. It would be difficult to uncover any substantial intertextual relationships based on those tales, but one fairy tale which is alluded to in Lolita, and which figures in all of the other novels in English, is "Cinderella." In fact, a close study of all of Nabokov's fiction leads one to perceive a Cinderella motif, beginning with a few isolated and indirect references in some of the Russian fiction, and gradually reaching fruition in the English novels, where the allusions become more and more overt.

The Lectures on Literature provide a clue to why Nabokov repeatedly chose to introduce Cinderella characters into his fiction. In his lecture on Mansfield Park, he suggests that Austen's novel "is a fairy tale," (10) and that the heroine, Fanny Price, is representative of "a most popular figure in the novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries." (10) Specifically, he maintains: "Fanny is an adopted child, an impecunious niece, a gentle ward," and "we find the gentle ward not only in the works of lady authors, but also in those of Dickens, Dostoevski, Tolstoy, and many others." Finally, he relates Fanny and the "gentle ward" tradition to another literary prototype:

> The prototype of these quiet maidens, whose

> bashful beauty finishes by shining in full when the logic of virtue triumphs over the chances of life -- the prototype of these quiet maidens is, of course, Cinderella. (11)

Nabokov suggests that a novelist might use the Cinderella character in order to induce a "steady stream of pathos," provide a perfect victim for romantic entanglement, and act as a representative of the author. In his own novels, however, the Cinderella figures act in ironic opposition to those roles. Their romantic entanglements are often overtly sexual, and they rarely display any of the traits of the "quiet maidens" of literature -- "dependant, helpless, friendless, neglected, forgotten -- and then marrying the hero." (11) Indeed, they are almost solely created for purposes of irony and comic effect, and they might be more accurately described as anti-Cinderella figures.

There have been a few previous inquiries into the Cinderella figures in Nabokov's fiction. Charles Nicol has carefully explored the Cinderella allusions in Pnin,[1] and William Rowe has expanded on Nicol's findings,[2] but both refer only in passing to the other novels. Douglas Fowler, in Reading Nabokov, refers to what he calls the "Cinderella micro-motif" in Bend Sinister and Ada, but fails to mention the other novels.[3] Other critics, such as Alfred Appel, have alluded to the Cinderella references,[4] but none have had the proper forum in which to discuss fully the Cinderella theme which begins quietly in Nabokov's early Russian work,

and reappears in all of the English novels.

The first example of what might be called an anti-Cinderella figure appears in King, Queen, Knave, Nabokov's second novel. In that novel, Nabokov creates a minor association between the character Martha and the Cinderella prototype. Martha strikes up an adulterous affair with her husband's nephew, and plans to murder her husband and inherit his fortune. At the end of the novel she even falls ill and dies, so that her character, her actions, her situation, and her fate are most un-fairytale-like. Yet this is the first instance of Nabokov's associating a Cinderella motif with one of his characters. In this case, it is a motif which will be found in many of the later English novels -- Cinderella's slipper. Furthermore, as in later novels, Martha's sexuality is incongruous with the virtuous and faithful Cinderella paradigm with which she is associated.

The indirect allusions to Martha as Cinderella seem rather ambiguous unless they are seen as Nabokovian clues which must be followed through the novel to the end. At the beginning of King, Queen, Knave, Martha and her husband are in a train compartment which they share with the nephew who is coming to visit them, although none of them realize the fact. When the couple leave the compartment for a moment, the nephew, Franz, begins to fantasize about the woman who had been seated across from him, whom he does not know is his aunt. He imagines her body but attaches to it the

face of a model from advertisements, and

> only then did the image come to life: the bare-bosomed girl lifted a wine glass to her crimson lips, gently swinging her apricot-silk leg as a red backless slipper slowly slid off her foot. The slipper fell off, and Franz, bending down after it, plunged softly into slumber. (14)

Later, the slipper motif is picked up again in association with Martha. On this occasion, Franz and his uncle are trying to enter Franz's room, but Martha is on the other side trying to keep them out: "The handle attempted to jerk again. There were now two men against her. She slipped and lost a slipper, which had happened in another life." (221) That other life may have been her dream-life in Franz's fantasy, but it may ironically suggest a previous life as "Cinderella." Ultimately, the slipper association follows Martha right into her next life, for she suddenly falls ill and dies at the end of the novel. It is reported that "her last words had been (in a sweet remote voice [her husband] had never heard before) 'Darling, where did you put my emerald slippers -- no, I mean earrings? I want them. We shall all dance, we shall all die.'" (271) Thus does the Martha-slipper association end, and although the name Cinderella never appears, it is fairly evident that the overt Cinderella figures of the English novels have their first ironic incarnation in the character of Martha.

It does not appear that the Cinderella prototype is re-incarnated in any of the other Russian novels, but she

reappears in Bend Sinister, and from then on becomes a permanent fixture in any cast of characters. In Bend Sinister, the Cinderella associations are worked out so completely with respect to a most inappropriate heroine that the irony becomes extreme. In the novel, Adam Krug is under great pressure from the political upheaval in his country. He finds solace only in the memories of his late wife, and in the comfort of his son's company. Yet, in the end, agents of the state infiltrate his home, with the help of Mariette Bachofen, a young girl who makes a most unlikely Cinderella.

Mariette mysteriously appears from a neighbouring apartment to offer her help when Krug loses the services of his housekeeper. She quickly moves into the room near the nursery. The Cinderella motif follows Mariette throughout Bend Sinister. On first seeing her, Krug notices her eyes, which are "shaded by sooty lashes," and later he remembers seeing her in the hallway previously: "Cinderella, the little slattern, moving and dusting in a dream, always ivory pale and unspeakably tired after last night's ball." (123) On another occasion, Krug tries to find Mariette, and he discovers "Cinderella in David's bedroom." She had been in the habit of wearing "old bed slippers trimmed with dirty fur," but at this point, he finds her "half-sitting, half-lying athwart the bed, with one leg stretched far out, the bare ankle resting on the back of a chair, the slipper

off," (141-142) and finds it difficult to avert his eyes. Near the end of the novel, the erotic associations of the Mariette-Cinderella character surface again in Krug's mind. He becomes momentarily attracted to Mariette, because of the close quarters in the apartment, but also because she continues to dress informally in his company: "He could not help glancing at her. She sat at the table mending a stocking. Her bare neck and legs looked uncommonly pale in contrast to her black frock and black slippers." (173)

It becomes apparent, later in the novel, that one of Mariette's older sisters (even anti-Cinderellas have two older sisters) is coming with the state police to arrest Krug. Mariette tries one more time to entice the professor, even cooing: "It's your last cha-ance," just as the police are about to enter. Following Krug's departure, she strikes up a conversation with one of the brutish officers, and continues the sexual innuendo she had begun with Krug. Eventually, he carries her down the stairs of Krug's apartment: " . . . the young policeman cupped a perspiring paw under the girl's grateful thighs, put another around her ribs and lightly lifted her heavenwards. One of her slippers fell off." (182) After her slipper is returned, the policeman mysteriously asks Mariette: "Sure you not cold, Cin?" and she blushes, not because of any embarrassment, "but because he had employed a secret diminutive which none knew, which he had somehow divined." (182) Thus, in a covert form of self-

reflexiveness, the policeman knows what only Nabokov could have known, namely that Mariette had been associated with Cinderella throghout the novel. Unfortunately for all of them, their tale does not end happily ever after, for Bend Sinister ends with the sad news that Mariette, her sister, and the policeman "will be executed by an inexperienced headsman." (205)

As with Bend Sinister and King, Queen, Knave, there is also an obvious anti-Cinderella in Lolita, and it is Lolita herself. She fits the role of a victimized step-daughter, and she also shares a number of characteristics with the previous Cinderella incarnations in Nabokov's fiction. She too has eyes with "soot-black lashes," (46) and she shares Cinderella's, Martha's, and Mariette's propensity to lose footwear with remarkable alacrity. Humbert remembers how Lolita would stand, "brown, naked, frail," wearing nothing but "new slippers with pussy-fur tops," (140) and he remembers her "losing her slipper," revealing "the heel of her slipperless foot." (61) Lolita even has a 'midnight' theme associated with her status as nymphet, as evidenced by Humbert's obsession with the dismal truth that at fourteen, a nymphet's status changes forever.

Although it is apparent that Lolita is indeed a reincarnation of the anti-Cinderella character, there is little direct allusion to that fairy tale in the novel. In direct contrast, there is no obvious female incarnation of

anti-Cinderella in Pnin, but there are numerous specific allusions to the fairy tale. Charles Nicol and William Rowe have both diligently studied Pnin's relationship with "Cinderella."[5] In particular, they attempt to distinguish the identity of a possible male Cinderella figure, and they explore a number of Cinderella-related themes. One of the themes they study involves the squirrels that appear and reappear in such places as the campus at Waindell, at Pnin's side as he strolls, on a postcard he sends to Victor, and while waiting for a drink at a fountain. The squirrel theme is related to Cinderella as a result of Pnin's research into the fairytale. At the party at Pnin's new home, he explains to the group "that Cendrillon's shoes were not made of glass but of Russian squirrel fur -- vair, in French." (157) This information not only associates Pnin with the Cinderella motif (because of the recurrence of squirrels in Pnin's presence, and at important moments), but it adds a new dimension to a number of seemingly ambiguous references in earlier novels. In Glory, fairy tales are associated with "various Volkovs (Wolfs), Kunitsyns (Martens) or Belkins (Squirrelsons)," (3) and in The Real Life of Sebastian Knight, we overhear a mysterious uncle reading to his nephew: "Once upon a time . . . there was a racing motorist who had a little squirrel."(148) Perhaps that motorist is transported into Lolita, for after their first night together, Lolita spots something on the road, and says "Oh, a squashed

squirrel . . . . What a shame." (142)

Fairy tale squirrel motifs may recur in Pnin only because Nabokov, like the hero of The Gift, "likes squirrels," but surely in the English novels the figure of a squirrel is frequently suggestive of the Cinderella tale. Nicol and Rowe have traced the squirrel-nut-Cinderella theme in Pnin, but even in Bend Sinister one finds an allusion to a "girl's tiny slipper trimmed with moth-eaten squirrel fur," and both Mariette and Lolita are often associated with chestnuts and nuts. Thus, Pnin's research into "Cinderella" only reflects what Nabokov has already been inserting into his texts. Pnin's explanation of the real nature of Cinderella's slipper is Nabokov's way of explaining and tying together the various motifs he has been employing.

In the fifth and sixth novels in English, Nabokov's desire to insert Cinderella figures into his fiction is again satisfied, for Pale Fire and Ada each have more than one overt Cinderella character. The two Cinderella figures in Pale Fire are the King's first "love," Fleur, and John Shade's daughter, Hazel. At one point, Kinbote's annotation suggests that "there are always 'three nights' in fairy tales," and both Fleur and Hazel have experiences involving three nights during the course of the novel. Fleur's three nights are spent in the company of the Prince (who would later become King Charles X), and it is during those three nights that Fleur takes her turn as Nabokov's anti-Cinderella.

Like Mariette, Fleur is an erotic Cinderella, and her feminine charm is emphasized by the homosexual inclinations of the Prince. Kinbote relates how the "pretty yet not repellent" (73) Fleur was chosen by a society sculptor to be a model, after the sculptor had searched about for months with "Cinderella's slipper," looking for a suitable subject. Then, Kinbote tells how the Prince would dance only with Fleur, who would brush her lips against his "cheek which the haggard after-the-ball dawn had already sooted." (71) In the end, their three day fairy tale cohabitation is brought to a halt, by Representatives of the People, who are infuriated with the idea of having the lowly granddaughter of a fiddler for Queen. Thus, the rags-to-riches fairy tale possibilities for Fleur are ruined by the disinterested Prince who ignores her and by the citizens of the State, who prefer not to have a Cinderella ascend to the throne.

The other, less obvious, ironic Cinderella figure has an even sadder ending to her fairy tale. Hazel Shade is born into an unhappy life, somewhat similar to Cinderella's later position as young step-daughter. She is unattractive, shy, awkward, and unpopular. In the poem "Pale Fire," John Shade tells how other children would be cast as "elves and fairies on the stage," (l. 310) while his daughter would appear as "Mother Time,/A bent charwoman with slop pail and broom." (ll. 312-313) Hazel has no young prince to call her up, and even her "three night" experience investigating supernatural phenomena ends in failure. In the end, Hazel's turn

as Nabokov's Cinderella is disastrous, for in this case, midnight is synonymous with death. Shade documents how, one night, Hazel is forced into a blind date. Hazel's date leaves her early in the evening, maintaining that he has to be somewhere at midnight, in order to save a friend. She is left to return home alone, and she decides to walk beside a lake in the dark. Later that night, a patrol car arrives at Shade's home to inform him of Hazel's death by drowning:

> "Midnight," you said. What's midnight to the young?
> And suddenly a festive blaze was flung
> Across five cedar trunks, snow patches showed,
> And a patrol car on our bumpy road
> Came to a crunching stop. (ll. 484-487)

Thus, midnight for Hazel is the end of the fairy tale, and Cinderella is no longer in her place by the fireside.

In King, Queen, Knave, Bend Sinister, and Lolita, one particular Cinderella figure is discernible. In the succeeding novels, the Cinderella fairy tale begins to permeate the actual text, for "Cinderella" is important to Pnin in a number of ways, and Pale Fire contains at least two characters who are associated with the fairy tale. But Nabokov's sixth novel in English, Ada, is the perfect work with which to conclude this chapter. Ada contains a remarkable number of allusions to "Cinderella," and, indeed, almost every female character becomes associated with Cinderella at some point in the novel.

In Reading Nabokov, Douglas Fowler writes: "There are about twenty references to Cinderella in Ada, most of

them connected with the maid Blanche at Ardis Hall."[6] He then continues by giving two examples of the Cinderella allusions involving Blanche. Although Fowler is correct in his estimate of the number of allusions, the fact that he only mentions Blanche can be slightly misleading. As suggested, almost every female character takes a turn as Cinderella in this novel. Furthermore, while minor characters like Blanche, Marina, and Cordula are the Cinderellas of the beginning and middle of the novel, even Ada herself and her sister, Lucette, are associated with Cinderella by the end.

Nevertheless, Fowler is correct in pointing out the Blanche-Cinderella micro-motif, for, indeed, the housemaid is associated with Cinderella for much of the novel. At her first appearance in Ada, upon Van's arrival at Ardis, we discover that, although her name was Blanche, "Mlle Lariviere called her 'Cendrillon' because her stockings got so easily laddered, see, and because she broke and mislaid things." (49) Even better reasons for lending her that particular sobriquet are discovered later. Blanche runs through the manor, reporting a fire in the barn, when suddenly she loses "a miniver-trimmed slipper on the grand staircase, like Ashette in the English version." (114) That miniver-furred slipper appears again in the novel, like Mariette's in Bend Sinister, and later, Blanche is again referred to as "sweet Cinderella de Torf." (334)

When Blanche first appears in the novel, she

arouses young Van, and as they are alone, he confidently moves closer in an attempt to embrace her. Although she wards off his advance on this occasion, Blanche's sexuality is emphasized throughout the novel, relating her to previous anti-Cinderellas like Lolita, Mariette, and Martha. She returns late one night, jumping out of a "pumpkin-hued police van in her stockinged feet (long, long after midnight, alas,)" (121) and it is obvious that she had been out on one of her frequent nocturnal trysts. On another occasion, Blanche comes to visit Van late at night. She intends to tell him that she is leaving Ardis, but that his dream has come true and he can enjoy the pleasure of her body for that one night. To Van, however, "She presented an odd sight: bare armed, in her petticoat, one stocking gartered, the other down to her ankle; no slippers; armpits glistening with sweat; she was loosening her hair in a wretched simulacrum of seduction." (292) This time, it is Van's turn to refuse physical contact, and he leaves the most un-fairytale-like Blanche alone in the room. Late in the novel she seems to regain some of that fairy tale association. Van and Ada are perusing some photographs of the happy days of the past. They spot a picture of Blanche, and she is again referred to as Cinderella, but that is her last appearance in the role, dancing with "drunken Ben Wright," "like the Beast and the Belle at the Ball." (401)

Although it is true that Blanche is frequently

associated with Cinderella, she is by no means the only character in the novel who carries those associations. The first Cinderella to appear in Ada is actually Marina, the mother of Ada and Lucette. In the second chapter of the novel, the origins of Marina's affair with Van's father are described. The scene in question takes place at a dramatic performance involving Marina. At one point, the production is described as a "ballet of Caucasian generals and metamorphosed Cinderellas." Marina, in fact, is one of those Cinderellas, and when she departs for her meeting with Van's father, she leaves a certain Baron d'O "kneeling in the middle of an empty stage, holding the glass slipper that his fickle lady had left him." (12) The actress Marina goes on to many other roles in the course of the novel, and she also goes on to bear two daughters. In true Nabokovian fashion, those two daughters, Ada and Lucette, carry on the Cinderella associations which began with their mother. The younger daughter, Lucette, is described by Van as having "Cinderella's finger." (373) At the same time, she is described as wearing a "very chic patent-leather Glass shoe." (374) Lucette's fairy tale, however, is a sad and short one, and she dies in the course of the novel. In the middle of a sea journey, she hurls herself overboard. Van, the narrator of Ada, could not have known what her last thoughts were. Nevertheless he depicts a few of the images that flashed before Lucette's eyes as she bobbed on the ocean's surface. One of the visions, nat-

urally enough, involves a "pair of new vair-furred bedroom slippers," (495) which is indeed a fitting last vision for any Nabokovian Cinderella.

Like Lucette, Ada also becomes associated with Cinderella in the course of the novel. It becomes increasingly apparent, then, that the Cinderella motif stems, not only from Nabokov's familiarity with the tale, but also from Van's urge to mythologise his past and the people involved in it. Ultimately, Ada is both Van's memoir and his fairy tale. Every female, therefore, is transformed into a Cinderella figure, and Ada, the heroine of Van's life-tale, is no exception. Thus, the coach and carriage which transported Ada, on the occasion of first meeting Van at Ardis, consisted "of six one-window carrosses of pumpkin origin, fused together." (150)

Later in the novel, Van falls at Ada's feet, only to encounter a pair of "glossy black Glass slippers." (391) Later still, he refers to having heard Ada's voice "calling for her Glass bed slippers." But on this occasion, there is a slight indication that Van's fairy tale memoirs are faltering. He remembers another of his past Cinderellas, whom he thinks of as Cordulenka. He suddenly realizes that, as with Cordulenka, he has become unable to distinguish "Glass bed slippers" from "ordinary dance footwear." Lost between fantasy and reality, Van makes a descent into reality by making violent love to his Cinderella. After that instance, the

Cinderella allusions in the novel begin to taper off, and the only major allusion involves the very real death of Lucette. It does not immediately follow that Van no longer considers his memoir a fairy tale. It remains true, however, that near the end of the novel, as the time period being covered by the memoir moves closer and closer to Van's present, Ada becomes less and less a fairy tale Cinderella, who will live forever in the fantasy world. In fact, she becomes more like Alice, whose adventures become the past, and who must return to the real world in the end.

CHAPTER IV

NABOKOV AND LEWIS CARROLL

Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass cannot, of course, be regarded as true fairy tales. Wherever Nabokov uses the term "fairy tale", it is usually understood in the traditional sense of Märchen, or his native skazka. But Nabokov had an affection for the Alice books, as he did for fairy tales, and there is indeed a strong indication of Carrollian influence in Nabokov's fiction. For this reason, Alice in Wonderland can probably be accepted as a fairy tale for this argument. There is precedent for such an assumption: Lewis Carroll himself, in his introductory poem to Through the Looking Glass, three times refers to the story as a "fairy -tale," full of "magic" and "pleasance." It is also true, however, that while Carroll's work shares some affinities with traditional fairy tales, there are aspects of his work which transcend the fairy tale, and move the Alice books into the realm of metafiction.

In Extraterritorial, George Steiner suggests that Alice in Wonderland "has long been recognized as one of the keys to the whole Nabokovian oeuvre."[1] Likewise, in City of Words, Tony Tanner reaffirms: "Lewis Carroll is one of Nabokov's favourite writers."[2] Neither critic expands upon his statement, however, and this is fairly representative of most of the major Nabokov critics, who note the Carroll

influence but fail to study it at length. As with the fairy tale allusions, most studies have limited themselves to isolated texts. James Joyce has studied the Alice in Wonderland allusions found in Lolita,[3] William Rowe has discovered a number of allusions to Carroll in Pnin,[4] and perhaps in the most extensive study to date, Beverly Lyon Clark has discussed both Pale Fire and Ada in terms of Lewis Carroll's influence.[5] Thus, there is a need for a study of the true extent of Alice allusions in Nabokov's fiction. We have already seen the existence of a fairy tale 'Thesean thread' running though the whole of Nabokov's career. Similarly, there is a Carrollian thread which winds its way through Nabokov's life and art, from Switzerland in 1969, back to turn-of-the-century St. Petersburg.

In an interview for Wisconsin Studies, Nabokov admitted: "In common with many other English children (I was an English child) I have always been fond of Carroll."[6] His statement suggests that Alice in Wonderland was read along with English fairy tales when he was a child in St. Petersburg. Alice influenced him so strongly that one of the first things that Nabokov published, at the age of 23, was a translation of Alice in Wonderland. The translation was entitled Anya v stranye chudes, and as Simon Karlinsky and Beverly Lyon Clark have both noted, the precision with which Nabokov crafted his rendition is evidence of a close and careful reading of Carroll's work.[7] Both Karlinsky and Clark are helpful in

detailing the changes which Nabokov made to the original, and Clark is particularly adept at showing how those changes relate to Nabokov's own fiction. The greatest change he chose to make was moving Alice-Anya's earthly domain to Russia, thus enabling him to draw upon his knowledge of Russian literature. This was because he created his own parodies of Russian works, rather than simply translating Carroll's nonsense verse. This also gave Nabokov the opportunity to practice a difficult cross-language wordplay, for rather than simply translating the dialogue word for word, he tried to emulate Carroll's word-play, which involves both sound and meaning. An example cited by Karlinsky involves Nabokov's equivalent of "reeling and writhing." Nabokov switched around the initial syllables of the Russian verbs for "reading" and "writing," obtaining new Russian words, chesat' and pitat', with which to pun. Thus, although Nabokov once claimed: "I do not think that [Carroll's] invented language shares any roots with mine,"[8] it is fairly obvious that the wordplay he practiced in his translation of Alice is indeed related to the cross-language punning so prevalent in Ada (for instance, the allusion to Bryant's Castle [Chateaubriand], or Lucette's devilish "condor" pun).

Anya v stranye chudes was published in 1923, in Berlin, and in Speak, Memory Nabokov tells us: "I got five dollars (quite a sum during the inflation in Germany) for my Russian Alice in Wonderland." (233) Three years later, in 1926, Nabokov published his first novel, Mary, which, along with his

next eight novels,was originally composed in Russian. Interestingly, those novels do not allude specifically to Lewis Carroll or his works, although we know that Nabokov had a thorough knowledge of Carroll's works and admired them very much. As some have noted, though, there are certainly echoes of Lewis Carroll to be found in the early fiction. The Defense, for instance, involves Luzhin, a chess-master, who is occasionally portrayed as a chesspiece, trapped on life's gameboard and controlled by some unknown force. But that motif does not necessarily tie The Defense, or the other novels which feature chess allusions, to Through the Looking Glass or Lewis Carroll. Similarly, allusions to mirror worlds and mirror images appear in every one of Nabokov's Russian novels, but those allusions are never specifically related to the Looking Glass world. So Smurov, for example, who sees himself mirrored in the eyes of his companions and desires to venture psychologically into that world, should be seen primarily as a Nabokovian character, and not as a direct result of any Carrollian influence. During his Russian period, therefore, there is a paucity of direct, or even indirect, allusion to Lewis Carroll. This is not surprising as the Russian texts, in general, are not rich in allusion to English literature. After 1940, however, when Nabokov began composing in English, Carrollian allusions enter into his writing. Indeed, in almost everything Nabokov wrote after 1940, including his fiction, his college lectures, and his autobiography, one finds frequent allusion to Lewis

Carroll.

It is in The Real Life of Sebastian Knight that one first finds specific references to Alice in Wonderland, but as Anthony Olcott suggests: "The Real Life of Sebastian Knight is a book little treated by critics, perhaps because in relation to his later, longer work it seems simple, or perhaps because it is Nabokov's first book in English."[9] As Olcott goes on to suggest, neither reason is justified, and, in truth, the fact that it is Nabokov's first book in English should be of great interest. For this particular study, Sebastian Knight is especially interesting for the very reason that the narrator, V., displays a knowledge of Carroll's work, and weaves a few scattered allusions into the text. It first becomes apparent that V. is familiar with Alice in Wonderland during a conversation between V. and a hotel clerk. The clerk hesitates to divulge some information, and one of his careful responses is described by V. as being "in the elenctic tones of Lewis Carroll's caterpillar." (123) V.'s comparison, while introducing an element of the fantastic into the conversation, is also quite apt (furthermore, "elenctic" seems to be either V. or Nabokov's attempt at "le mot juste"). But V's allusion to Lewis Carroll may ultimately be only an extension of his desire to emulate his brother, Sebastian. Early in the novel, V. visits Sebastian's small London flat, in search of clues concerning his brother's character and habits. He espies many shelves of books, but one shelf is neater than the rest. On it,

V. finds a selection of books, many of which were picked by Nabokov for his European fiction course. Among the fifteen titles we are given is Alice in Wonderland, listed twelfth, just before Ulysses. It is obvious that either V. or Nabokov could have stopped after naming a few of Sebastian's books, so the list must be of some importance to the novel. Indeed, this list, like many other Nabokovian lists, is important: in some ways it acts as a mirror reflection of elements found in the rest of the book. The presence of the Alice in Wonderland volume not only prefigures V.'s description of the hotel clerk's response, but also suggests the real identity of the "soft blue cat with celadon eyes which had appeared from nowhere" (47) earlier in the novel. Perhaps Sebastian's copy of Alice also explains the strange juxtaposition of photographs on Sebastian's wall: a horrible snapshot of a man being beheaded, and a photographic study of a child playing with pup. V. assumes that his brother "had his own reasons for keeping and hanging them so." (41) Certainly the photographs are only indirectly reminiscent of two of Tenniel's drawings. But the juxtaposition of terror and normalcy on Sebastian's wall adequately reflects the atmosphere of Carroll's Wonderland, where puppies can be enormouse, and "very likely eat" Alice if they so desire.

Nabokov's next novel after Sebastian Knight, Bend Sinister is similar to the nine Russian novels, for while there is no direct reference to Alice in Wonderland, there are unmistakable echoes of Carroll in the novel. Bend Sinister begins with an

allusion to "the glass of a puddle," (3) through which Adam Krug's story is reflected. Later, Krug is thrust into a world of comically inefficient soldiers, mirrors, chess, and mad parties. Perhaps Nabokov even approaches direct allusion to Carroll through Krug's description of trying to stop time: "stepping on its receding tail . . . letting this or that moment rest and breathe in peace. Taming time," (11) which seems reminiscent of the stopped-time world of the mad tea party.

For further evidence that Nabokov's affection for Carroll's work inspired him during the 1940s (when Sebastian Knight and Bend Sinister were published), one need only look to Nabokov's autobiography and to his college lectures, also composed in that decade. Frequently in Speak, Memory, Nabokov employs V.'s technique of looking to Carroll for an apt description. At one point, Nabokov describes a visit to an old friend's home (for a dinner of roasted hare) where he spots a portrait on the wall: "My eyes, still smarting from the dazzling snows, kept trying to decipher, on the near wall, a so-called 'typographical' portrait of Tólstoy. Like the tail of the mouse on a certain page of Alice in Wonderland, it was wholly composed of printed matter." (154) Later, Nabokov portrays one of his cousins as a "nebulous little blond of eleven or so with long, Alice in Wonderland hair and a shell-pink comlexion." (163) Later still, Nabokov employs the term "wonderland" itself, a practice which he would continue in his fiction. In this

case, he is referring to his tutor's lantern-slide show, and he describes what he sees in the slides: "what loveliness the glass slides . . . revealed when simply held between finger and thumb, and raised to the light -- translucent miniatures, pocket wonderlands, neat little worlds of hushed luminous hues." (166) Clearly, then, Nabokov thought highly of the Alice books, but he also took the term "wonderland" to heart, using it to depict both artistic and natural worlds. These sentiments are most clearly revealed in Ada. Even twenty-five years before Ada, however, Nabokov conceived of the world and the world's fiction as mutual wonderlands, full of terror and surprise. In his closing lecture, "The Art of Literature and Commonsense," Nabokov told his students:

> In a sense we all are crashing to our death from the top story of our birth to the flat stones of the churchyard and wondering with an immortal Alice in Wonderland at the patterns of the passing wall. This capacity to wonder at the passing trifles -- no matter the imminent peril -- these asides of the spirit . . . are the highest form of consciousness, and it is in this childishly speculative state of mind, so different from commonsense and its logic, that we know the world to be good.[10]

The Alice reference is appropriate, for her fall is never a crashing into death -- it is fall into the world of art and fantasy. Alice thinks that after this, she would think nothing of falling off a house, and Carroll reminds us that this is true, for such a fall means death in real life.[11] But in the world of fiction anything can occur, for it is the novelist who dictates the rules and realities of his particular wonderlands.

Nabokov's four novels after Bend Sinister all contain wonderlands of some kind. Van and Humbert create fantasies of the past involving their young lovers, and Kinbote's Zembla is both a wonderland and a "Looking Glass" world -- it exists in relation to New Wye just as wonderland in Carroll's story relates to Alice's England. In Pnin, the most obvious wonderland is the Pines, where elderly Russians gather every other summer to relive their fairy-tale pasts by sharing memories of old Russia. There seems to be a fairy-tale relationship between man and nature at the Pines: Pnin magically stumbles upon it at the moment the sun appears, (114) a woman named Varvara is "enchanted" by the plants and animals there, (119) and Pnin himself smiles at "the smiling forest" (123) (the émigrés even wish that Nabokov could be there too, to discuss the "enchanting insects," but he was busy elsewhere). Ultimately, however, reality forces its way into the natural wonderland at the Pines. Pnin is forced to remember Mira's death, (133) we are reminded that old Russia no longer exists, (134) and, despite their attempts at reliving the past, "logical thought put electric bulbs into the kerosene lamps and reshuffled the people, turning them into aging émigrés." (132) The Pines as wonderland fails, therefore, because it is impossible for the characters to re-create their pasts. But Pnin's wonderland exists beyond the limits of the Pines, and expands to include the entire novel. His best student is named Carroll, and Pnin himself is the possessor of a "large, Duchess of Won-

derland chin." (65) His bedroom possesses a "silent looking glass" (23) alongside a portrait of "Girl with a Cat," and at his "house-heating" party he serves a remarkable variety of tarts ("mushroom tarts, meat tarts, cabbage tarts" [151]). The extensive Carrollian allusions related to Pnin reinforce the idea that he is existing in some kind of wonderland. It may be America, where he finds refuge and stability, but it is also the novel itself, a wonderland created by Nabokov's imagination, which Pnin enters in a train and exits in an automobile (but to which he returns in the looking glass universe of Pale Fire).

The various levels of fictive reality in Pale Fire lie at the centre of a critical debate which has never been resolved. The debate revolves around the question of what is real within the context of the novel. Tony Tanner said: "Lewis Carroll is one of Nabokov's favourite writers, but we do see Alice before she passes through the mirror or falls down the hole; a boundary between differing worlds is visibly crossed. Whereas in Pale Fire we don't know whether Kinbote 'exists' and Shade is his fantasy; or whether Shade is indeed a poet and Kinbote a projection of his subconscious."[12] Indeed, Pale Fire allows for a number of possible readings, and Beverly Lyon Clark has discussed the different levels of fantasy and reality as they relate to Zembla's role as mirror world. As Clark's study shows, there are few overt Carrollian allusions in Pale Fire. There are, however, a number of themes and images which

would seem to associate Zembla with wonderland and Looking Glass world. At one point, the King recognizes his "red-sweatered, red-capped doubleganger," (94) in a reflection, and the implied "red King" reference is frequently repeated. Elsewhere, one finds a teasing allusion to a Duchess of Payn; (73) yet another cat vanishes and suddenly reappears; (62) and again, chess and mirror allusions abound. But as Kinbote's annotations to the first lines of 'Pale Fire' suggest: "We cannot help reading into these lines something more than mirrorplay and mirage shimmer." (89) Kinbote alludes to Zembla as "Semblerland, a land of reflection, of resemblers," (178) but it is ultimately true that both fantastic Zembla and realistic New Wye are mirror worlds. They are both part of Nabokov's fictional universe, and thus, I would argue that Pale Fire is as much a metaphor for the novel as it is an actual novel. Zembla represents the imaginative re-working of reality which is reflected in any work of fiction (furthermore Kinbote's entire annotations suggest the way in which each individual's experience of a novel creates a new and unique text). We have already seen how Nabokov compared the course of life to Alice's fall down the rabbit-hole. Certainly the many Carrollian allusions in his fiction suggest that he also conceived of Alice's wonderland as the equivalent of any novel's universe: a world into which one falls but from which one must return -- one individual's dream which can be experienced by all.

Just as Pale Fire is primarily Kinbote's fantasy, so too are Lolita and Ada the documents of Van and Humbert's fantasy lives. Earlier we saw how the two narrators portrayed Lolita and Ada as Cinderella figures, and interestingly, the two females lead fairy-tale double lives, for they are also portrayed as Alice figures. In both novels, Carrol's Alice in Wonderland is invoked by the narrator, and Van and Humbert are ultimately cast as Carrollian figures, dreaming a world within the world of Nabokov's fiction.

Ada, for instance (whose title character may indeed be related to the Ada whom Alice thinks she has awakened as), alludes to a number of characters originally found in wonderland. On the second page of the novel, "New Cheshire" is referred to. Later, a character named Dick Cheshire keeps re-appearing, (4) and still later another Nabokovian cat appears from nowhere, and despite all efforts, vanishes. (80) There is also an allusion to "Madhatters," (222) and a certain Mr. Krolik (rabbit, in Russian) is referred to as a "big, strong, handsome old March Hare." (404) Tying all of these minor allusions together are the frequent allusions to the actual title of Carroll's work. At one point, Van suggests that playing croquet with Ada would be like "using flamingoes and hedgehogs." (53) Ada catches the allusion, and refers in kind to that book, "Palace in Wonderland," against which she claims to be prejudiced. Carroll's title is transformed again when Van informs us that his former house tutor once purchased "Alice in the Camera

Obscura" for him (a title which brings together both Carroll and Nabokov, for the original title of Laughter in the Dark was Camera Obscura). Elsewhere, Van alludes to his little cousin as "Ada in Wonderland," (129) and near the end of the memoir, he suggests that his story has tried to document "Ada's adventures in Adaland." (568) It seems, therefore, that "Ada in Wonderland" may be an adequate sub-title for Van's memoir, but, importantly, it is a wonderland which Van creates by an imaginative re-working of his past. Thus, Ada is cast as a fictionalized character playing an important role in Van's fictionalized past, and Van's allusions to fairy tales and to Lewis Carroll reflect the extent to which he is turning his past into a fantasy.

Humbert Humbert, like Van, portrays his past as a wonderland fantasy. Alfred Appel's annotations to Lolita show that there is a wealth of literary allusion in the novel, and certainly Lewis Carroll's works are among those to which Humbert refers. At one point, Humbert feels himself dreamingly inspired by a "breeze from wonderland," (133) and on other occasions, he feels himself trapped in a "lighted house of glass," (182) and cannot place a tea party "correctly in terms of time." (192) When Humbert first learns that he may actually make love with a willing Lolita, he feels "the odd sense of living in a brand new, mad new dream world, where everything was permissible." (135) Later, Lolita tries

to escape that world, and Humbert feels that his wonderland is vanishing. He feels spurned and empty, for she had entered his "world, umber and black Humberland," (168) and transformed it. Yet now, she refused the "wonderland [he] had to to offer" (168) in favour of someone else's. Near the end of the text, he spots another nymphet and watches as she combs her "Alice-in-Wonderland hair," yet he realizes that he cannot have her, for she is only a "forbidden fairy child beauty." (266) Humbert's confession, therefore, portrays his past as a wondrous fantasy whenever Lolita is involved. Perhaps that was only a way of accounting for his socially unacceptable behaviour. But beyond that, the wonderland that Humbert creates out of his past is, like Adaland and Zembla, a symbol for the supremacy of the imagination. Pale Fire, Lolita, and Ada are all novels within novels -- just as Alice's dream exists within Carroll's dream-fantasy, Humbert, Van, and Kinbote's fantasies all themselves exist within Nabokov's fantasy world. Certainly the three narrators suffer under various delusions, but they also display a characteristic much admired by Nabokov, namely, the ability to lead an intense inner life no matter what the circumstances.

CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of Through the Looking Glass, Lewis Carroll saves Alice by dissolving her dream-fantasy, and the story ends with Alice back in her home, conversing with her kittens. But Alice is puzzled by her dream, and particularly with her conversation with the Red King. She begins to wonder about "who it was that dreamed it all,"[1] for she senses that the Red King was part of her dream while at the same time, she was a part of his dream. If one assumes that the Red King can be seen as a Carrollian representative (and he certainly can, for Alice is "only a sort of thing in his dream," and if "he left off dreaming," Alice would be nowhere[2]), then the questions posed by Alice reflect a growing realization on her part that she is a character in someone else's fiction.

In Nabokov's novels, we are often reminded that his characters, like Alice, are fictional creations, and that he himself lies behind their thoughts, actions, and even the fantasies which they create. In Pnin, Nabokov gradually inserts himself into the narrative, and Prof. Pnin is forced to move away, saying: "We are friends, but there is one thing perfectly certain. I will never work under him." (168) Pnin already does work under Nabokov, however, and he, Humbert, Krug, and other characters are forced to recognize their existence as characters, through the gradual realization that there is "some-

one else" in their midst.

Thus, in all of Nabokov's English fiction, there are moments when the reader is reminded of the existence of a dreamer behind the dream. At one point, Humbert emphasizes his fragile existence by crying: "Imagine me; I shall not exist if you do not imagine me." (131) On another occasion, he describes Lolita asleep: "mouth open, in a kind of dull amazement at the curiously inane life we all had rigged up for her." (217) Thus, Humbert is covertly suggesting that it is both he and Nabokov who have thrust Lolita into Humberland: he by taking her away with him, and Nabokov by inventing the universe in which Lolita takes place. Likewise, in Sebastian Knight, V. describes a man and his wife sitting at a table, "both of whom Sebastian had never known, and who had been placed there by the dream-manager -- just because anybody would do to fill the stage." (187) In Ada, Van frequently refers to the fact that he is composing a book, and thus Nabokov's own position as author is emphasized. At the beginning of Part Two, Chapter Ten, Van writes: "They took a great many precautions -- all absolutely useless, for nothing can change the end (written and filed away) of the present chapter." (432) Similarly, at the conclusion of Pale Fire, Kinbote proclaims that he will not commit suicide, and that he will continue to exist. In his concluding statement, however, Kinbote alludes to his own existence as only a "character" in a work of fiction, and thus, the novel ends with a re-affirmation of its own status

as fiction. (202)

One of the most striking examples of what might be considered romantic irony, where Nabokov materializes in his own texts and re-affirms his role as dreamer, occurs in Bend Sinister. The conclusion to that novel offers a vivid example of how a character's individual fantasy is itself contained in Nabokov's larger fantasy. At the end of the novel, Adam Krug confronts his old classmates, Rufel, Schimpffer, Schamm, and the Toad. In the reality of the present, the Toad is dictator in charge of a tyrannized state, Schamm is one of the Elders of state, and the other two are slotted for execution, along with Krug. But in part because he is still stunned by the death of his son, Krug lapses back into his past, and he imagines himself back in his old school-yard, playing with mates. Krug fantasizes that Schamm's "wide-brimmed white-feathered hat" (214) is only a "sissy sealskin bonnet," (215) , and he throws it to "Pinkie Schimffer," who throws it away, while the Toad watches idly. Schamm tries to remind Krug that: "The days when we played in this very yard are gone," but Krug, like Martin Edelweiss before him, is unable to distinguish the past from the present. Eventually, he makes a mad rush towards the Toad (Paduk), and is just about to reach his old nemesis when he is struck down by a soldier's bullet. Fortunately for Krug, however, a second bullet is left forever in flight, for "just a fraction of an

instant before another and better bullet hit him," (216) Nabokov dissolves the entire scene, thereby saving Krug, just as Carroll saves Alice in both of his stories. But whereas the Alice stories end with Alice herself suddenly waking from her dream, Bend Sinister concludes, not with Krug, but with Nabokov, who stops his narrative to investigate specimens caught in the wire netting of his window. (217) Thus we are reminded that Krug's fantasy (like Martin's fairy tale, Kinbote's Zembla, and Van's Adaland) is ultimately Nabokov's fabrication, but surely that moment of transformation, from Padukgrad to Nabokov's study, also contains an implied comment on the novelist's ability to turn fairy tales, lies, and un-truths into perceived reality -- to create new worlds and people out of words on a page.

NOTES

Introduction

[1]Kurt Vonnegut, Mother Night (New York: Dell Publishing, 1966), ix.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Vladimir Nabokov, Lectures on Literature, ed. Fredson Bowers (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1980), p. 5.

[4]John Updike, Introduction to Lectures on Literature, by Vladimir Nabokov, ed. Fredson Bowers (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1980), xxv.

[5]Nabokov, Lectures, p. 1

[6]Ibid., p. 10

[7]Ibid.

[8]Lectures, p. 2

[9]Ibid., p. 125.

[10]Vladimir Nabokov, Pale Fire (New York: Berkeley Publishing Co., 1968), p. 107.

[11]Tony Tanner, City of Words (London: Jonathon Cape, 1971), p. 401.

[12]James Joyce, "Lolita in Humbertland," Studies in the Novel, 6(1974): 339-348.

[13]Charles Nicol, "Pnin's History," Novel (Spring 1971): 197-208 and William Rowe, "Pnin's Uncanny Looking Glass," in A Book of Things About Vladimir Nabokov, ed. Carl Proffer (Ann Arbor: Ardis, Inc., 1974), pp. 182-191.

Chapter One

[1]Page Stegner, Introduction to Nabokov's Congeries (New York: Viking Press, 1968), xxxi.

[2]Vladimir Nabokov, Introduction to Invitation to a Beheading (New York: Fawcett World Library, 1959), vi.

[3]Vladimir Nabokov, Introduction to King, Queen, Knave (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), viii.

[4]Vladimir Nabokov, Introduction to "A Nursery Tale," in Tyrants Destroyed (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), p. 40.

[5]Nabokov, "A Nursery Tale," p. 41.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid., p. 47.

[8]Max Luthi, On the Nature of Fairy Tales (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1970), p. 53.

[9]Vladimir Nabokov, Mary (New York:McGraw-Hill, 1970), pp. 85-86.

[10]Ibid., p. 56.

[11]Ibid., p. 120.

[12]Nabokov, Mary, p. 57.

[13]Ibid., p. 158.

[14]Ibid., p. 10.

[15]Vladimir Nabokov, Forward to Glory (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), xiv.

[16]Vladimir Nabokov, Speak, Memory (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1966), p. 79.

[17]Ibid., p. 81.

[18]Ibid., p. 86.

[19]Nabokov, Glory, p. 4.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Nabokov, Glory, p. 5.

[23]Ibid., p. 54.

[24]Ibid., p. 117.

[25]Nabokov, Glory, p. 199.

[26]Ibid., p. 172.

[27]Nabokov, Invitation, p. 27.

[28]Vladimir Nabokov, The Gift (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963), p. 28.

[29]Nabokov, Pale Fire, p. 159.

Chapter Two

[1]Vladimir Nabokov, Bend Sinister (New York: Time, Inc., 1947), p. 160. All further references to this work appear in the text.

[2]Vladimir Nabokov, The Real Life of Sebastian Knight (Norfolk: New Directions, 1941), p. 21. All further references to this work appear in the text.

[3]Vladimir Nabokov, Pnin (New York: Avon Books, 1969), p. 18. All further references to this work appear in the text.

[4]Nabokov, Pale Fire, p. 92. All further references to this work appear in the text.

[5]Vladimir Nabokov, The Annotated Lolita, ed. Alfred Appel, Jr. (New York: McGrow-Hill, 1970), p. 17. All further references to this work appear in the text.

[6]Ibid., p. 234.

[7]Vladimir Nabokov, Ada (New York:McGraw-Hill, 1969), p.143. All further references to this work appear in the text.

[8]Vonnegut, Mother Night, p. 134.

Chapter Three

[1]Nicol, "Pnin's History," pp. 197-208.

[2]Rowe, "Pnin's Uncanny Looking Glass," pp. 182-192.

[3]Douglas Fowler, Reading Nabokov (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 46.

[4]Nabokov, The Annotated Lolita, pp. 346-347.

[5]Nicol, "Pnin's History," and Rowe, "Pnin's Uncanny Looking Glass."

[6]Fowler, Reading Nabokov, p.213.

Chapter Four

[1]George Steiner, Extraterritorial (New York: Atheneum, 1971), p. 5.

[2]Tanner, City of Words, p. 33.

[3]Joyce, "Lolita in Humbertland," pp. 339-348.

[4]Rowe, "Pnin's Uncanny Looking Glass," pp. 182-192.

[5]Beverly Lyon Clark, "Carroll, Nabokov, and Pynchon: Fantasy in the 1860s and 1960s," Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, 1979.

[6]Interview with Vladimir Nabokov, from Strong Opinions (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 81.

[7]Simon Karlinsky, "Anya in Wonderland: Nabokov's Russified Lewis Carroll," in Nabokov, ed. Alfred Appel, Jr. and Charles Newman (London: Northwestern Press, 1970), pp. 310-316.

[8]Nabokov, Strong Opinions, p. 81.

9Anthony Olcott, "The Author's Special Intention," in A Book of Things About Vladimir Nabokov, pp. 104-121.

[10]Nabokov, Lectures, p. 23.

[11]Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1981), p. 25.

[12]Tanner, City of Words, p. 33.

Conclusion

[1]Carroll, Alice in Wonderland and Looking Glass, p. 346.

[2]Carroll, Alice in Wonderland and Looking Glass, p. 244.

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