APPENDICES

BIOGRAPHY OF VLADIMIR NABOKOV

Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov, most famous as the author of Lolita, was born on or about April 23, 1899 in St. Petersburg, Russia. The eldest of five children, he grew up in a wealthy and aristocratic family, moving between two homes (one in St. Petersburg, and an estate fifty miles to the south in the countryside). He enjoyed playing tennis and soccer in his youth, but also spent many hours chasing and collecting butterflies, a passion he apparently learned from his father.

At the time of Nabokov's adolescence, Russia was under the rule of the doomed czar, Nicholas II. The Nabokovs lived largely at piece with the czar's regime, though Nabokov's father, Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov, was a famous and controversial liberal politician. He was imprisoned in 1908 for ninety days for his involvement in a political manifesto.

Meanwhile, Nabokov's mother, Elena Ivanova, raised the three boys and two girls in aristocratic fashion, using several governesses and tutors who taught the children French and English along with Russian. In 1911 Nabokov entered the highly regarded Tenishev School. He has been described as an arrogant student who came to school each day in the family's Rolls-Royce. He wrote his first poem at the age of 15 and privately published two books of poetry before leaving the school.

This childhood of privilege ended with the Bolshevik revolution and the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II. Political unrest forced the Nabokov family to leave
Russia for England in 1919. Nabokov and his brother subsequently enrolled at Cambridge University, where Nabokov majored in French and Russian literature.

Nabokov's father chose to move the family to Berlin in order to settle down. However, in 1922 he was murdered while attempting to stop an assassination attempt targeting the politician Pavel Miliukov. Nabokov returned to school and graduated later that year, and decided to move to Berlin in 1923. He spent his time writing poetry and short stories for "The Rudder," a Russian newspaper his father founded. Known as VN, he developed a following with fellow Russian emigres for his writings. He also met his future wife, Vera Slonim, a Russian emigre, whom he married in 1925.

Nabokov's first Russian novel, Mary, was published that year, but received little attention. However, the rise of the Nazis interrupted his growing literary career and forced him to move to Paris. He continued to write, publishing the novels King, Queen, Knave in 1928 and The Defense in 1930. He soon developed a Russian and French readership that hailed his genius. The eruption of the war soon caused him to flee Paris for New York in 1940, along with his son Dmitri who had been born in 1934. Thus, at 41 years of age, Nabokov abandoned his budding fame in Europe for obscurity in America. Money was not a problem due to his inheritance, but he nonetheless chose to work. Returning to his passion for butterflies, he succeeded in getting a position at the Museum of Natural History in New York. He was rather successful in his Lepidoptera studies, and his work includes the naming of several butterflies and the publication of scientific studies.
In 1941 Nabokov accepted a position at Wellesley College as a resident lecturer in Comparative Literature. He also published his first English novel, The Real Life of Sebastian Knight, which is full of references to chess. While at Wellesley, he continued to write and to pursue his study of lepidoptery; in addition, he participated in the founding of that school's Russian Department. In fact, between 1944 and 1948, Nabokov was the only lecturer in the Wellesley Russian Department. During this time Nabokov also published in "The New Yorker" and other respected magazines, helping him gain a reputation. He also lectured at Harvard, where he was the curator of lepidoptery at the Museum of Comparative Biology. In 1948, he left Wellesley for Cornell.

During this time he continued collecting butterflies during visits to the Rocky Mountains. While on one of these trips in the early 1950s Nabokov composed his masterpiece, Lolita. The book proved initially difficult to sell to publishers, but within a decade it was such a success that it allowed Nabokov to give up teaching and concentrate solely on writing fiction.

In 1961 he moved to Montreux, Switzerland, in an effort to escape American publicity. He spent his last years publishing several novels, including Pale Fire in 1962. The book left his readers shaking their heads in confusion; it is a 999-line poem written by assassinated American poet John Shade, a poem which is then analyzed by the narrator. His work peaked in 1969 with the publication of Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle, the book he considered his best. He and his son also spent time translating his Russian works into English and his English work into Russian. Nabokov remained in Switzerland until his death in 1977 of a
viral infection, leaving an unfinished manuscript, The Original of Laura. During his life he published eighteen novels, eight books of short stories, seven books of poetry and nine plays.
THE SUMMARY OF LOLITA

Humbert Humbert is in jail awaiting trial for murder. While he waits, he presentsus, his readers and potential jurors, with his defense. While we may expect Humbert to spend his time justifying the murder he's accused of, he doesn't. Instead he tells us the story of his obsessive love for a teenage girl he calls Lolita, Lo, Lola, Dolly, and in moments of precision and formality, by her givenname, Dolores Haze.

Humbert first tries to put his obsession in context for us, describing his failedromance at age thirteen with a young girl named Annabel Leigh. Their love remains unconsummated and Annabel dies a few months after their summerromance ends. Humbert explains how he spent his adult life trying to recapture the magic of that fatal summer and the lost beauty of that dead girl. He goes to great lengths to define for us a specific type of young girl he calls a "nymphet," who is very different from ordinary, innocent little girls and who stirs great passion in men such as himself. The nymphet is, according to Humbert, between nine and fourteen years old, with an insidious charm much more demonic than childlike. It is this type of girl Humbert lusts after, a desire that finally finds its perfect object in Dolores Haze.

Humbert rents a room in Ramsdale from Charlotte Haze specifically to be near her twelve-year-old daughter Lolita, in whom he believes he sees his lost Annabel Leigh. Charlotte becomes infatuated with her boarder, sending Lolita away to summer camp in order to be alone with Humbert and to declare her feelings for him. Humbert is inconsolable at Lolita's absence, but when Charlotte
professes her love openly, he realizes he has the opportunity to stay near Lolita permanently as her step-father. After he and Charlotte marry, he tries to hide how his new wife repels him, confiding his loathing for Charlotte and his longing for Lolita only to a journal he keeps hidden away. His horror of Charlotte grows when she announces she wants to send Lolita to boarding school, and Humbert finds himself plotting his wife's murder. Ultimately, Humbert finds he can't kill Charlotte, however much he wishes she were dead. Fate intervenes on Humbert's behalf finally when jealous Charlotte finds his secret diary and she stumbles distractedly into the path of a black Packard. After only ten weeks in Ramsdale, Humbert is suddenly a widower, and sole guardian of his precious Lolita, who is still away at summer camp.

Humbert picks Lolita up from camp, and at a hotel called The Enchanted Hunters they become lovers. He claims Lolita actually seduced him and that he was not even her first lover, but he also makes it clear that she participates in their affair more reluctantly as time goes on. The two travel across America, moving from one hotel to the next, enjoying whatever local activities and tourist attractions present themselves as he tries to keep Lolita amused. After a year of traveling, they settle in Beardsley and Humbert enrolls Lolita in an elite private girl’s school. He becomes jealous when Lolita shows any interest in boys her age or other social activities at the school. When pressed by school officials, Humbert allows Lolita to have a party and to participate in the school play, although he is reluctant to do so. After a particularly nasty argument about her whereabouts when she skipped piano lessons, Lolita announces she wants to quit the play, quit
school, and travel with Humbert again, provided he lets her choose the destinations. Surprised and delighted, Humbert agrees and the two set out again.

Their second trip is very different from the first. This time Humbert is convinced Lolita is plotting something, and even more certain that they are being followed. After a brief stay in the hospital, Lolita vanishes. The hospital staff can say only that Humbert's brother checked the girl out of the hospital. Humbert tries to track Lolita down, but he is unsuccessful. He follows a trail of tantalizing clues left behind by the man she has run away with, but all he is able to figure out is how similar he and his adversary seem to be. After searching for Lolita for a year, Humbert loses hope that he will find her. He spends the next two years wandering aimlessly in the company of a woman named Rita.

When Humbert unexpectedly receives a letter from Lolita, he leaves Rita to go find her. She is now seventeen, married, and very pregnant, but despite her altered appearance and circumstances, Humbert asks her to run away with him again. She refuses, but when Humbert offers her $4000 to help her and her husband relocate to Alaska, she tells him about the man she ran away with, a famous playwright with a sexual interest in pedophilia and pornography. When Lolita assures him she won't come with him, he leaves to find and kill his nemesis, Clare Quilty.

Humbert arrives at Quilty's house and threatens him before finally shooting him. The murder scene becomes comic, as Humbert shoots Quilty again and again and Quilty continues to stumble around and speak. After a lot of ammunition and a lot of time, Humbert is finally sure that Quilty is dead. He
decides as he leaves that having broken every other moral law, he would now break all the traffic laws as well. He drives on the left side of the road, runs red lights, and it is finally his driving that gets him appréhended by the police. Even as he awaits trial for murder, Humbert assures us that he did the right thing in killing Quilty and that the crime he deserves punishment for is, if anything, his affair with Lolita.