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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF VLADIMIR NABOKOV'S  
RUSSIAN TRANSLATION OF *LOLITA*

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## Abstract

Vladimir Nabokov was born in St. Petersburg in 1899 and grew up speaking Russian, English, and French. He spent his childhood in Russia, but spent most of his life living in Germany, France, and finally moved to the United States in the 1940s. In America, he switched from writing in Russian to writing primarily in English and found international fame with his novel *Lolita*, which came out in 1955. In the afterword to his novel, Nabokov wrote that the English language was “second-rate” compared to the “rich” Russian one. He decided to take on the task of translating *Lolita*, which was published in his native Russian language in 1967. But the author did not find the satisfaction that he was searching for with his translation, and in the postscript to the Russian version, Nabokov expressed this discontent by writing that “the story of this translation is the story of disappointment.” This thesis aims to recognize the reasons behind the author’s self-proclaimed unsuccessful translation and to directly compare the English original with the Russian translation.

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## **A Look into Nabokov's Life**

Nabokov was born in St. Petersburg on April 23, 1899 into an affluent, aristocratic family. In his autobiography, he described his upbringing as that of “a normal tri-lingual child in a family with a large library” (*Speak, memory* 135). At home, he spoke both Russian and English, and, at the age of five, began to learn French. He was educated at home with the help of tutors and governesses. By the time that he was seven, he was fluent in Russian, English, and French. Nabokov's parents were avid lovers of literature so by the time that he was entering school at the age of 11, he had read all of Shakespeare in English, all of Tolstoy in Russian and Flaubert in French (“The Life and Works of Vladimir Nabokov”).

His diverse background and the influence of these various languages is clear from a statement that he made in his autobiography: “I am an American writer, born in Russia and educated in England where I studied French literature, before spending fifteen years in Germany” (*Speak, memory* 376). Nabokov began writing literature in Russian, but eventually switched over to English. Despite this transition though, it seemed as if he was never quite able, or willing, to escape his Russian roots.

Nabokov received his education at the Tenishev School in St. Petersburg. In 1916, his uncle bequeathed him a large estate, but he was not able to enjoy his new wealth because of the onset of the Russian Revolution. Nabokov's father, Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov, became a secretary of the Russian Provisional Government and was briefly arrested after the Bolshevik Revolution (“The Life and Works of Vladimir Nabokov”). The family was forced to flee the city, and they lived for a short time in Crimea. Following the withdrawal of the German army in 1918 during World War I, Nabokov and his family went into exile in Western Europe. They spent some time in England, where Nabokov began majoring in zoology at Trinity College at Cambridge University.

However, he quickly switched his major to French and Slavic languages. It was here that Nabokov began to really engage the field of translation professionally, although he dabbled with it prior to this time. He had been translating into and from Russian for years, even as a young child. When he was 11 years old, he translated Mayne Reid's *The Headless Horseman* into French. And as a 17 year old, he translated Alfred de Musset's *La Nuit* from French into Russian. As a student at Trinity College, Nabokov's major required that he complete translations so he continued to do so throughout his years of study there. Supposedly, Nabokov took on the task of translating Romain Rolland's novel *Colas Breugnon* because his father expressed to him the idea that he thought it would pose problems for a translator. Nabokov's first published translation was *Nikolka Persik* (*Nikolka the Peach*), which was printed in the journal *Slovo* in November 1922. Nabokov also translated *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll into Russian, and this is still considered one of the best versions of the novel in another language ("The Life and Works of Vladimir Nabokov").

While still in England, Nabokov began experimenting with writing in English, but continued to write primarily in Russian. During his time at Trinity College, he wrote two collections of Russian poetry, *The Cluster* and *The Empyrean Path*, which were published in 1923. Around this time, his family had settled in Berlin, Germany, where Nabokov would spend the next eighteen years as well as in Paris, France. In 1922, Nabokov's father shielded a speaker at a public meeting and was killed by a reactionary assassin. The death of his father apparently played a significant role in Nabokov's prose, despite his denial of this fact ("The Life and Works of Vladimir Nabokov").

In Berlin, Nabokov became recognized for his poetry and wrote under the penname of V. Sirin. He supported himself through the money he made with his translations and published works, and also gave lessons in tennis and in English. During

this time, he began to experiment with different genres of writing, and in 1925, he settled primarily on prose, even though most of his published work up until this point had been poetry. He continued to write in Russian, the language of his native country, and a few of his novels were published in Berlin and Paris in very small editions. It was here that he married Vera Slonim. They had one son together named Dmitri, who later in life was to help his father with translations. The atmosphere in Berlin under Nazi rule became increasingly more anti-Semitic, and because of this, Nabokov and his family moved to Paris and eventually to the United States in May 1940. He worked at Wellesley College as a lecturer in comparative literature and later at Cornell University. It was during this time that Nabokov stopped writing in Russian and began to primarily focus on composing fiction in English (“Vladimir Nabokov Biography”). Even though he is probably best known for his works written in English, it seems as though Nabokov still kept strong ties to his Russian roots. In his autobiography, he was quoted as saying, that “the very term ‘émigré author’ sounds somewhat tautological. Any genuine writer emigrates into his art and abides there. As for Russian writers, they have always loved their motherland nostalgically even without leaving it in reality. Not only Kishinev [Pushkin’s place of exile] or the Caucasus but Nevsky Prospect seemed like a faraway exile to them” (*Speak, memory* 209). Nabokov was fond of the country that he left behind even though he ended up spending an almost equal amount of his life abroad in other parts of Europe.

According to John Lennard in *Vladimir Nabokov’s Lolita*, Nabokov “soars above such petty concerns as national identity, insisting on his individuality and freedom outside geographical or linguistic borders” (206). This idea is seen in the fact that even though Nabokov lived in so many different places and had such a strong grasp of both Russian and English, he never fully identified with one country completely. There was

always a part of him that was drawn towards the Russian language and culture, even after he became a citizen of the United States. According to Lennard, the culmination of Nabokov's work as a Russian author was in *The Gift*, and it serves as his "farewell" to the Russian language: "Its intricate patterns of allusions and references to Russian literature is both Nabokov's tribute and farewell to his native language and heritage" (208). With his departure from Europe to America in 1940, Nabokov made a conscious effort to begin writing primarily in English. Lennard asserts that it was Nabokov's reputation that he gained under his penname Sirin, coupled with his multi-language upbringing that gave the author "the confidence to embark on another departure, this time from the Russian language, re-casting himself in the process into an English-speaking writer" (208). Despite this switch though, Nabokov still maintained strong ties with the Russian language, primarily through his translations of works from Russian into English. The switch in language not only influenced the author's professional work, but also affected him on a personal level. He began to question his identity as a writer and in his autobiography, he wrote that when he stopped writing in Russian, "across the dark sky of exile, Sirin passed, to use a simile of a more conservative nature, like a meteor, and disappeared, leaving nothing much else behind him than a vague sense of uneasiness" (*Speak, memory* 207). Even though Nabokov no longer wrote under his penname, Sirin, he did not completely abandon the Russian language and he clearly felt nostalgic for the country he had to leave behind. In the afterword to the English *Lolita*, this notion is especially apparent when he writes that "my private tragedy, which cannot, indeed should not, be anybody's concern, is that I had to abandon my natural language, my natural idiom, my rich, infinitely rich and docile Russian tongue, for a second-rate brand of English" (287). These words reveal that Nabokov never quite identified with the English language as closely as he did with Russian and even thought of it as being somewhat

inferior. But this contradicts somewhat with interviews that were conducted with Nabokov after the novel had reached international fame. In later accounts the author says that *Lolita* was the piece of literature of which he was proudest. Perhaps he realized how stylistically brilliant the novel was in English and wanted to prove that the same could be delivered in his “rich, infinitely rich and docile Russian tongue”. The journey of the novel from an idea to a novel to a translation is an interesting one to follow and examine in order to ultimately compare the English original with its Russian translation.

### **The Publication History of *Lolita***

In the afterword to his best-selling novel *Lolita*, Vladimir Nabokov wrote that “the first little throb of *Lolita* went through me late in 1939 or early in 1940, in Paris” (283). This “throb” was prompted by a newspaper story about an ape in the Jardin des Plantes. He said that “the impulse I record had no textual connection with the ensuing train of thought” and he began writing in Russian, which he wrote was “the language in which I had been writing novels since 1924” (283). He later developed this first “throb” of *Lolita* into a thirty-page novella in Russian called *Volshebnik*, which was published after his death in 1986. It was later translated into English as *The Enchanter*. In *Vladimir Nabokov’s Lolita*, John Lennard writes that the novel itself was “by no means Nabokov’s first approach to the troublesome theme of an adult’s infatuated desire for an underage girl- there are, for example, the story ‘Skazka’, the poem ‘Lilith’, the unwritten novel summarily outlined to Fodor by the landlord Schchyogolev in Chapter 3 of ‘The Gift’” (21). There were allusions to this subject matter that appeared in his earlier works and it seemed to be a theme that Nabokov would approach but never fully developed until he began to write the novel that would eventually become *Lolita*.

In the afterword to *Lolita*, Nabokov goes on to say that the novel “developed



slowly, with many interruptions and asides” (283). By the time that he began writing it in the 1950s, he had long ago transitioned from his native Russian language to English.

Even though he was fluent in English, in the afterword to *Lolita*, Nabokov demonstrates a certain frustration with the language:

It had taken me some forty years to invent Russia and Western Europe, and now I was faced by the task of inventing America. The obtaining of such local ingredients as would allow me to inject a modicum of average “reality” into the brew of individual fancy, proved at fifty a much more difficult process than it had been in the Europe of my youth when receptiveness and retention were at their automatic best. (283)

His words seem to reflect the fact that unlike Russian, English did not come as automatically and naturally to him. Even though many critics have praised Nabokov for his rich descriptions of America in the novel, the author himself admits that it was a “difficult process.”

The manuscript for the novel was finished in 1953, and Nabokov was determined to have it published in the United States. He gave the manuscript to five publishing companies: Viking, Simon & Schuster, New Directions, Farrar Straus, and Doubleday, but not one of them would publish the novel because of its controversial content. The *Partisan Review*, a journal in the United States, finally agreed to print a section of the novel, but only if he agreed to sign the work under his own name. Nabokov had been hoping to publish the novel under a pseudonym because he was afraid that its controversial content would put his career and reputation in jeopardy. Nabokov was also afraid to be associated with the main character of his novel, Humbert Humbert, because of the latter’s controversial infatuation with the pre-adolescent protagonist of the novel, Lolita. On December 23, 1953, he wrote a letter to Katharine White, the editor of the journal, saying that “its subject is such that V., as a college teacher, cannot very well

publish it under his real name” (“The Life and Works of Vladimir Nabokov”). Therefore, the publication of the novel in the United States continued to be delayed.

In the early 1930s, Nabokov hired a French agent named Madame Doussia Ergaz, and after his failed attempts of having the novel published in America, she suggested that he try in Paris. In 1955, Maurice Girodias, from the Olympia Press, agreed to publish it in English under a pseudonym. Nabokov hoped that his novel would become an instant success, but unfortunately, it garnered practically no public attention (“The Life and Works of Vladimir Nabokov”).

After its release, *Lolita* made its way into the United Kingdom to a mixed reception. Graham Green, from the London Sunday Times named it one of the best three novels of 1955. He wrote in a letter to Nabokov that “in England one may go to prison, but there couldn’t be a better cause!” This was counteracted by the Sunday Express, in which its editor, John Gordon, called the novel “the filthiest book I have ever read”. Soon the book was banned in the United Kingdom because of pressure from the British Home Office. In 1956, the novel was also banned in France (“The Life and Works of Vladimir Nabokov”).

Despite these bans though, there were still some copies of the Olympia Press publication that made their way into the United States during this time. But these were few and far between, and Nabokov continued to search for a publishing house that would agree to release an American edition of his novel. Jason Epstein, who was the editor Doubleday, was able to have about a third of the book published in *Anchor Review* in June 1957. It appeared along with critical praise from F.W. Dupee, the editor of *Partisan Review*, and also an explanation from Nabokov, who tried to defend the content of his novel. After this, a few publication deals fell through, but finally, Putnam’s Sons Press

agreed to publish the complete novel in August 1958. On the day that the novel was to be published, the president of the company, Walter Minton, sent a telegram to Nabokov:

EVERYBODY TALKING OF LOLITA ON PUBLICATION DAY  
 YESTERDAYS REVIEWS MAGNIFICENT AND NEW YORK TIMES  
 BLAST THIS MORNING [panning the novel] PROVIDED NECESSARY FUEL  
 TO FLAME 300 REORDERS THIS MORNING AND BOOK STORES  
 REPORT EXCELLENT DEMAND CONGRATULATIONS ON  
 PUBLICATION DAY. (“The Life and Works of Vladimir Nabokov”)

This “excellent demand” endured and the book instantly became a sensation and went into its third printing within days, selling more than 100,000 copies in its first three weeks; it was the first book to do so since *Gone with the Wind* (“The Life and Works of Vladimir Nabokov”).

Despite some of the negativity that the author expressed in the afterword to his novel, once it became such a sensation, Nabokov seemed to have a much more positive opinion of it in later interviews. In an interview given to *Life* in 1963, he was quoted as saying “I would say that of all my books, *Lolita* has left me with the most pleasurable afterglow — perhaps because it is the purest of all, the most abstract and carefully contrived” (“Nabokov’s Interview with Life”), and in an interview with *Playboy* that same year, he said that “I shall never regret *Lolita*. She was like the composition of a beautiful puzzle — its composition and its solution at the same time, since one is a mirror view of the other, depending on the way you look” (“Nabokov’s Interview with *Playboy*”). These sentiments are quite different than those that he has in the afterword to the novel, in which he calls his English “second-rate”. When he wrote the afterword to the novel on November 12, 1956, *Lolita* had still been relatively unsuccessful. At that point, it had still only been published in France and even there, its reception had been mixed. He had no inkling of the international fame and recognition that he was going to receive after the novel was published in the United States by Putnam and Sons in 1958.

While some critics could not get past the controversial content of the novel, it was overall critically acclaimed. The Chicago Sun-Times called it a “delight, a revelation and a shattering experience,” while The Reporter called it “the most remarkable – and certainly the most original – novel written in English during recent years” (*Lolita*). This positive regard for the book may have changed the way that the author himself perceived it as well.

Despite the fact that the novel garnered such success in the United States, Nabokov still wanted the book rendered into his native language, Russian. The translation was published almost a decade after the original.

### ***Lolita* in Translation**

Nabokov began to translate *Lolita* a few years after its successful publication and positive reception in the United States. In 1967, it was published by Phaedra Publishers in New York (“Vladimir Nabokov Biography”). Even though he eventually took on the task of translating his renowned novel himself, there were other people who had been willing to do so. In *New Perspectives in Language, Discourse and Translation Studies*, Miroslaw Pawlak and Jakub Bielak write that “If *Lolita* was ever going to be translated into Russian, Nabokov wanted to ensure control over the outcome” (228). Initially, his siblings offered to do the translation for him, and they divided the task amongst themselves. At first Nabokov was pleased with their offer, but after he read some of their sample translations, he was horrified by their work and felt as though it was a “hideous mistranslation”. In an interview that he gave in 1964, he said the following:

I trained my inner telescope upon that particular point in the distant future and I saw that every paragraph, pockmarked as it is with pitfalls, could lend itself to hideous mistranslation. In the hands of a harmful drudge, the Russian version of *Lolita* would be entirely degraded and botched by vulgar paraphrases or blunders. So I decided to translate it myself. (Bielak and Pawlak 228)

Nabokov realized that he was the only one that truly knew the intention behind every idea and sentence since he was the original author of the piece. He was aware of the complex nature of the English original and realized that it would cause obstacles for a translator. It was clear that the novel held a special place in Nabokov's heart, as did the author's native language, Russian. Therefore, he recognized that if there was anyone that should take on the task of translating the novel, it should be the original author himself.

The task was difficult though, even for Nabokov. Translation was a large part of his career and he had a great deal of experience in this field, but in a letter to James Laughlin on July 16, 1942, Nabokov wrote that the task "drained him of precious energies needed for new writing and required 'another section of the brain than the text of my book, and switching from the one to another by means of spasmodic jumps causes a kind of mental asthma'" (*Selected Letters* 377). In the afterword to the Russian translation, the author spoke of the difficulty that he faced as he was translating his novel:

The story of this translation is the story of a disappointment. Alas, that "wonderful Russian language" which, I imagined, still awaits me somewhere, which blooms like a faithful spring behind the locked gate to which I, after so many years, still possess the key, turned out to be non-existent, and there is nothing beyond that gate, except for some burned out stumps and hopeless autumnal emptiness, and the key in my hand looks rather like a lock pick. (193)

This is an interesting quote to examine, especially in comparison with what he wrote in the afterword to the original English version of the novel. There, he had expressed his disappointment in the English language, which he viewed as "second-rate" when compared to the "rich" Russian one. When Nabokov took on the task of translating the novel, he seemed hopeful that he would be able to create something extraordinary using his native language, but he says that instead, the experience was a "disappointment". The Russian language which he had hoped would be like "a faithful

spring”, turned out just to be “burned out stumps” and “hopeless autumnal emptiness”.

This is quite a contrast to his views on the nature of the Russian language as he described it in the afterword of the original *Lolita*, where nostalgia may have played a larger emotional role for him than in the reality of attempting to render the novel’s unique aspects in Russian.

Before beginning the translation, Nabokov thought that he possessed a key to the “wonderful Russian language,” but instead for him it turned out to be more like “a lock pick”. This metaphor suggests that after completing the translation, he realized that he no longer had the same facility with the Russian language that he once had and instead now was just intruding on something that had been closed off to him. This can partly be attributed to the fact that Nabokov was so long removed from the ever-developing Russian language and culture that he no longer grasped separated from it as a living language for so many years.

Despite Nabokov’s disappointment in his translation, there are many critics and readers who believe that Nabokov’s rendering of *Lolita* into Russian was a literary feat, and that it is filled with stylistic brilliance. Perhaps Nabokov’s disappointment stems from the fact that many of the ideas of American life and culture proved to be a struggle to transfer into another language. Also, at this point in his career, he had not been writing in the Russian language for many years, and most of his translations had been from Russian into English, and not the reverse. Additionally, Nabokov was outspoken about his controversial theory of translation; he believed that the only correct way to translate was “to reproduce with absolute exactitude the whole text, and nothing but the text” (Schulte and Biguenet 134). His overall philosophy of translation was compromised when translating himself. He was forced to make some changes and additions and this could have contributed to his overall disappointment with the final product.

## Nabokov as a Translator

Nabokov's theory of translation has been scrutinized by many, especially in connection with his translation of the novel in verse *Eugene Onegin*, which was written by Alexander Pushkin from May 1823 to October 1831. It has eight chapters and consists of "5,551 lines, all of which, except a song of eighteen unrhymed lines... are in iambic tetrameter, rhymed" (Schulte and Biguenet 129). All this is divided into 366 stanzas, which are 14 lines each and have an ababecciddiff rhyme pattern. In an essay on the theory of translation, Nabokov asserted that "the person who desires to turn literary masterpiece into another language, has only one duty to perform, and this is to reproduce with absolute exactitude the whole text, and nothing but the text" (Schulte and Biguenet 134). He claimed that the translator faces the problem of making a decision whether to preserve rhyme or reason. In the case of his translation of *Eugene Onegin*, Nabokov choose to go the route of reason. Instead of preserving the original rhyme scheme and precise rhythm of the original, Nabokov chose to translate each word as accurately as possible. This method reflects the fact that he believed that a translation should not and will not be able to "soar and sing" like the original, but rather will be able to be "nicely dissected and mounted, and scientifically studied in all its organic details" (Schulte and Biguenet 135). Nabokov believed that a translation should not sound beautiful and polished in the target language, but rather it should be an exact reiteration of the original, keeping as literal and close to it as possible.

Before Nabokov took on the task of translating *Onegin*, there had been many translators before him who had done so. Unlike Nabokov, they tried to maintain the rhyme and meter of the original in their renderings. Nabokov expressed that he believed that these translations were mistranslated and incorrect. He argued that anyone who wants to translate Pushkin's masterpiece "should acquire exact information in regard to a

number of relevant subjects” (Schulte and Biguenet 137). He believed that nothing should be added for the sake of rhyme or meter and to do so would be incorrect. At the end of his essay, he concluded that it is impossible to translate *Onegin* into rhyme, and that its rhymes should instead be explained in footnotes. Additionally, he declared that the only possible way to translate the work would be to substitute the original lines with ones that vary in length and do not necessary rhyme unless this happens naturally.

During the 1950s, Nabokov translated mostly for academic purposes, and he was quoted as saying that “any translation that does not sound like a translation is bound to be inexact upon inspection; while, on the other hand, the only virtue of a good translation is faithfulness and completeness. Whether it reads smoothly or not, depends on the model, not on the mimic” (Eysteinnsson and Weissbort 382). His aim was not to make a translation sound elegant or make it seem as though it was written in the target language. He asserted that “the clumsiest literal translation is a thousand times more useful than the prettiest paraphrase” (Schulte and Biguenet 127). Even though Nabokov was vigilant in keeping to this philosophy in his translations of other authors’ works, he was faced with a dilemma when it came to translating his own novel *Lolita*. Should he stick as closely as possible in order to preserve meaning over sound and rhythm? Or should he allow for some changes and revisions in order to make his beloved Russian language shine as brilliantly as possible? It seems that when it came to the translation of his own work, Nabokov abandoned his rigid guidelines and was more willing to make compromises for the sake of fluidity and aesthetic beauty.

According to the *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation*, even though many of Nabokov’s translations are quite different, they all “reveal him operating as a scrupulous and painstaking translator” and they demonstrate that he “reserves especial severity for any hint of compromise with the original and consistently reinstate images, however



pallid, that have been glossed over or lost by his translator” (Classe 989). Even though his approach to the translations of works of other authors, as in the case of Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin*, fits in within his general paradigm, his approach to translating his own works takes on a wholly different dimension. Classe writes that “when translating his own work, however, Nabokov was always prepared to reverse these priorities and quite often valued the retention of the stylistic effect more highly than the retention of meaning” (990). Thus an inherent contradiction surfaces from his theoretical to practical applications of his attitude towards translation, specifically when examining his translation of his own novel. The reason that Nabokov was ultimately left disappointed with his translation may have been because he was uncomfortable and inexperienced in veering away from his rigid theoretical underpinnings on translation. He was conflicted over his desire to make his translation exact, but also stylistically beautiful. The critical acclaim that the original English version of *Lolita* received from readers and reviewers most likely fueled his desire to make something equally as admired and praised in his native Russian language.

### **Critical Responses to *Lolita* in America**

*Lolita* became an instant best seller when it was released in the United States and made Nabokov an internationally acclaimed and recognized author. Despite its success though, it had a mixed reception, largely due to its controversial subject matter. In England, the novel was deemed by some to be one of the best novels of the year, while others thought of it as “filthy” and pornographic. In the United States, the reviews of the novel also varied. There were many critics who condemned the subject matter of the novel and therefore didn’t even acknowledge the actual linguistic and stylistic elements of the book.

Lionel Trilling, one of the leading American critics of his time, and a professor at Columbia University, wrote a review of the novel in October 1958 in which he said the following:

Indeed, for me one of the attractions of *Lolita* is its ambiguity of tone... and it's ambiguity of intention, its ability to arouse uneasiness, to throw the reader off balance, to require him to change his stance and shift his position and move on. *Lolita* gives us no chance to settle and sink roots. Perhaps it is the curious moral mobility it urges on us that counts for its remarkable ability to represent certain aspects of American life. (Page 102)

Overall, it seems that Trilling's review of the novel was a positive one, and despite the "uneasiness" that it caused within him, it challenged him in an unexpected way. It is interesting to note that he praises Nabokov on his "remarkable ability to represent certain aspects of American life" even though the author had spent most of his life living in Europe. This could be attributed to the fact that when Nabokov moved to the United States, he became a keen observer of American life. He had an outsider's perspective that he used to his advantage. Nabokov was able to notice and appreciate certain aspects of American life that may have gone unobserved or overlooked by people who had spent their entire lives in the United States. Details that seemed trivial to most people did not go unnoticed by the author, and he was able to highlight them beautifully in his novel. He had experienced life in pre-revolutionary Russia and then spent many years in various parts of Europe before he moved to the United States. The fact that he had not grown up surrounded by American culture may have been one of the reasons why the novel was so successful, especially in his representations of "American life" that Trilling notes in his review. Nabokov was able to pick out and highlight certain aspects of it that other American authors may have not even stopped to think about or explore since they grew up surrounded by these elements and had become somewhat desensitized to their uniqueness.

Another review, written by Kingsley Amis on November 6, 1959, offers a quite different reaction to the novel. He says that “the development of this émigré’s euphuism is a likely consequence of Nabokov’s having had to abandon his natural idiom” (Page 105). His main problem with the novel is the fact that Nabokov seems to have a disconnection from both his Russian roots and with the American way of life, which in turn has produced an unsuccessful novel. Unlike many other critics of the novel, Amis believed it to be less controversial and shocking than he had expected: “do not misunderstand me if I say that one of the troubles with ‘Lolita’ is that, so far from being too pornographic, it is not pornographic enough” (Page 106). In spite of the fact that the novel is full of descriptions of American life, Amis believes that this is not Nabokov’s natural subject matter and that he delivered it ineffectively. He concludes his review by saying that “Nabokov’s tragedy has been his separation from Europe, the course of his natural subject-matter as well as of his natural language” (Page 107). Amis believes that the authors’s “natural language” and “natural subject-matter” is of European origin and Nabokov’s attempts at depicting American life are not fruitful.

Many other critics praised Nabokov’s writing style including Walter Allen, who published a review of *Lolita* in the “New Statesman” on November 7, 1959. Allen writes that “the novel is told with sparkling brilliance...but here one must distinguish between Nabokov’s brilliance and that which is postulate to Humbert” (Page 107). This is a seminal point made by Allen, because many critics have drawn comparisons between Nabokov and the narrator of the novel, Humbert Humbert. The novel is written from Humbert’s perspective and, much like Nabokov himself, Humbert spent most of his life in Europe. Humbert is a literary scholar, who was born in Paris and had an English mother and Swiss father. The way in which the protagonist views the United States could be associated with how Nabokov felt in America when he emigrated from Europe. The

author was an outsider looking into a completely new way of life, and this is the same way in which Humbert experiences America. Therefore, many critics of the novel have said that the narrator was a projection of the author himself. Allen goes on to say that “the novel is often very funny indeed, and some aspects of the United States, the hotels, the motels, the small-town drug stores and gas stations of the tourist, are caught and exactly pinned down as never before” (Page 108). Allen clearly believes that Nabokov was able to successfully capture certain elements of life in the United States in a way that is unique and highly perceptive which again could be attributed to Nabokov’s unique outsider perspective on the American way of life. Despite Nabokov’s conflicted feelings in terms of his heritage, most critics have agreed that *Lolita* captures American life in a precise and unique way and solidified his position as one of the leading American authors of his time. In *Annotated Lolita*, Alfred Appel writes that Nabokov “re-created America so brilliantly” and in the process became “an American writer” (xl).

Some critics of *Lolita* have said that the novel should not be looked at in terms of its content and characters, but rather for its stylistic elements: “Nabokov’s use of the language reveals his obsession with it, to the extent that language is often cited as the central focus of the novel, instead of its characters or the plot” (Giertz 13). The language itself is so rich, that the actual subject matter negates from the perverse subject matter: “It is obviously language that transforms and re-creates the plot of squalor into the work of refinement” and “it creates beauty where there is none” (Casarino 100).

Even several quite famous American authors defended the novel including Joyce Carol Oates, who asserted that “*Lolita* is one of our finest American novels, a triumph of style and vision, an unforgettable work, Nabokov’s best work, a wedding of Swiftian satirical vigor with the kind of minute, loving patience that belongs to a man infatuated with the visual mysteries of the world” (“*Lolita*”). These overall positive reactions to the

novel may have propagated the author's desire to deliver it as successfully in his native tongue. He stated that his aim in publishing *Lolita* in Russian was that he wanted his "best English book – or, let us say more modestly, one of my best English books to be translated correctly into my native language" (*Lolita* 190). In translating his hugely successful novel, Nabokov faced the tremendous challenge of making his translation stylistically equal, or even more superior, in comparison with the original.

### **Critical Responses to Nabokov's Russian Translation**

When the translation of the novel was released, it was still banned in the Soviet Union, and was not published there for the general public until the late 1980s. Despite this ban, the translation was reviewed by Russian speakers around the world. Overall, there seemed to be an overarching belief that the translation was clumsy and not nearly as stylistically brilliant as the English original. There were however, those who disagreed with this sentiment. Nina Berberova, who is also an author and literary critic who emerged in the Russian emigration, "dismissed [Nabokov's] claim that his Russian strings had grown rusty" and praised the novel for its stylistic achievements. Similarly, Gennadi Barabtarlo, who after Nabokov's death translated *Pnin* into Russian, thought that Nabokov's translation of *Lolita* was "in many stylistic respects his finest," sufficient to place it "on the very top step of the frozen escalator of Russian masterpieces" (Boyd 238).

Nabokov personally did not agree with these words of praise, and it is clear that the process of self-translation was a difficult one for the author. In the Postscript to the Russian *Lolita*, he alludes to the afterword to his English version in the following passage:

I so fervently stress to my American readers the superiority of my Russian style

over my English that some Slavists might really think that my translation of *Lolita* is a hundred times better than the original, but the rattle of my rusty Russian strings only nauseates me now. (190)

These self-effacing sentiments demonstrate Nabokov's dissatisfaction with his Russian translation of the book, which is striking, since he considered his original version one of his best works. Readers who have read both versions of the novel are of divided opinions. Some consider the English original far superior, while others believe that the Russian measures up in its stylistic accomplishments. At the time that Nabokov translated the novel, it had been many years since he had lived in Russia and by that time he had switched over primarily to writing prose in English. He was disconnected from both the Russian language and culture for many years, and therefore his ability to successfully transfer his ideas may have become what he describes as "rusty". In the Postscript to the Russian version of *Lolita*, Nabokov attempts to reason why his translation was not satisfactory:

I console myself, first of all, with the thought that the fault for the clumsiness of the translator offered here lies not only with the translator's loss of touch with his native speech but also with the spirit of the language into which the work is being translated. In the course of a half year's labor over the Russian *Lolita*, I not only recognized the loss of a number of personal trifles and irretrievable linguistic skills and treasures but also came to certain general conclusions regarding the mutual translatability of two amazing languages. (191)

Nabokov admits that he had lost "touch with his native speech," and this could be one of the reasons why he was ultimately unsatisfied with his translation. He also mentions that it could have been due to the "spirit" of the Russian language. One of the problems many translators face is that they do not know the precise intent of the author they are translating. They may perceive the meaning of something differently than the author had intended, and some elements therefore are invariably lost in translation. Nabokov, though, did not encounter this problem, because he was translating himself. Yet at the same time, he had to labor even more to convey every nuance in Russian the

same way that he was able to convey it in English. But in doing so, he had to grapple with another problem:

The subtle reticence so peculiar to English, the poetry of thought, the instantaneous resonance between the most abstract concepts, the swarming of monosyllabic epithetics- all this, and also everything relating to technology, fashion, sports, the natural scenes, and the unnatural passions- in Russian become clumsy, prolix, and often repulsive in terms of style and rhythm. (191)

Even though earlier in his life he had criticized English for being “second-rate” in comparison to his “beloved” Russian, in this passage he admits that certain elements of language come across better in English. One problem that Nabokov might have faced is the fact that the novel’s plot is situation in America and is rich with images of the American lifestyle. This is especially apparent when Lolita and Humbert make their way from one motel to another, and stop at movie theaters and diners during their travels together. Images of Middle America and some elements of the reality of the American lifestyle may have been impossible to translate smoothly and exactly into Russian. Some English words may not have had a direct equivalent in Russian, forcing Nabokov to come up with creative ways to convey these ideas.

With regard to the Russian translation, the question of Nabokov’s intended target audience arises. At the time the Russian book was published, it was strictly prohibited in the Soviet Union. Even Nabokov admitted that he found it “difficult to imagine the regime in my prim homeland, whether liberal or totalitarian, under which the censorship would pass *Lolita*” (*Lolita* 192). Therefore, he says the reason that he translated the novel was one that “belongs to the sphere of metaphysics and humor” (*Lolita* 192). All of Nabokov’s works were prohibited in the Soviet Union and “Nabokov was dismissed by Soviet authorities for decades as a practitioner of “literary snobbism” and “distortions” of socialist heroes” (“Novelist Nabokov Finally Published in Soviet Union”). The first

publication of Nabokov in the USSR was in 1986, in a small-circulation Soviet chess magazine called 64. It was a 2,000-word excerpt from Nabokov's *Speak, Memory* and it praised the author as a master of "sparkling language" ("Novelist Nabokov Finally Published in Soviet Union").

*Lolita* was prohibited for 34 years, and it was only in spring 1989 that a special edition of the novel was printed by the Soviet journal Foreign Literature ("Censors in Soviet Union"). Unlike in France and in England, where the novel was banned for its controversial content, the reason that it was banned in the Soviet Union had more to do with the fact that Nabokov was a Russian-born emigrant. Despite this ban, there were still people in the Soviet Union who were able to read smuggled underground copies of the novel, often passing them along among friends. My mother, who lived in Russia until 1992, recalls that she read a copy of the novel in the 1970s after one of her friend's fathers was able to get a copy of it. This same copy was then read by many different people in their circle of friends despite the ban (Romanova).

In an interview conducted with Nabokov by the Paris Review in 1964, Herbert Gold asked the author whether he had any contact with Soviet citizens after his departure from Russia in 1917. Nabokov said that in those years he had practically no contact with them, except for a few brief encounters. This lack of interaction may have contributed to Nabokov's inability to deliver *Lolita* as successfully in the Russian language as he was able to in English. He was separated and cut off from the changing culture and ever-developing language. Nabokov spent a substantial part of his adult life in the United States and considered himself American. In the same interview, he told Gold the following:

I am as American as April in Arizona. The flora, the fauna, the air of the western states, are my links with Asiatic and Arctic Russia. Of course, I owe too much to



the Russian language and landscape to be emotionally involved in, say, American regional literature, or Indian dances, or pumpkin pie on a spiritual plane; but I do feel a suffusion of warm, lighthearted pride when I show my green USA passport at European frontiers. (“Vladimir Nabokov, *The Art of Fiction* No. 40”)

The impression that one gets from this interview is, that despite feeling American, a large part of Nabokov’s soul seemed consistently to be tied to his native Russia. While he becomes American by citizenship, part of him still seems to be removed from American culture, perhaps because most of his childhood and youth had been spent in Europe. He identified with American culture but he remained somewhat of an outsider looking in at it. With the writing of *Lolita*, the author truly wanted to immerse himself in the culture of the United States and said that “I chose [to depict] American motels instead of Swiss hotels or English inns only because I am trying to be an American writer and claim only the same right that other American writers enjoy” (*Lolita* 315). But despite this desire to prove himself as an American writer, Nabokov’s inner Russianness remained with him his entire life. Therefore, his dissatisfaction with his translation was not only a professional issue, but also a personal one. His attempt at rendering his “best” novel into his native language was in a way a challenge to himself to prove that there was a part of him that still remained truly Russian.

## **A Comparison of the Original and the Translation**

In order to get a better idea of why Nabokov seemed dissatisfied with his Russian version of *Lolita*, it would be useful to compare some of the key passages of the original novel with his translation. In *New Perspectives in Language, Discourse and Translation Studies*, Mirosław Pawlak and Jakub Bielak describe a study that was done to compare the English original with the Russian translation of the novel in a scientific way. The study utilized a computer program called WordSmith Tools 4.0 in order to compare the

two texts. The aim of the study was to see if the “differences between the English and Russian texts is because of translation strategies or whether it is due to typological differences between the Russian and English languages” (227). There were two parts of the study and the first part compared “lexical wordlists (i.e. top-frequency lexical words) generated for the English and Russian *Lolita*” (228). The analysis demonstrated that Nabokov used synonymy as a strategy for translation. It also indicated that “the analysis highlighted a conspicuous typological difference between the two languages whereby Russian is more explicit semantically (i.e. words have more specific meaning distinctions) than English, which in turn is more ambiguous and vague in its surface forms” (228). The second part of the study revealed that Nabokov exhibited “a strong tendency towards lexical normalization while translating creative hapax legomena into Russian” (Pawlak and Bielak 228). Hapax legomena refers to a type of word or phrase “appears only once in a manuscript, document, or particular area of literature” (“Hapax Legomena” while lexical normalization is when a translator tries to find a colloquial equivalent in the target language.

Gennady Baratarlo made a comprehensive comparison of the two versions of the novel in his article, “On the Russian *Lolita*”. According to the author, “many of the Russian *Lolita*’s emendations help to unravel the riddles of the original; some even provide ready solution to those cruxes that Nabokov thought might baffle, or go unnoticed by, that vaporous creature, the contemporary Russian reader, less versed in the subtle lore of cutting across a literary webwork than the best of Nabokov’s original American and European readers” (240). The author, unlike many other critics, believes that the Russian translation is successful and that Nabokov is able to mimic many of the elements of the English novel in the Russian language. He writes that “sometimes, Nabokov replaces an impregnable English puzzle with an equally puncture-proof Russian

one” (Barabtarlo 241). He even asserts that there are times that the Russian translation is even more stylistically rich than the English original: “The relatively plain alliteration “millions of so-called ‘millers’, a kind of insect” [243], intensifies in the Russian version into a lambent multitude of swarming m’s, l’s, and t’s” (Barabtarlo 241).

Barabtarlo’s opinion is much different than that of Jane Grayson, who, in “Nabokov Translated,” writes that no matter how “ingenious and talented” Nabokov’s translation might be, its style “bears such strong traces of English constructions that it cannot safely be treated as an autonomous piece of Russian [prose]” (183). She goes on to say that the language of the translation is “awkward, unnatural, and strongly influenced by English idiom and English construction” and that “both Soviet and émigré Russian readers have commented on the oddness of the language...” (Grayson 183). Barabtarlo defends the translation and says that “there are very few Russians extant who can appreciate the opulent beauty of the thing because of the tragically rapid deterioration of the language” (243). Barabtarlo believes that one of the reasons that translation is underappreciated by Russian speakers is because the language itself went through many changes and “deterioration” during Soviet times. Nabokov was still writing in his native tongue the way he remembered it after leaving Russia following the Revolution, even though it had changed significantly since then. Therefore, many of the phrases and words that the author chose to use for his translation may have been old-fashioned and archaic-sounding to the modern Russian reader. There are a few instances in the novel where Nabokov struggles with finding a direct equivalent word in Russian and therefore he has to elaborate on it in order to convey the idea in translation. For example, for the term “football cheerleader,” Nabokov does not find a Russian equivalent for this, but rather gives a description of what they look like by saying that they are “bare-legged girls in short skirts and thick jerseys, who encourage students playing the American version of

rugby by rhythmic yelps and frenetic calisthenics” (*Lolita* 211). Nabokov probably adds so much detail in the translation because there is no equivalent term for cheerleader in the Russian language and therefore he needed to provide an elaborate description.

Another example of this is on page 262 of the English novel where the “Cantrip Review” was mentioned. Nabokov assumed that American readers would understand this reference, but for the Russian reader he chose to elaborate and describes it as a “scholarly magazine” that “in Swedish means witchcraft” (240). The author chose to elaborate in his translation because he knew that foreign readers would not understand the reference.

Another example of this is on page 253 of the original. The author does not find a direct equivalent for “my pathetic endearments” and instead writes “жалкий шифр ласковых имен, и своенравный прозваний, которые я ей давал” (231-32). This is much more elaborate and can be translated as “the pathetic cipher of tender names, and capricious nicknames, which I gave her”. This extra detail may be attributed to the fact that Nabokov was not able to transfer the same idea in Russian as in English with so few words, so therefore he was forced to elaborate.

There are also parts of the novel where Nabokov makes small changes that are more difficult to explain. For example, in the English version, he writes “Lucas Picador, Merrymay, Pa” (176) but in the Russian he writes “Maryland” instead of “Pennsylvania.” Another example of this is on page 253 where he writes “The gruesome ‘Harold Haze, Tombstone, Arizona’ and in the Russian he says “the tasteless Harold Haze, Mavzolei, Mexico” (232). Also, in the English version, when describing license plates, he writes “Q32888 or CU 88322” (253), but in the Russian version, the numbers instead are “6969” and “9933” (232). These changes do not change the overall sense of the novel and are virtually inconsequential. It may have been that they were simply added by Nabokov for no apparent reason, or it may have been an oversight.

Another interesting addition to the Russian version of the novel is the fact that Nabokov provides many more dates in the translation than he does in the original. For example, on page 147 of the original, when describing an event he writes simply that “it was then...,” whereas in the Russian he specifically says that it was in “August 1947” (128). Similarly, on page 188 of the English novel, he writes that something occurred “in the course of the winter,” but in the Russian version provides the precise year, which was “1948-1949” (168). This happens again on page 201, where Nabokov writes “For her birthday I bought her a bicycle.” The Russian translation is much more descriptive though, and he specifies that it was for her “fourteenth birthday” and it was “on the first day of the year 1949” (181). The reason that he added these details into the Russian translation could be attributed to the fact that some authors have a tendency to provide additional information in their novels when they revise them. Even though Nabokov was technically not revising the novel, but merely translating it, his addition of dates and clarifications of time frames could be seen as an extension of this instinct. According to John Foster in *Nabokov’s Art of Memory and European Modernism*, when Nabokov revised some of his earlier novels, he “rewrote key passages or even whole chapters, at times clarifying what had been obscure or undeveloped but often modifying the work to reflect later interests” (20). The major changes that are seen in the later version of *Lolita* could be attributed to this as well. In a letter that Nabokov wrote to Michael Seammell, Nabokov admitted that it was often difficult for him to resist the temptation to amend his work when he translated (*Selected Letters* 143). In *Stalking Nabokov*, Brian Boyd discusses this as well and observes that “Nabokov painstakingly worked and reworked his fiction to a state of serene finality. His translations were different”. In an unpublished note, the author wrote that “translations fade much more rapidly than the originals, and every time I re-read my versions I tend to touch them up here and there” (Boyd 220). This

may have been one of the reasons that Nabokov chose to provide more detail in his later Russian version of the novel. The details that he provides offer more clarification and context for the reader. In rereading his original English novel for his translation, Nabokov may have realized in hindsight that some elements should have been more clear and specific, and therefore provided more detail and context to his translation.

Many historical and literary allusions are sprinkled through the novel, especially references to French literature. In the Russian translation, Nabokov often offers an explanation or description of that allusion, which is something that he does not do in the English original. One example of this is on page 12 of the original where he references *Les Misérables*. In the Russian, he translates the French into Russian and writes that it was a novel by Victor Hugo. Similarly, on page 260 of the original, Nabokov writes that “I picked her up one depraved May evening somewhere...between Toylestown and Blake” and in the Russian original, he includes in parenthesis that the phrase “depraved May” is a reference to a poem written by T. S. Eliot. The reason behind why Nabokov might have done this isn’t entirely clear. It could be attributed to the fact that Nabokov was not as familiar with his prospective Russian audience as he was with his English readers and therefore could not anticipate how much they would know about these foreign references. According to Barabtarlo, Nabokov added these new explanations in the translation because he knew that he was writing for “the contemporary Russian reader, less versed in the subtle lore of cutting across a literary webwork than the best of Nabokov’s original American and European readers” (243). This statement implies that Nabokov believed his Russian readers had a narrower awareness of international literature. This may have been largely true since the Soviet Union was closed off from the rest of the world and had a strict ban on a plethora of literature. By providing extra background information, Nabokov could convey a certain idea to his Russian reader even

if he or she did not recognize the allusion or reference he was making. Nabokov's tendency to add detail to his allusions is similar to the way in which he translates all of the French phrases that populate the English original into Russian. Some examples of French phrases that he keeps in the original but translates into Russian are: "La Petite Dormeuse ou l'Amant Ridicule" (131), "ce qu'on appelle Dixieland" (156), "J'ai toujours admire l'oeuvre ormonde du sublime Dublinois" (209). Similarly to the way in which Nabokov provided context for his literary references, he may have felt as though the French phrases would not have been understood by his Russian readers and therefore chose to provide translations.

One of the most defining and famous parts of the novel comprises the first few lines. The reader is immediately introduced to Lolita with the phrase "Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins" (*Lolita* 1). The alliteration and sounds of this phrase are skillfully crafted and the meaning of it is less significant than the way that it sounds. In the Russian version, Nabokov translates this literally by getting the general sense across: "Lolita, svet moei zhizni, ogon' moikh chresel". This is an exact translation of the original, word by word. Instead of trying to deliver the sound of the original by perhaps sacrificing the exact meaning, Nabokov decided to convey precision of meaning by sacrificing sound. This kind of approach coincides with his overall approach towards translation discussed earlier. In *Vladimir Nabokov: The American Years* Boyd says that "Nabokov's translation is as literal as any of his other translations... In compensation, he finds what Clarence Brown calls "routinely brilliant" Russian equivalents for English wordplay" (249).

It is true that in some parts of the novel, Nabokov chose to find equivalent wordplay in his translation and also chose to preserve alliteration when he deemed it to be especially important. For example, on page 61 of the English original, Nabokov writes "between beast and beauty" and in the Russian, writes "между чудом и чудовищем"

(49). The meaning of the two phrases is essentially the same and Nabokov was able to preserve the alliteration of the words, even though with a different beginning sound. However, the allusion to “Beauty and the Beast” becomes lost in the Russian version. Another example of this is on page 244 of the English where Nabokov writes “some ‘serum’ (sparrow’s sperm or dugog’s dung). In the Russian, he translates this as “какую-то ‘сыворотку’ (из спермы спрута или слюны слона)” (222). This can be translated literally into English as “some ‘serum’ (the sperm of octopus or the saliva of an elephant)”. Even though the translation does not completely coincide with the original, it still maintains the playful alliteration of the original. This provides a good example where Nabokov was able to create a Russian equivalent for the English wordplay.

## **Final Remarks**

A comparison of the original novel and translation ultimately demonstrates that Nabokov was able to do an extraordinary job at creating a stylistically rich rendering of his famous novel. Even though Nabokov had considerable experience in the field of translation, *Lolita* was the first and only novel of his own that he translated. The author’s theory of translation was extremely rigid, and he believed that a translation should stay as close to the original as possible, and that the translator should not try to find equivalents in the target language in order to make the translation sound better. When translating his own work though, Nabokov did not always keep to this rigid theory, which was demonstrated by examples in the comparison between the original and the translation. There were some instances where the author supplemented the Russian text with additional information and parts where he would find Russian equivalents for English word play and alliterations. One source of Nabokov’s disappointment in his translation may have been because of the conflict that he felt in keeping as close to the original, but



also attempting to have his beloved native language shine brilliantly.

As Nabokov discussed in the preface to the Russian *Lolita*, he realized during the process of translation that there were many elements and subjects that were easier to express in English than in Russian. The novel's subject matter itself certainly posed problems for translation. The novel takes place in the United States, and Nabokov includes myriad descriptions of American life. Some of the words and terms that the author used do not have equivalents in the Russian language because they were never a part of life in Russia. Therefore, Nabokov had to somehow relate these ideas without having the benefit of word-for-word equivalents. Some of the phrases that sounded beautiful and effortless in English became clunky and convoluted in the Russian translation. Nabokov's negative outlook on his translation was mirrored by the reviews of the novel. Though there are some positive critiques of the book, the overall consensus among reviewers is that the Russian translation is not as stylistically rich as the original. Nevertheless, Nabokov was able to create a masterful translation of *Lolita*, especially considering the fact that he created it more than 40 years after he was forced to leave his native country.

The novel continues to have an enduring impact, even to this day. 2008 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of the novel in the United States. That year, The New School in New York City held a day-long conference called *Lolita in America*. More than 500 people from all over the world came to this event and there were 14 featured speakers which included Nabokov's editor at McGraw-Hill, and various Nabokov scholars including Alfred Appel, Jr., Ellen Pifer, and Nina Khrushcheva. There was a variety of panels that were held during this conference that highlighted the effect that Nabokov and his novel had both on the United States and on cultures across the world ("Lolita in America"). This impressive gathering of people demonstrates the

impact that the novel continues to have, even half of a century after its publication. The original English version of *Lolita* received critical acclaim from around the world and made him an internationally acclaimed author. Even though his translation was not as critically successful, its impact should not be discounted. Not only was it a literary feat, but it also allowed Nabokov the chance to speak to the people of his native Russia and give them opportunity to appreciate his masterfully crafted novel.

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## Academic Vita

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### EDUCATION

- The Pennsylvania State University**, University Park, PA May 2012  
Bachelor of Science in Russian Translation  
Minor in Psychology  
Member of the Schreyer Honors College  
Paterno Fellow September 2009- Present  
- Supplemental Honors program
- The Institute of Palazzo Rucellai**, Florence, Italy Jan 2011- May 2011  
- Studied Italian culture, art, and politics

### EXPERIENCE

- The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society**, Alexandria, VA May 2011- August 2011  
Summer Intern  
- Organized and managed Swim-a-thon fundraiser  
- Raised more than \$85,000  
- Teamed with local swim clubs in order to raise funds  
- Coordinated fundraising events  
- Devised new strategies for future Swim-a-thons
- Lion Line Telefund**, State College, PA September 2009- January 2011  
Fundraiser  
- Spoke to alumni in order to raise funds for Penn State  
- Raised more than \$10,000 for Penn State  
- Researched Penn State facts and figures in order to improve calling skills
- Winkler Pool Management**, Alexandria, VA May 2010- August 2010  
Lifeguard  
- Worked 30-35 hours a week  
- Received certification in CPR, lifeguarding, and pool operations

### ACTIVITIES

- Member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars September 2008- Present  
Member of Phi Eta Sigma September 2009- Present  
Member of Phi Beta Kappa February 2012- Present  
THON Hospitality Committee September 2011- Present  
- Largest run student-run philanthropy in the world  
- Inspiration and Promotions Chair

### SKILLS AND HONORS

- Schreyer Ambassador Travel Grant December 2010  
Awarded by the Schreyer Honors College for study abroad Fluent in Russian  
Dean's List: Fall 2008-Fall 2011