Mysterious Machinery

Unraveling the Engaged Narrative Experience of Nabokov’s *Lolita* (1955) and *Pale Fire* (1962)

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Index

Introduction: Preliminary Remarks .......................... 1
Research aims and scope ......................................... 1
Acknowledgments ..................................................... 1

Chapter 1. The Phenomenology of Reading ..................... 3
1.1 Introduction: Experiencing narratives ...................... 3
1.2 ‘The reader’ ....................................................... 6
1.3 Reading: now and then ......................................... 7
2 Reading redefined .................................................. 9
2.1 The reader’s mind ................................................. 11
2.1.1 Fictional minds .............................................. 11
2.1.2 Consciousness ............................................... 12
2.1.3 Mental simulation ......................................... 14
2.2 Texts as worlds ................................................ 19
2.2.1 Immersion ..................................................... 21
2.2.2 Logical & imaginative recentering ....................... 22
2.2.3 Cognitive stylistic underpinnings of recentering ........ 23
2.3 The engaged narrative experience ......................... 32
2.3.1 Emotion, empathy and simulation ..................... 32
3 Conclusion .......................................................... 33

Chapter 2. Lolita, Pale Fire and the Critics ...................... 34
1 Introduction: Quantitative-qualitative analysis
and literary interpretation .................................... 34
2 From Lolita to Pale Fire ......................................... 36
3 From Pale Fire to Lolita ......................................... 42
4 Conclusion .......................................................... 45

Chapter 3. Stylometric Analysis of Lolita and Pale Fire ........ 46
1 Introduction: Words and numbers ............................ 46
2 Stylometric interpretive analysis: Why and how ............ 47
### Chapter 3. Data preparation, method, and descriptive statistical tests of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Data preparation &amp; method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1</td>
<td>Most Frequent Words (MFW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2</td>
<td>The effects of genre difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.3</td>
<td>Function words, homographs and hyphenated forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.4</td>
<td>Personal pronouns and culling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.5</td>
<td>Text-blocks and standardization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Statistical analysis of <em>Lolita</em> and <em>Pale Fire</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1</td>
<td>Principal Components Analysis &amp; Cluster Analysis of MFW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2</td>
<td>Zeta analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 4. *Lolita’s* Engines of Desire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 4</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction: Coming full circle - language, minds and worlds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Lolita</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Through the looking glass… and into <em>Lolita’s</em> Storyworld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>‘<em>Lolita</em>’ - Beginnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A (not quite so) lazy Sunday morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Portrait of an American girl child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A visit to the Schillers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><em>Lolita</em> - Endings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 5. *Pale Fire* - The Dying of the Light

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 5</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction: <em>Pale Fire</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Pale Fire</em> - Novelistic beginnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Escape from Zembla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dreaming of Disa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gradus on the move</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Pale Fire</em> - Poetic endings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 6. Conclusion: Final Remarks on the Engaged Narrative Experience of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*  

1. An ode to reading  
2. Humbert vs. Kinbote  
3. Life after *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* - Some reflections on theory, method and avenues for further research

Bibliography  

List of Figures and Tables  

Curriculum Vitae  

Nederlandse samenvatting
Introduction: Preliminary Remarks

Research aims and scope

This dissertation addresses questions on the nature of reading stories, experiencing narratives and engaging with fictional worlds. It focuses on the characterization of the reader’s engaged narrative experiences of two novels by Russian-American author Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977), Lolita (1955) and Pale Fire (1962). The main goal of the present study is to gain insight into how the language of literary fiction triggers different cognitive processes that allow readers to engage with narrative worlds and follow the mental functioning of fictional characters. Having its roots within literary studies, the project is interdisciplinary in nature and aims at an integration of theory and method found in the disciplines of linguistics, computer science, communication studies, the philosophy of mind and the cognitive sciences. By allowing complementary views on the nature of language, reading, comprehension and interpretation to come together, an all-embracing account of characterizing the engaged narrative experience is put forth. The research aims to show the benefits of such an interdisciplinary approach for studying topics with a long standing history within the field of literary studies, where questions of interpretation and narrative engagement are often at the heart of the matter.

Chapter 1 presents the methodological framework of the phenomenology of reading at the core of this study, focusing on the cognitive processes of Storyworld construction and immersive simulation. The theorization in this chapter is strongly embedded within the cognitive poetic strand of literary-linguistic research, and incorporates insights from the disciplines of functional linguistics, communication and persuasion studies, and philosophy in order to sketch a comprehensive account of what it is for readers to experience narratives. Chapters 2 and 3 elaborate which stylistic features of Lolita and Pale Fire are of consequence for the reader’s engaged narrative experience of those novels. Chapter 2 offers a discourse analysis of Lolita- and Pale Fire-criticism, distilling recurring themes and stylistic elements that critics view as affecting their reading experiences and interpretations of the novels. In Chapter 3 this is followed up by stylometric analysis of the novels’ literary-linguistic textures in order to find out which stylistic features are relevant for describing those narrative experiences. The results of the integrated quantitative-qualitative analysis in Chapters 2 and 3 lay the groundwork for the cognitive poetics based analyses of the engaged narrative experiences of Lolita and Pale Fire in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 6 compares those experiences and offers final remarks on the project’s research aims, scope and limitations, as well as some reflections on the future of interdisciplinary research within and with the help of the humanities.

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Chapter 1. The Phenomenology of Reading

1 Introduction: Experiencing narratives

For many years, even centuries, reading literature has been metaphorically described as a voyage – a voyage to distant lands, unknown shores; a voyage into worlds that are different from the one we experience every day. Probably the best known and most extensive theoretical account of the narrative experience as an instance of travel, is Richard J. Gerrig’s idea of transportation as premised on the common feeling readers have of being ‘lost in a book’.1 This often heard metaphor for the narrative experience also forms the title of Victor Nell’s influential study on the subject.2 Gerrig and Nell both investigate the psychological aspects of the reading experience and the performance of reading. They look at reading as an active process on the part of the reader, but at some point in the reading experience this conscious activity of reading is somehow, and quite paradoxically, subverted: readers get so caught up in a narrative that they forget they are actually reading. This leads Gerrig to believe that the process of transportation, instantiated by and mediated through the text of a narrative, has the ability to block access to “some aspects of the world of origin”.3 For Nell, who focuses on reading for pleasure, reading resembles hypnotic trance and dreaming in some ways.

Gerrig presents a supposedly general account of experiencing narratives, as his notion of transportation is not focused on a specific type of reading behavior (i.e. for pleasure, education, escapism, cognitive gain), and explicitly rejects a straightforward distinction between the narrative experience of fiction and nonfiction.4 He quite implicitly extends the idea of transportation as being lost in a book to transportation as “immersion in narratives [that] brings about partial isolation from the facts of the real world”.5 To prove this, he considers how readers can experience suspense when reading a story leading up to a known outcome, and why they can have emotional responses to events and characters which they know to be fictional.6

What then is experiencing a narrative? Is it becoming or being totally absorbed in a story? Is it the unconscious or conscious experience of a fictional world? Is it an active process of a reader engaging her mental faculties to imagine such a world? Is it an emotional experience of fictional events? Is it a semi-conscious transgression of ontological and epistemological boundaries? The answer to the multi-faceted question of what exactly comprises the narrative experience has as many faces. We nevertheless must attempt to answer it, because it is essential for any thorough understanding of why people read the way they do and have engaged narrative experiences.

5 Idem: 16.
6 Idem: Chapter 5.
1.1 A new narratology

The narrative experience, transportation to fictional worlds, being absorbed in a story, narrative engagement – these abstract terms somewhat obscure what underlies the mere possibility of their occurrence: to ‘experience’ is, in the case of literature, premised on the act of reading. To experience a literary narrative, a reader must read one. Although this statement may seem self-evident, it actually complicates matters further. For what comprises the act of reading? Different schools of thought have given different answers to this question, or have bluntly ignored it altogether. In recent years, the strand of narrative theory known as ‘postclassical narratology’ stands out when it comes to theorizing reading, understanding and interpreting narratives. Postclassical narratology is not easily defined. The term serves as a communal header, under which literary theorists, who believe both structuralist and poststructuralist narratology to have insufficient analytical value, find each other. Accordingly, the multi- and possibly, interdisciplinary nature of the postclassical project largely defines this type of narrative theory. In the Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory (2005), Luc Hermans and Bart Vervaeck state that postclassical narratology comprises all of the following perspectives on narrative:

“[T]he feminist [angle]; the linguistic; the cognitive; the philosophical (informed by possible-worlds theory); the rhetorical; and the postmodern; […] contextualist, thematic and ideological approaches; […] transgeneric and transmedial studies; […] cyberage narratology and psychonarratology.”

In spite of the differences between these numerous theoretical orientations in their proposals for analyzing narratives, they share a common interest in the act of reading, or rather in the reading process. As Hermans and Vervaeck state, this commonality has the potential to turn the postclassical project into an interdisciplinary endeavor.8

Whether we view postclassical narratology as an optimistic attempt to strengthen the merit and foundations of narratological analysis, or a utopian vision of creating a coherent picture from the mosaic of perspectives that currently hold sway in narrative theory, the proposed emphasis on the reading process as the most important aspect of narrative theory is of great value. However, postclassical narratologists are not the first ones to focus on this. From the 1960/70’s onward, literary theorists have continually reassessed the role of readers and the reading process in their conceptual frameworks. Some forms of postclassical narratology devote a few words acknowledging their debt to this so-called reader-response criticism, another umbrella term that, as Jane Tompkins explains, “has come to be associated with the work of critics who use the words reader, the reading process, and response to mark out an area for investigation.”9 Similar to the postclassical project, reader-response criticism can be found, as it were, within different

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schools of literary theory, such as “New Criticism, structuralism, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and deconstruction.”

Therefore postclassical narratology, like reader-response criticism, is no “conceptually unified critical position”, and shares its predecessor’s interest in readers and their way(s) of reading. I would argue that postclassical narratology can be seen, not as a radical break with previous or existing strands of narratology, but as a continuation of the project of reader-response criticism; its most promising contribution to this project being its potential for true interdisciplinarity. A postclassical view on and definition of the reading process may draw on insights from all disciplines mentioned above in the Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory and, I would argue, a whole vista of disciplines beyond the traditional borders of the field of literary theory. Instead of offering views on the reading process from ‘within’, for example, deconstructionism and its limited terminology, a postclassical view on reading is of a more open and daring nature.

Research within cognitive neuroscience, evolutionary biology and artificial intelligence may, for instance, provide useful information when it comes to defining concepts like ‘narrative’, ‘mind’, ‘identity’, ‘emotion’ and ‘consciousness’ - concepts that play a crucial role in many postclassical accounts of reading. Of course, such an endeavor must not be interdisciplinary for interdisciplinarity’s sake. Research on reading and the reading process will only benefit from postclassical narratology if the latter is able to provide a measured account of combined insights from different disciplines. If postclassical narratology offers new ways of interdisciplinary research as expected, it should not look exclusively at ‘new’ academic disciplines. Hermans and Vervaeck mention that almost all scholars who consider themselves postclassical narratologists have been schooled in structuralism, and logically react to its dogmas. As a result, literary theorists and analytical concepts chronologically prior to structuralism, but in what are now called postclassical directions, might be obscured. A balanced post-classical account of experiencing narratives, then, needs to take into account prestructuralist insights into the nature of reading stories and engaging with narratives.

The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory also states that “[t]he identification of structuralism as the classical age of narratology might be contested, especially by empirically oriented scholars, who have always rejected the lack of testing typical of the structuralist endeavor.” If we take postclassical narratology to be no more than a response to structuralism, it loses much of its initial power and claim to fame. If we take it upon ourselves to develop new ways of thinking about and analyzing the act of reading, we need to incorporate empirical and quantitative research into the postclassical project. Many studies within the sub-fields of postclassical narratology are mainly concerned with establishing new terminology and theory on the reading process, borrowing insights from the other sub-types, but lack empirical evidence to back up their analytical findings. There is, however, much of this evidence out there, acquired through experimental

10 Ibidem.
11 Ibidem.
13 Michael Burke’s 2011 study Literary Reading, Cognition and Emotion: An Exploration of the Oceanic Mind is a notable exception.
testing, that can back up postnarratological claims or give impetus to the construction of new concepts and theories about readers and the reading process. Quantitative research is not sacred; nor is its qualitative brother. Without a firm theoretical framework, experimentally acquired data is meaningless in any analysis; without such quantitative data, analyses may only evince the researcher’s subjective reading of texts.

Consequently, a firm account of what comprises the act of reading and the ensuing engaged experience of narratives needs to comprise the following elements: It must incorporate both recent and older ideas on the nature of the reading process, has to acknowledge its alliance with different fields of study within different academic disciplines, and needs to take its theoretical and analytical cues from both empirical research and theoretical findings concerning the act of reading. Only in doing so, a valuable contribution can be made to the ongoing projects of both postclassical narratology and reader-oriented research.

In the remainder of this chapter an attempt to formulate such an account of the act of reading and experiencing narratives is theorized. In a narratological vein, it focuses on how the literary-linguistic texture of narratives - their style - prompts readers to engage with those narratives. It aims to explain how narratives position their readers vis-à-vis the worlds they conjure up through very specific use of language, based on insights from a wide array of academic disciplines (such as the cognitive sciences, philosophy, communication studies and functional linguistics). Chapters 4 and 5 provide analyses of the engaged narrative experience of two novels by Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977), Lolita (1955) and Pale Fire (1962), based on the phenomenological account of reading proposed in the present chapter, discourse analysis of Nabokov-criticism in Chapter 2 and the results of stylometric analyses as presented in Chapter 3. The analyses of Lolita and Pale Fire function to show the beneficial consequences of a combined quantitative-qualitative approach to questions of literary understanding and interpretation, contributing to the ongoing scholarly debates on both novels. By combining Distant and Close Reading, incorporating computational methods within the analytical toolkit and allying itself with multiple academic disciplines, the present study examines a truly postclassic narratological subject, the engaged narrative experience, in a truly postclassical way.

1.2 ‘The reader’

An attempt to theorize the act of reading and experiencing narratives must first of all address the concept of the reader. In the history of literary theory, this concept has been defined in many ways, and theorists have a tendency to couple this term with ominous adjectives. Gerald Prince distinguishes between the actual reader, the ‘virtual reader’ (the reader the author has in mind), the ‘ideal reader’ (the perfectly insightful reader) and the ‘narratee’ (the reader ‘produced’ by the text)\textsuperscript{15}; Wolfgang Iser subdivides the term into the categories of the actual reader (who forms mental images of a text) and the ‘implied reader’ (which is a structure created by the text)\textsuperscript{16}; Stanley Fish talks of the

\textsuperscript{16} Idem: 55.
‘informed reader’ who has a certain degree of linguistic and literary competence\textsuperscript{17} – and if an ‘informed reader’ exists, there must also be a non-informed variety; and Umberto Eco supplies us with the idea of the Model Reader (an intricate semantic web, produced by both textual cues and the empirical reader’s perception of them).\textsuperscript{18}

These definitions show that defining ‘the reader’ apparently calls for a dissection of this term into different sub-conceptualizations, which in turn are defined in relation to either the author of a text, the text itself, or the actual reader; and in the most elaborate cases (such as Eco’s) in relation to one or more of the positions in this constellation. All of these different ‘readers’ exist next to each other, at least if they are conceived as belonging to one overarching theory of what constructs ‘the reader’ (or rather, the ‘total’ reader). Such comprehensive theories of ‘the reader’ appear intuitively valid to a great extent. After all, we all know that our role as actual readers of a narrative can never be the precise equivalent of the reader as envisioned by the author, whether this is an idealized reader as a mirror of the author herself, or another type of specifically envisioned reader. This dissimilarity becomes explicitly manifest when we take up a literary work written in, for example, the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, containing words of which we do not know the contemporary meaning, or references to historical ‘facts’ we take at face value, but learn later to be literary inventions.\textsuperscript{19}

However, the idea of a reader postulated by the text, as is found in Prince’s as well as Iser’s and Eco’s thinking, is of a more complex nature. For if we believe narratives to have the power to create their own readers, we might ask to what extent the act of reading and the engaged narrative experience of actual, or empirical, readers are influenced by this intra-textual dynamics. The ‘reader’ postulated by a certain narrative is, of course, not a person of flesh and blood, but a virtual construct that linguistically prompts the actual reader to take on certain stances toward and within the narrative. The question then arises how the ensuing amalgam of the virtual and actual reader functions in the interplay of narrative meaning construction and experience. The account of the phenomenology of reading proposed in this chapter aims to redefine the role of the reader in terms of consciousness, and consequently to shed light on how an engaged narrative experience is brought about.

### 1.3 Reading: now and then

It is somewhat surprising that the definitions mentioned in the previous section are not picked up in postclassical theorizations of ‘the reader’, as ‘the reader’ in all its guises has been defined so exhaustively in earlier different reader-oriented literary theories. One of the most prolific areas of postclassical narratological thought, where literary analysis and the cognitive sciences find one another, is as concerned with the role of readers’ minds in the reading process as some of the older theories on reading are: \textit{Cognitive narratology} and

\textsuperscript{17} Idem: 58-59.
\textsuperscript{19} Think of the use of words such as ‘scientifick’ in Sterne’s \textit{Tristram Shandy} (1759-1767), or the illustrious Dr. Bianchion in Balzac’s \textit{Illusions perdues} (1837-1843), who is praised as one of the most beautiful minds of the century within Balzac’s ‘objectively’ rendered tale, but is actually a fictional construct.
cognitive poetics are cases in point. David Herman defines cognitive narratology as “the study of mind-relevant aspects of storytelling practices.”\(^\text{20}\) This includes studying the mind-narrative nexus by looking at “the processes by means of which interpreters make sense of the narrative worlds (or ‘storyworlds’) evoked by narrative representations or artifacts, and the cognitive states and dispositions of characters in those storyworlds.”\(^\text{21}\) As for the related field of cognitive poetics, Peter Stockwell explains that it “models the process by which intuitive interpretations are formed into expressible meanings, and it presents the same framework as a means of describing and accounting for those readings.”\(^\text{22}\) Furthermore, according to Joanna Gavins and Ernestine Lahey, “[o]ver the last few decades, the disciplines of stylistics, narratology and cognitive poetics have all seen a notable proliferation of research taking a particular perspective on the experience on producing and receiving discourse.”\(^\text{23}\) Most importantly, “[t]his research […] can be seen to be united in its view of language as essentially world-building in nature.”\(^\text{24}\) Especially phenomenological oriented theorists, such as Wolfgang Iser, but also structuralist narratologists like Gerald Prince, construct their theories concentrated on the reading process.\(^\text{25}\) They take this process to be influenced by both the text (its language and what it represents in terms of content) and the reader (what she brings to the text in terms of life experience and linguistic, narrative and literary competence).

A thorough incorporation of the insights from (pre-)structuralists into cognition-based postclassical thought is promising, because it might provide a firmer conceptual foundation in formulating a renewed account of the act of reading and experiencing narratives and, above all, of the specific role language plays in this process. Forty years ago, literary phenomenologists did not have the same resources to validate their intuitive claims about the role of language and the mind in the reading process that we have today. Contemporary literary theorists have access to recent insights into the functioning of the human mind and consciousness, provided by empirical research, that can help confirm or disprove these claims. Research in cognitive linguistics, cognitive and developmental psychology, cognitive neuroscience and communication and persuasion studies, as well as recent insights from the philosophy of mind, provide strong evidence for certain aspects of phenomenologist thought. The phenomenology of reading can be redefined in the light of these recent insights, but without losing sight of the valuable conceptual work that has already been done on the subject. A new account of the phenomenology of reading will thus evince a conceptual strength, based on insights from both literary phenomenology and recent empirical and conceptual research in the diverse areas of study on the human mind.

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\(^{21}\) Ibidem.


\(^{24}\) Ibidem.

\(^{25}\) See, for example, Iser’s ‘The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach’ (1972) and Prince’s ‘Introduction à l’étude du narrataire’ (1973).
2 Reading redefined

The renewed account of the phenomenology of reading I propose consists of the following postulates:

I. Reading is a constant interaction between the language of the text and the mind of the reader. Specific language use prompts readers’ consciousness-projection onto fictional characters and narrators through a move of mental simulation.

II. Readers read text (linguistic signs), but understand this text to represent something like a world behind the words. In order to understand this world, readers need to become immersed in it.

III. We can distinguish between readers’ transportation into the world of the text (logical recentering) and readers’ movement within this world (imaginative recentering).

IV. The ensuing process of immersive simulation is governed by a text’s specific stylistic nature and readers’ cognitive processing of the different stylistic elements that constitute this nature.

V. The specific nature of immersive simulation accounts for readers’ emotional engagement with narratives.

The claim underlying these postulates is that cognitive poetic analysis is able to shed light on the nature of the reading experience and can in part account for an engaged narrative experience, because it allows us to follow the different steps in the cognitive processing of character’s mental functioning and texts as worlds. The italicized concepts in these postulates are clarified in the next section. Before dwelling on them separately, some preliminary remarks on their interdependence and theoretical embedding are in order.

The ‘reader as consciousness’ and ‘text as world’ claims are strongly rooted in both literary phenomenology and cognitive poetics. They are based on the assumption that narratives have a virtual dimension: they become ‘Storyworlds’ (mental representations of holistic imagined worlds) in the minds of readers through the act of reading. Cognitive poeticians firmly believe in readers’ ability to create mental models of worlds based on the specific linguistic structure a text displays, just as literary phenomenologists believe that a text sets its own interpretive limits. In addition, different subtypes of cognitive poetics subscribe to the idea that readers need to recenter themselves within a Storyworld to understand the narrative coherently. The nature of the immersion of a reader’s consciousness in a narrative is thus subject to two main areas of input: The language of the text and the reader’s ability to project her consciousness into a virtual world.

The style of a text, its linguistic texture, influences how this consciousness projection takes place. This combined input of language and the mind shapes the process of immersive simulation and thus the reader’s engaged experience of the narrative. Immersive simulation is the process of simulating fictional characters or narrators, based on consciousness projection into their field of vision, and through this process fleshing out and experiencing a fictional world. Both terms in this concept have to do with general
human abilities: being able to imagine yourself in someone else’s shoes and having the mental capacity to imagine being in and engaging with another, fictional, world. I contend immersive simulation takes place on different levels, following Marie-Laure Ryan’s distinction between logical recentering (from the actual world to that of the narrative) and imaginative recentering (on its ‘deeper’ levels: wish-worlds, desire-worlds, moving between different spatiotemporal locations). Immersive simulation thus is the cognitive process of experiencing fictional minds and fleshing out Storyworlds, which I take to be the default mode of reading. Following its concerns with world building and experiencing fictional minds, the presented account of reading and experiencing narratives is firmly situated within a postclassical and more specifically cognitive poetic/stylistic framework. It also elaborates on earlier reader-oriented insights, such as the structuralist narratological notion that the text posits agents of narrative production and reception, such as narrators and narratees, “about which inferences can be formed based on features immanent to the text.” However, the structuralists’ focus on readers begins and ends with readers ‘inside’ the text, where narrators and narratees are viewed as communicative positions correlated systematically with identifiable textual markers. The proposed account of immersive simulation and the engaged reading experience aims to provide a holistic model of the phenomenology of reading and to go beyond this ‘inside’-only view of communicative positions and textual markers. The formal elements of the text and the narratee-positions it allows for need to be recognized as such by an actual reader, who then, based on her own reading background and life experience, will or will not actualize certain narratee-positions. Aided by insights from recent studies in (cognitive) psychology, linguistics, literary studies and philosophy, we can now better hypothesize the possible relationships between formal textual features and the reader’s cognitive processing of those features. This allows for a better understanding of why readers read, interpret, engage with narratives the way they do, especially if we focus on the reading experiences of readers in a specific interpretive community, such as the Anglo-Saxon world of literary criticism.

Since the styles of literary texts differ immensely, it comes as no surprise that there exists a vast repertoire of textual features and narrative strategies to effectuate immersive simulation on the reader’s part. Nabokov’s novels Lolita and Pale Fire have both been applauded and criticized for the ways they engender reader-identification with their narrators’ fields of vision, guide readers into their worlds and ‘trap’ them there, giving rise to strong emotional engagement with the stories they convey. As Frank Kermode mentions in New Statesman in 1962, Lolita’s Humbert Humbert and Pale Fire’s Kinbote are prototypical Nabokovian narrators, concerned with amoral states of mind and aesthetic bliss. Moreover, both harbor obsessions revolving around very specific objects: Humbert only has eyes for his nymphet Lolita, while Kinbote is solely concerned with his own ‘rectifying’ commentary of Shade’s poem ‘Pale Fire’. Humbert and Kinbote are

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both word-wizards, but somehow Humbert is able to persuade readers to uncomfortably identify with him and his views, while Kinbote appears to fail at convincing readers to take on his perspective on the novel’s fictional world. The present study aims to explain the divergent narrative experiences of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* by Nabokov-critics, integrating forms of quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis - more specifically stylometry and cognitive poetics or stylistics -, with the idea of immersive simulation at its centre.

The following section provides an elaboration of the different concepts in the given postulates concerning the act of reading and anticipates the analyses of Nabokov’s novels in the next chapters. The textual features at the center of these analyses are constitutive of different aspects of immersive simulation and will be linked to its related concepts. These features are all somehow oriented towards the reader. An engaged narrative experience of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* occurs as a function of these linguistic elements, as they are cognitively processed within the greater narrative structure of these novels. Above all, the analyses aim at creating an integrated perspective on how the higher-level structuring of the narratives and their lower-level linguistic choices inform each other, and how this dynamic relationship affects the reader’s engaged narrative experience.

### 2.1 The reader’s mind

In everyday usage, the word ‘mind’ can mean almost anything the user wants it to: From such metaphysical concepts as ‘spirit’ to physically oriented ones as ‘brain architecture’. If we take reading to be a constant interaction between the reader’s mind and the language of the text, a working definition is needed. First, let us consider the role of the mind in narrative.

#### 2.1.1 Fictional minds

Following Mark Turner, Jeroen Vandaele and Geert Brône state that literary criticism and literature “may be said to provide insights into the workings of more or less interacting minds-in-bodies-in-worlds, that is, into the actions, thoughts and feelings of characters in a fictional world, for readers in the actual world”. Reflecting on literature is thus reflecting on minds at work, embodied in a fictional world. Alan Palmer provides an even more nuanced view of the mind’s role in narratives. His working definition of narrative states that “narrative fiction is, in essence, the presentation of fictional mental functioning.” Therefore, “the study of the novel is the study of fictional mental functioning.” The consequence of this view is that characters as fictional minds in novels

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30 The online dictionary of Oxford University defines ‘mind’ in the following diverging ways: 1. the element of a person that enables them to be aware of the world and their experiences, to think, and to feel; the faculty of consciousness and thought. 2. a person’s ability to think and reason; the intellect. a) a person’s memory b) a particular way of thinking, influenced by a person’s profession or environment c) a person identified with their intellectual faculties. 3. a person’s attention. a) a person’s will or determination to achieve something.


can be analyzed and interpreted ‘intermentally’: their functioning and thinking within the fictional world is understandable only within that context and in relation to how other fictional minds respond to them. Readers thus ascribe mental states to characters by interpreting characters’ thoughts and actions in a contextualized way.

I adhere to Palmer’s working definition of narrative and the idea that a character is a fictional mind. I would, however, like to broaden his idea of contextualization. If a reader wants to understand a fictional mind, she needs to contextualize herself in a remarkable way: Only by somehow recentering her own non-fictional mind into and within the narrative world, will she be able to ascribe mental states to characters and interpret their thought and action in a truly contextualized way. In other words, to interpret the functioning of minds-in-bodies-in-fictional worlds, the reader must simulate those minds. However, the reader always remains a mind-in-body in the Actual World as well, so she is also always poised toward the Storyworld. The specific character of her positioning towards the narrative world is largely influenced by the text’s formal features, just like her Storyworld-internal recentering moves, and plays an important part in the process of immersive simulation and the nature of the engaged narrative experience.

2.1.2 Consciousness

Following the notions of the reader positioning her consciousness towards and recentering it within the narrative world, a distinction needs to be made between two ways in which the reader’s mind is engaged during the reading process. On the one hand, her mind is directed towards the reading process in the actual world; on the other, it simulates participating minds-in-bodies in a fictional world, experiencing this world. Wolfgang Iser eloquently describes this double role of the reader’s mind:

“As the literary text involves the reader in the formation of illusion and the simultaneous formation of the means whereby the illusion is punctured, reading reflects the process by which we gain experience. Once the reader is entangled, his own preconceptions are continually overtaken, so that the text becomes his ‘present’ whilst his own ideas fade into the ‘past’; as soon as this happens he is open to the immediate experience of the text, which was impossible so long as his preconceptions were his ‘present’.”

These two reading-oriented functions of the reader’s mind both have to do with consciousness, a nuanced view of which can help explain the difference between these functions and their workings during reading.

My definition of consciousness follows philosopher’s Ned Block’s distinction between phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness. He observes that these two concepts of consciousness are habitually confused in philosophers’ and neuroscientists’ discourses on them. Block defines these concepts as follows: “Phenomenal consciousness is just experience, access consciousness is a kind of direct control. More exactly, a

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representation is access-conscious if it is actively poised for direct control of reasoning, reporting and action.”34 He explains this conceptual difference by giving an example of someone suddenly noticing that the refrigerator has just gone off; when it does, she realizes she has been hearing its subtle noise the entire time, but without noticing it until the refrigerator went off. Before it went off, Block claims, she already had the experience of the noise in terms of phenomenal consciousness, but not in terms of access consciousness: Insufficient attention was directed towards the noise to allow direct control of speech, reasoning or action. At most, there might have been indirect control such as adjusting the volume of her voice to be heard over the noise. An image, a sound, a feeling can thus “be unconscious in one sense (not poised for access), yet experienced and therefore conscious in another sense (phenomenally).”35

The difference between engaging in the act of reading and experiencing the narrative world can be rephrased in terms of this conceptual distinction: On the one hand, the reader is both actively engaged in the physical act of taking up a book and reading the story, activating her mental faculties to make sense of the perceived linguistic signs on the pages, while at the same time she needs to downgrade her awareness of this conscious act of reading if she is to experience the narrative world. The words ‘act’ and ‘experience’ themselves point towards this paradox: An act presupposes an agent performing that act, while experiencing something implies someone undergoing something. A rephrasing of the narrative experience following Block’s distinction makes clear that it is characterized by a specific interaction between phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness:

A reader beginning to read a story directs her attention toward this act and toward the narrative world, which thus becomes the focus of her consciousness. In this period she has action consciousness as well as phenomenal consciousness of this act; it is poised for access (it allows direct control of reasoning and action) and it is experienced in the Actual World. As she reads on, the degrees of access and of phenomenality start to change: At first, the reader might have a moderate degree of both phenomenal and access consciousness, but then, using Block’s words in the refrigerator example, “filters might reset the threshold for access, putting the stimulus below the threshold for direct control […].”36 So at some point during reading, the reader’s focus of attention is no longer on the act of reading and toward the Storyworld, but on the narrative experience of this world. And here the peculiar world building quality of narratives comes into play: The readers’ phenomenal consciousness is now experiencing the narrative world. To construct a Storyworld the reader’s phenomenal consciousness must be focused on the narrative’s world building prompts, which means she must recenter her consciousness within the narrative world. This consciousness shift through immersive simulation is the premise for an engaged reading experience. It partially explains why readers are able to affectively engage with narratives during reading, considering they experience the narrative world as phenomenologically more accessible than the real world for a limited

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36 Ibidem.
amount of time. It is important to note that the degrees of phenomenal and access consciousness towards and within the Storyworld and Actual World are in a constant state of change and movement. Many textual features have the ability to either have the reader’s consciousness pop back up to the Actual World or to immerse it into the Storyworld. These features will be explained in more detail in section 2.2.4 below.

The positioning and recentering of the reader’s consciousness depends on the narrative’s literary-linguistic texture, which can hinder or facilitate consciousness projection. Related to this is the notion that, as Alan Palmer notes, every “storyworld is aspectual in the sense that its characters can only ever experience it from a particular perceptual and cognitive aspect at any one time.” The same holds true for readers: If recentering into the Storyworld is facilitated, the text invites them to experience the projected narrative world from the point of view of one or more characters at different times in the narrative. As such, during the narrative experience of a narrative world, the Storyworld is the focus of the reader’s phenomenal and access consciousness as experienced and poised for direct control through simulation of a fictional mind. If such recentering is hindered, and the reader is positioned toward the Storyworld from the outside, an appeal is made to both the reader’s access and phenomenal consciousness within the Actual World during the reading act. As such, the actual reader views the narrative world from their actual perceptual and cognitive aspect at that particular time during reading. The act of reading is in focus at that moment, while the experience of the narrative world is backgrounded. This shifting between the Actual World and the Storyworld in terms of experience, as well as between multiple fictional consciousness plus the reader’s actual consciousness, is the core characteristic of immersive simulation. The reader simulates fictional consciousnesses when gaining access to the narrative world or experiencing this world, but her own consciousness is never ‘replaced’ by those she simulates in the narrative world: It is backgrounded, it is in the periphery of the phenomenal consciousness, and as such is not poised for access.

The idea of consciousness projection is premised on the believe that readers automatically ascribe consciousness to fictional characters. According to Palmer this is inevitable, because it is a key cognitive frame readers use in order to interpret texts. Interestingly, he relates this type of consciousness-ascription to readers’ supposed insight into the minds of people in the real world:

“The reader uses existing or prestored knowledge of other minds in the actual world in order to process the emergent knowledge that is supplied by fictional-mind presentations. The work that we put into constructing other real minds prepares us as readers for the work of constructing fictional minds.”

Adding up the notions of consciousness-ascription and consciousness-projection, we move into a new direction for describing the reader’s recentering move into narratives: the concept of immersive simulation. This concept is premised on two assumptions: 1) The

38 Idem: 175-176.
39 Ibidem.
reader simulates the mental functioning of fictional characters in the same way she would that of an actual person; and 2) In the realm of narrative fiction, this process is in part guided by language and how it constitutes a fictional world. The next sections provide empirical and theoretical evidence for these claims and show the merits of using the concept of immersive simulation when characterizing the engaged narrative experience.

2.1.3 Mental simulation

Mental simulation, constituting one half of the concept, is a cognitive ability humans employ to simulate the minds of others: “Simulating triggers pretend-mental states (pretend-beliefs, pretend-desires, pretend-emotions) and evaluations relative to a concrete, individual situation. This ability is related to empathy […]” At first glance, mental simulation might appear rather a description of the fact that people try to understand each other than a cognitive ability in and of itself. However, recent neurobiological research has led to the discovery of the existence of so-called ‘mirror-neurons’, which, according to cognitive poetician Michael Burke, “lends tangible, empirical weight” to the theory of simulation. Burke defines simulation as “people using their own cognitive and emotive processes to predict or understand the cognition and emotion of others.” Put concisely, mirror-neurons discharge when a person sees, or imagines she sees, another person performing an action, like reaching for a book. The first person is capable of feeling the full sensory extent of that movement. Moreover, mirror neurons have also been observed to fire when a person only sees the object she has previously interacted with or has seen someone else interact with. This means that just seeing the book in the previous example still enables a person to experience reaching for it. With regard to reading, mental simulation is the consciousness-projection of the reader’s phenomenal and access consciousness onto a fictional mind. When imaginatively experiencing a narrative world, readers engage in an elaborate process of simulation, which is partially triggered by language and partially by the reader’s empathic abilities.

When considering simulation in the realm of narrative fiction, this process has a very specific characteristic: Mental simulation proper, concerning real minds simulating and being simulated, is not mediated by language per sé, let alone composed language, which is precisely what makes up novels. According to Melanie Green and John Donahue, who view transportation as a form of mental simulation, its key characteristic is “the guided nature of the experience. Individuals are not creating their own simulated worlds from scratch, but rather are following along the narrative trails blazed by an author.” So what does it mean to put yourself in another’s shoes, if this other is a fictive construction and is made up of, basically, text? First, it means that you can simulate both more freely and more restricted: More freely in the sense that you might be more apt to simulate thought and action of a person you would not consider doing this for in real life.
(say, a psychopath, a murderer, a sex offender); more restricted in the sense that there are certain paths set out for the character in the story, which is your simulation target, that guide your simulative process. This interaction between ‘free’ and ‘restricted’ simulation is, I believe, characteristic for every encounter with a mind through a medium that triggers mental simulation.

Multiple fictional minds can be simulated alternatively, and sometimes even almost simultaneously, when a narration presents different fields of vision through different characters. The interplay between simulating different characters within the narrative on the one hand and being positioned toward that narrative from within the Actual World can lead to mixed responses to a narrative. Simulating the mental functioning of a character may lead the reader to view the narrative world from a very different angle than when perceived through her own actual field of vision. The reader’s view of a character’s actions, opinions, thoughts, desires, wishes, beliefs and so on may differ considerably from the character’s own view when perceived from outside the Storyworld. The cognitive processes of simulation and reader-positioning provide the narrative experience with a certain flavor, prompting the reader to engage with the narrative in specific ways. The engaged narrative experience that ensues can thus differ during the course of reading one narrative, say a novel, and different narratives engender different narrative experiences.

The reader’s own consciousness is certainly not arbitrarily focused on a narrative world, and the narrative itself provides one or more fields of vision, from one or more fictional minds, for the reader to simulate. Catherine Emmott suggests that readers imagine a fictional context by piecing together information from different parts of the text in order to build a mental representation of this context. She adheres to the idea coined by Chafe that ‘orientation’ of the human self towards a context is what allows us to engage with it in a meaningful way and that readers must focus their consciousness on certain characters/events by placing them on a contextual background. It is this orientation within a narrative world, through simulation of a fictional mind, that allows readers to understand what this world is like and to assign meaning to it. We could specify the nature of this orientation by using Palmer’s definition of the term ‘field of vision’, first coined by Mikhail Bakhtin in relation to the polyphonic novel. Palmer explains this concept when talking about characters as consciousness centers. His definition echoes the concepts of ‘point of view’ and ‘focalization’, but goes beyond them due to his conviction that reading narrative fiction is following the workings of fictional minds:

“[T]he field of vision [of a character] does not simply mean visual perception. It means each character’s knowledge, beliefs, perceptions, memories, habits of thought, intentions, purposes, and plans. It is each character’s whole mind in action. It is what determines a character’s actions and what is then modified by the consequences of those actions. It is the story of the narrative as it exists in the mind of each character.”

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44 Emmott, C. (1995): 84. Chafe has elaborated this idea for oral storytelling, while Emmott’s focus is on reading narratives.
The concept of field of vision points at the inherently aspectual nature of the reader’s narrative experience: Simulation of a fictional mind means taking on that mind’s field of vision, which is ideological in the sense that it provides a highly colored view on the Storyworld. This becomes especially clear when narratives do not provide readers with balanced possibilities for simulating multiple fictional minds. First person narration, for example, is a narrative strategy biasing Storyworld construction by forcing readers to simulate one of the characters in the narrative much more thoroughly than others.

Extending the idea of field of vision to simulation, it thus means we can only perceive the fictional world *through* the perception of another consciousness, that is, the fictional mind whose field of vision is our base-line for world construction at any one point. Within the fields of psychology and communication studies this kind of consciousness-projection is related to the notions of perspective taking and empathy. Nicholas Epley and Eugene Caruso state that within psychology the common feature shared by all instantiations of perspective taking “is the need to get beyond one’s own point of view to consider the world from another’s perspective.”

The notion of point of view is, most of the time, used akin to what I call field of vision:

“[point of view] is used figuratively to describe assessments based on one’s own ideology, emotion, direct experience, or preexisting attitudes and knowledge. Perspective taking then requires getting beyond one’s own literal or psychological point of view to consider the perspective of another person who is likely to have a very different psychological point of view.”

Perspective taking can thus be seen as a form of far-reaching identification, as “an experience in which readers adopt the perspective of a character and see the narrative events through the character’s eyes.” Here we must address a problematic feature of the idea of simulation: What if the fictional mind to be simulated is very different from the reader’s own? What possible consequences does this entail for the mental simulation of a fictional mind? If we look at the central case studies of the present study, *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*, we can expect readers to be very different from the narrators they will be invited to simulate: Humbert is an adult man who claims to love a young girl, while Kinbote appears to be psychologically unstable and is very possibly a murderer. At the same time, both narrators try to establish an intimate relationship with their readers by posing as erudite scholars and friendly citizens. Readers might very well recognize certain characteristics of themselves in those narrators, while at the same time rejecting many of their opinions and actions.

Epley and Caruso point out that when there are ambiguous cues that others (in our case fictional minds) are likely to see the world very differently and there is some uncertainty about their perspectives, people’s attempts to adjust their perspective will be egocentrically biased. They may also rely on stored knowledge such as stereotypes.

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interesting quality of simulation in the realm of narrative fiction is that readers must indeed rely on their own ‘egocentric’ field of vision (‘What would I desire in such a situation?’), on the simulated characters’ field of vision (‘What does the text say he desires?’) and stored knowledge (‘What would a certain type of person desire?’). In addition, the textual features of the narrative influence the nature of the simulation process, which complicates matters further. The reader can be prompted to simulate desires, beliefs, memories, intentions etcetera that she does not like and tries to refuse doing so; the narrative’s language, however, nevertheless exerts a certain force, triggering complex and ambiguous simulation that leads to highly engaged narrative experiences.

Empirical studies show that when people are prompted to adopt another’s perspective they use themselves as “a default mode or a guide”.\(^{50}\) Even when people are fully aware that the perspective they are taking is very different from theirs, the initial egocentric stance serves as a starting point.\(^{51}\) De Graaf and colleagues found that readers identified more with perspectivizing characters than with their antagonists, regardless of the characters’ opinions.\(^{52}\) This helps to explain why, seemingly paradoxical, adopting someone else’s perspective tends to increase the perceived similarity with the target of the simulation and a merging of the self and the other.\(^{53}\) As Epley and Caruso eloquently put it: “Adopting another person’s perspective requires getting over one’s own, and simply because people are trying to leave their own perspective behind does not ensure that they will do so completely.”\(^{54}\)

Let us re-address the issue of ‘the reader’ here. Following the tradition of literary phenomenology, the reader is perceived to engage with a narrative as a consciousness being-in-the-world. This does not mean, however, that every reader’s narrative experience is exactly the same, considering the inherently subjective nature of experience. Nevertheless, the actual reader I refer to when talking about ‘the reader’ can be defined in some ways. The reactions to Lolita and Pale Fire discussed in the next chapter all come from professional readers, whether academics or reviewers of literature. Both novels gave way to heated debate and powerful reactions within the interpretive community of professional readers. Interestingly, there is evidence suggesting that experienced readers are more prone to mentally simulate not only fictional minds, but also real minds. Mar and colleagues found that lifetime exposure to fiction increased people’s ability to perceive the mental states of others. They suggest that understanding characters in a fictional world provides parallels to understanding people in the real world.\(^{55}\) Epley and Caruso furthermore state that, based on different studies, people’s enhanced ability for perspective taking “requires either repeated and frequent practice […] or the strong motivation to exert the mental effort necessary to adopt another’s

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\(^{50}\) Idem: 301.
\(^{51}\) Idem: 300.
\(^{52}\) De Graaf, A. et al. (2012): 814.
\(^{54}\) Idem: 300.
perspective.”\(^{56}\) This means that more reading experience on the part of professional readers can be expected to lead to a higher capability of perspective taking and empathy in cases such as Humbert’s or Kinbote’s, when the fictional minds inviting and guiding mental simulation are very different from the reader’s own. This might subsequently account for feelings of unease on the reader’s part: They are automatically inclined to engage in far going identification by adopting the fictional minds’ goals and plans, but they certainly do not agree with many of their thoughts and actions.

Moreover, the specific nature of this simulation of a fictional mind from a certain field of vision depends on the unique qualities of the narrative. This is where its linguistic nature comes into play. Specific stylistic elements can prompt readers to inhabit certain fields of vision within the fictional world, not only on a surface level, but also on deeper levels. As such, simulation of fictional minds is not only a matter of stepping into someone else’s shoes, but also of moving around in the fictional world by way of textual paths, within or from the mind of the simulated character. I therefore want to propose the term *immersive simulation* as a more fitting concept than mental simulation to describe the multi-layered consciousness-projection readers must engage in. The cognitive process of immersive simulation is premised on both the reader’s capacity for mental simulation and specific textual features and narrative strategies, thus, what we call the style of a text.

### 2.2 Texts as worlds

Immersive simulation occurs as a joint project between the language of a narrative and the reader’s mind and provides the groundwork for an engaged narrative experience. One of the primary functions of language in this respect is to provide readers with cues for fleshing out a world ‘behind’ the text. This is another key frame readers use in order to understand narratives, just like the frame of consciousness-ascription to fictional characters. Reader-oriented theorists like Umberto Eco and Wolfgang Iser put stress on the reader’s capacity to construct fictional worlds, based on the text’s linguistic structure. For Iser, the reader’s narrative experience is premised on the formation of the virtual dimension of the text.\(^{57}\) The text as aesthetic object, as ‘the literary work’, only comes into being through the act of *Konkretisation*, of the reader’s realization of the text, based on its linguistic patterning.\(^{58}\) For Eco, the text is a linguistic strategy aiming at engendering an interpretation by its Model Reader. This interpretation, however it might be expressed, represents the possible world built during the cooperative interaction between the text and the Model Reader.\(^{59}\) Again, this world building is not of an arbitrary nature, but is a linguistically informed process: The reader, as Model Reader ‘produced’ by the text, can only truly interpret a text by acknowledging that it actualizes some semantic possibilities, while refuting others.\(^{60}\) These phenomenological accounts of the


\(^{58}\) Idem: 279.


\(^{60}\) Idem: 110.
text as world are somewhat fuzzy, but can be said to be concretized and made operational in cognitive poetics’ notion of the text as mental representation.

Taking their cue from cognitive linguistics and cognitive psychology, cognitive poetics scholars assume that readers process fictive speech acts, such as novels, by constructing mental representations of these acts in order to understand them.\(^{61}\) In natural language research such representations are called *mental models* or *discourse models*. David Herman defines mental models as “nonlinguistic representations of the situation(s) described by a sentence or a set of sentences, that is, a discourse.”\(^{62}\) He then defines discourse models as “emergent, dynamic interpretive frames that interlocutors collaboratively construct in order to make sense of an ongoing stretch of talk.”\(^{63}\) Drawing on both concepts, Herman puts forward the term *storyworld* to describe mental representations readers create when reading narratives: “Storyworlds […] can be defined as the class of discourse models used for understanding narratively organised discourse in particular.”\(^{64}\) Understanding stories is thus premised on constructing Storyworlds, based on textual cues and their consequent inferences.\(^{65}\)

Storyworlds are not just visual representations, as the term mental representation might suggest, but holistic ones; Joanna Gavins refers to them as “perceptual wholes”\(^{66}\). Herman’s comprehensive definition of Storyworlds emphasizes this holistic nature:

> Storyworlds are “mental models of who did what to and with whom, when, where, why, and in what fashion in the world to which recipients relocate - or make a deictic shift - as they work to comprehend a narrative. As a special type of mental or discourse model [...] storyworlds [...] can be viewed as global mental representations enabling interpreters to draw inferences about items and occurrences either explicitly or implicitly included in a narrative.”\(^{67}\)

Although Herman does not use the actual word ‘consciousness’ in his definition, he nevertheless talks about recipients relocating to another world, making a deictic shift, in order to comprehend the narrative. This is reminiscent of Ryan’s concept of *recentering*, put forward in her theory about narratives conjuring up different types of possible worlds. Through recentering “an APW [Actual Possible World] is placed at the center of the conceptual universe”, thereby replacing the Actual World of the reader as her new world.\(^{68}\)

An important aspect of Storyworlds is that they are of an inherently dynamic nature, meaning the representation is continually updated. For example, when a modal construction occurs in a text, the reader is prompted to imagine a new ‘part’ of the mental representation, which is then backgrounded, but might again become the focus of the context when a similar construction occurs later on in the story. And while it is

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63 Idem: 19.
65 Idem: 569-570.
backgrounded, it is still part of the mental representation, which becomes more and more detailed as the narrative progresses. Linguistic and contextual information thus influence Storyworld construction.

In terms of mental simulation, we can say that Storyworld construction is the prerequisite for a reader’s recentering move, for the consciousness-projection from the world in which reading takes place (Actual World) to the world conjured up by the narrative (Storyworld). I use the term Storyworld with a capital S for the holistic macro-representation of a narrative’s world, while worlds that are created on smaller or lower world levels are deemed subworlds (this is explained in more detail in section 2.2.4 below). The nature of the simulation process depends on how world-transitions, in terms of phenomenal and access consciousness, are textually guided. As such, the idea of simulating fictional minds, as minds-in-bodies-in-worlds, cannot be viewed separately from that of immersion in fictional narratives.

2.2.1 Immersion

When people say they are immersed in a book, they generally refer to the feeling of being caught up in a story, of being absorbed in the activity of reading. However, this is not the type of immersion I take to be constitutive of the process of immersive simulation. Following Ryan, I take immersion to be “the experience through which a fictional world acquires the presence of an autonomous, language-independent reality populated with live human beings.” In the phenomenology of reading, this specific type of immersion “presupposes an imaginative relationship to a textual world.”69 The notion of reading as an immersive experience is based on the premise that we experience texts as worlds: “For immersion to take place, the text must offer an expanse to be immersed within, and this expanse […] is a textual world.”70 Relating this definition to the concept of mental simulation, we could say that simulation in the realm of narrative fiction is, by definition, immersive:

Immersive simulation, as the cognitive process enabling readers to experience narratives, refers to the way in which they experience a world that is given form, is represented mentally, through their interpretive encounter with a textual narrative. Both terms in this concept have to do with general human abilities: Being able to imagine yourself ‘being someone else’ and having the mental capacity to imagine being in another, fictional, world. Readers engage in immersive simulation when logically recentering themselves from the Actual World to a Storyworld, but also while they are experiencing it on deeper levels, for example when the fictional mind they are simulating is engaged in wishing, desiring or another act that triggers consciousness-transition to non-actual states of events, in other words, to possible worlds. This process is thus instantiated and shaped dynamically by the reader’s general capacities for mental simulation and immersion, as

70 Idem: 90.
defined above, and by a text’s specific stylistic texture, guiding immersive simulation to a considerable extent.

In what follows I aim to describe how we can analyze the initial prompting and experiential course of immersive simulation during the reading processes of Nabokov’s novels *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*, based on their respective linguistic textures and thematic engagement, considered in the light of existing readings of the novels. The account of immersive simulation I propose is not dogmatic, but rather aims at revealing its dynamic properties. Depending on different texts’ higher-level contexts, their narrative set-ups, as it were, similar linguistic elements may have quite different effects on the reader fleshing out the Storyworld, and consequently the nature of her engaged narrative experience. Narrative strategies, such as point of view and focalization, influence these elements’ textual functioning, while they are reciprocally influenced by the ways in which those elements function. Moreover, different textual features interact with each other during the reader’s cognitive-affective processing of a narrative, creating and coloring the Storyworld and hindering or facilitating simulation of fictional minds. I follow Ryan’s distinction between logical and imaginative recentering to and within the Storyworld to trace readers’ immersive simulation.

### 2.2.3 Logical & imaginative recentering

Ryan distinguishes between logical and imaginative recentering as constitutive parts of immersion:

> “The variability of the distance between the reader’s implicit position and the narrated events suggests that narrative phenomenology involves not just one but two acts of recentering, one logical and the other imaginative. The first […] the constitutive gesture of fictionality-sends the reader from the real world to the nonactual possible world created by the text; the second […] relocates the reader from the periphery to the heart of the story-world and from the time of the narration to the time of the narrated.”

This difference between ‘surface-recentering’ from the world in which the act of reading takes place to that of the narrative, and ‘deeper level-recentering’ within this world, can be rephrased in terms of immersive simulation. More specifically, we can relate it to elements of style and narrative strategies in *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*. Following Ryan’s distinction, we can differentiate between elements and strategies that effectuate the reader’s initial transportation from the actual world to the Storyworld on the one hand, and ones that function as triggers for subworld construction within this Storyworld on the other. In order to properly integrate this distinction within the theoretical framework of immersive simulation, I propose one main conceptual adjustment: Imaginative recentering must not be seen as simply a ‘second act of recentering’ to the time of the narrated, but as a process harboring the possibility of immersing the reader’s consciousness ever deeper within the Storyworld. It thus entails many acts of recentering,

71 Idem: 139.
embedded within the simulative process. In addition, analyses of language that triggers readers’ recentering must be fully integrated. If we want to comment on how narrative engages and affects readers, we need to explain how logical and imaginative recentering interact in guiding the reader’s consciousness-projection.

The analyses of processes of recentering in *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* focus on specific linguistic elements, based on the cognitive stylistic research tradition in which the present study is based, discourse analysis of *Lolita*- and *Pale Fire*-criticism, and stylometric (that is, computational and quantitative) analysis of the novels. As Michael Toolan points out,

“The challenge to the stylistician is to identify and study just those features that contribute most crucially to the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the discourse - preferably features which are distinct from each other linguistically, but which operate in an evidently integrated way discoursally.”

Some of these features have the function of triggering and guiding the cognitive process of immersive simulation on the upper level of consciousness-projection (logical recentering), while others function to guide this process after the initial consciousness-projection has taken place (imaginative recentering). Similar features can function on both levels of recentering in a dynamic way, depending on the narrative context. Concretely, this means that readers are first led to simulate fictional minds in a more general way (they need to identify with a character to relocate to the Storyworld), but after this initial simulative step the text provides linguistic prompts that engender top-down recentering (going deeper into the mind of a character) or bottom-up recentering (for example, when the reader is experiencing a character’s dream, who then wakes up). In many cases, narratives require readers to shift between simulating different fields of vision on both the upper and lower levels of consciousness-recentering, for example when readers are prompted to shift between a character’s field of vision within the Storyworld and her own field of vision within the Actual World.

### 2.2.4 Cognitive stylistic underpinnings of recentering

This section provides the cognitive stylistic informed base-line insights for analyzing the processes of logical and imaginative recentering in *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* in the next chapters. Key to the account of recentering proposed here, is that the levels of logical and imaginative recentering stand in a dynamic, and often complex, relationship to each other. The consideration of different stylistic features that are of consequence for immersive simulation, as a cognitive process shaped by logical and imaginative recentering, will lead us to the issue of emotional engagement with narratives, or rather of the engaged narrative experience.

Let us briefly return to the idea of ‘text as world’ here, since its linguistic nature, as complementary to its cognitive aspect, needs to be more clearly defined in relation to the two processes of recentering occurring in immersive simulation. If we take a

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Storyworld to be a holistic mental representation of a narrative, fleshed out by readers based on the narrative’s language, we nevertheless need to make a distinction between this Storyworld, which is the actual world implicitly posited by the narrative, and different possible worlds within it. At the start of the reading act, specific world-building elements and function-advancing propositions allow readers to create mental representations of the initial text world at hand, based on linguistic information. Logical recentering, then, is the cognitive process that instantiates and maintains the shift of a reader’s consciousness from the Actual World to that of the Storyworld. However, this shifting works both ways, in that a reader can be triggered to shift ‘back up’ into the Actual World of discourse, or to shift between time, place, and perspective on the level of the initial text world. Logical recentering, in short, allows the reader to constantly negotiate shifts in consciousness between the Actual World and the Storyworld.

As Laura Hidalgo-Downing explains, the “textworld [Storyworld - PW] is identified deictically and displays a viewpoint - the one of a speaker-writer - for the benefit of an interlocutor” and “text worlds are defined first by specifying the deictic information regarding entities and time and space coordinates.” Consequently, analysis of immersive simulation on the level of logical recentering in Lolita and Pale Fire focuses on the workings of deixis, or rather the process of deictic shifting, which revolves around the reader’s perspective-taking. The key analytical concept in this respect is that of the Deictic Center. Mary Galbraith explains that there is a certain aspect of language that theorists from such fields as diverse as philosophy, linguistics, and narrative theory have noticed “to depend on extralinguistic, subjective, occasion-specific considerations.”

Within the field of psycholinguistics Karl Bühler first coined the term deictics to designate words and aspects of language that can only be understood with reference to a certain NOW, HERE and an I. The word THIS can be seen as the ultimate deictic word, considering it can refer to practically anything depending on the context in which it is used.

In a narrow linguistic sense, spatial and temporal deixis can be defined as follows:

“Spatial deixis is realized through terms which denote the relationship of objects to a speaker, or which signal how a speaker is situated in physical space. Temporal deixis, by contrast, concerns the ways in which the time of the events referred to in an utterance interacts with the time of the utterance itself.”

Spatial deixis is thus constituted by locative expressions, “which are governed by prepositions denoting place and direction and which function to identify the positioning of people and objects relative to the speaker and addressee.” Temporal deixis, then, works in a similar proximal/distal way and is characterized by the use of deictic adverbs.
and the system of tense. These are undoubted qualities of the linguistic system of deixis, but when reading literary narratives is considered, both types of deixis need to be conceived in light of immersive simulation.

According to Peter Stockwell, cognitive theories on deictic shifting model

“the common perception of a reader ‘getting inside’ a literary text as the reader taking a cognitive stance within the mentally constructed world of the text. This imaginative capacity is a deictic shift [...]. The key areas of investigation for DST [deictic shift theory] are how the deictic centre is created by authors in texts, how it is identified through a cognitive understanding of textual patterning, and how it is shifted and used dynamically as part of the reading process.”

From here on, I will use the term deixis to refer to those aspects of language and meaning associated with how readers are oriented towards and located in the world in which they read, but also towards and in the world conjured up by the narrative. The notion of the reader inhabiting a deictic center thus has to do with to and in which world her consciousness is oriented, in terms of both phenomenal and access consciousness. The proposed definition of deixis broadens the notion as merely pertaining to proximity and distance in space and time to include relations between the reader’s consciousness and those of other entities in the Storyworld. Since deictic information regarding entities is seen as one of the first defining characteristics of a text world, as Hidalgo-Downing states, considering these entities’ (narrators, characters) mental functioning as inherently deictic in nature is adamant for describing reading processes of Lolita and Pale Fire. The cognitive poetic analysis of deixis thus has to do with how readers and characters/narrators are positioned vis-à-vis each other and the narrative, and, as Herman notes, this positioning has bearing on the level of the reader’s engagement with the text.

When it comes to literary narratives, the functioning of personal pronouns and what M.A.K. Halliday views as the grammar of experience can well be considered language features that have the potential for triggering deictic shifting in its broadened sense. First, regarding personal pronouns, experimental work by Brunyé et al. has shown that readers take on differing perspectives, either internal or external, depending on whether 1st, 2nd or 3rd person pronouns are used. Since the ‘now’, ‘here’ and ‘I’ of the reader shift in tandem with perspective-shifts cued by different personal pronouns, the reader’s understanding of words and aspects of language that can only be understood with reference to a certain NOW, HERE and an I has to shift as well. The character of logical recentering as it is induced by different narratives is thus highly dependent on how personal pronouns trigger perspective-taking.

Second, it can be argued that Halliday’s grammar of experience is able to describe the cognitive process of logical recentering. In Halliday’s functionalist model using the notion of transitivity systems, transitivity allows speakers to encode their experience of

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the world around them, as well as their mental representation of that world, in language. \(^{84}\) “[T]he axiomatic transitivity question”, according to Paul Simpson, is “‘who or what does what to whom or what?’”\(^{85}\) This question echoes Herman’s cognition-based definition of ‘storyworld’ cited earlier, where these worlds are “mental models of who did what to and with whom, when, where, why, and in what fashion in the world to which recipients relocate - or make a deictic shift - as they work to comprehend a narrative.”\(^{86}\) Within the context of the greater cognitive process of immersive simulation, the transitivity issue becomes ever more important: When the reader simulates a fictional consciousness, or multiple ones, she is the one ‘doing’, ‘sensing’, ‘saying’, ‘being’, ‘having’, things are ‘happening’ to her, in whatever guise.

Michael Halliday’s analytical toolkit for classifying clauses according to the system of transitivity enables us to characterize the attitudinal relationship between reader and narrator, narrator and character, and even narrator and the narrator’s earlier self, because it allows for a classification of all of these participants’ relations within and towards the Storyworld. As such, it can help elucidate the particular nature of the reader’s engaged narrative experience, based in how experience is encoded in a narrative’s language. Halliday distinguishes between mental, material, relational, behavioural, verbal and existential process types, which “provide their own model or schema for construing a particular domain of experience as a figure of a particular type [of happening, doing, sensing, saying, being or having] […].”\(^{87}\) Figure 1.1 shows the different process types in a comprehensive overview. The circle suggests that there is a continuum of process types, where some types are more similar than others.

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Figure 1.1

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\(^{84}\) Halliday, M.A.K.


Transitivity occurs in every linguistic utterance, including literary texts. Halliday and Matthiessen argue that “[c]lauses of different process types thus make distinctive contributions to the construal of experience in text. [...] Part of the ‘flavour’ of a particular text, and also of the register that it belongs to, lies in its mixture of process types.”

Herman furthermore notes that “the functionalist idea of process types can help illuminate interpretive processes brought to bear on discourse- as well as clause-level structures.”

Consequently, when readers engage in logical recentering, the specific character of how meaning is represented in the clause by way of transitivity, in relation to the pronominally induced perspective-taking, can tell us much about how the reader experiences this level of the narrative. In can thus be argued that the use of specific process types enables readers to get a grip on the visual and spatio-temporal properties of a Storyworld; but more importantly, when analyzed dynamically in relation to personal pronouns as well as varieties of naming and deictically describing participants, transitivity analysis has the potential to characterize narrators’, characters’ and even readers’ attitudes towards (objects, events, actions, ‘people’) in the Storyworld. This means that deictic shift theory, the workings of personal pronouns and Halliday’s grammar of experience not only play a role in immersive simulation on the level of logical recentering, but also on the deeper level of imaginative recentering.

Imaginative recentering is not a separate process from that of logical recentering, but interacts with it on multiple levels. The idea of ‘text as world’ is, again, of the essence here, since the reader’s ability to move through a narrative world hinges on her ability to access subworlds created by narrators and characters, that is, worlds that are created when the set parameters of the Storyworld are changed. Readers gain access to the Storyworld via the initial text world, but then use this base-line world to create subworlds. According to Hidalgo-Downing, subworlds can either modify the deictic information related to the basic world building elements on entities and time and space coordinates, or introduce further domains in the text world. She follows Werth’s categorization of the three main types of subworld:

(a) deictic alternations: they include alternations in time and place
(b) propositional attitudes: they represent notions entertained by the protagonists, such as desires, beliefs and purposes
(c) epistemic subworlds: they are modalized propositions expressed by participants or characters. They include hypothetical worlds and modal worlds. To these the subgroup of quantity should be added: it includes quantity and negation.

Hidalgo-Downing’s categorization makes clear how intertwined the processes of logical and imaginative recentering are: Deictic shifting takes place between the Actual World

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and the Storyworld, the Storyworld and its subworlds, and between different subworlds. Taking propositional attitudes into account, transitivity analysis is also apt to describe the crossing of world boundaries, since it characterizes those transgressions; it lends them a specific flavor and therefore influences world building and colors the reader’s narrative experience. Modalized propositions have immense subworld creating potential, both when taking the Storyworld or other subworlds as a starting point for triggering the creation of modal worlds.

For Joanna Gavins, deictic alternations trigger the construction in the reader’s mind of what she calls world-switches:

“Should the central focus of the discourse be switched (for example to a different place), a new world corresponding with that scene is created. Flashing backwards or forwards in time has a similar effect. Instances of direct speech and thought also cause world-switches, since they alter the temporal parameters of the text world by introducing present-tense discourse in a past-tense narrative.”

The difference between participant- and character-accessible worlds is important here. In both Werth’s and Gavins’ frameworks, participant-accessible subworlds are created by the discourse participants, while character-accessible subworlds are created by characters in the text world. The notion of immersive simulation calls for a redefinition of these two types of accessibility, based on their accessibility by the immersively simulated mind. In a strict sense, a fictional narrative such as a novel does not contain any participant-accessible worlds at all, since the reader always needs to simulate some fictional mind in order to gain access to the Storyworld. As such, even the move from the Actual World to the Storyworld is character-accessible in nature. Character-accessible, then, refers to a reader shifting her consciousness on subworld level, from within the field of vision currently simulated; this means the world-shift takes place on the level of imaginative recentering. As we will see in Chapters 4 and 5, the narrative set up of almost exclusive first person narration in Lolita and Pale Fire complicates matters of accessibility even more, since the only way for readers to gain insight into the nature of the Storyworld is via the Narrator’s Storyworld, which is, in essence, a subworld. Since the first person narrators Humbert and Kinbote are the reader’s main access points into the Storyworld, they can be said to function as the reader’s discourse participants. So tailored to the specific narrative set ups of both novels, with their highly biased first person narratives, the notions of accessibility retains its analytical value when tracing processes of world building and simulation.

Deictic alternations on the level of imaginative recentering happen, for example, when a flashback instantiated through a first person narrator’s field of vision (“I remember [...]” triggers the creation of a character-accessible subworld. A more ambiguous possibility is the embedding of a direct speech act in a modalizing clause (“I

92 Ibidem.
would have the reader see [...]) triggering the creation of a participant-accessible world switch within the bounds of a boulomaić modal world, thereby transgressing its boundaries and reaching into the Actual World. This example shows how interconnected the layers of logical and imaginative recentering are: The ‘reader’ addressed here is the one reading the novel ‘Lolita’ Humbert wrote (as opposed to Nabokov’s Lolita), but in being addressed through means of personalization (‘reader’), the actual reader experiences this direct address in terms of her access consciousness. This means that there is a layered kind of world building taking place and a complex form of simulation, providing the reader with a multi-faceted experience of the narrative, with consciousness projection and engaged reading taking place on more than one world level.

These fictional examples appear in Lolita and Pale Fire, narrative situations with (mostly) fixed first person narration and explicitly addressed readers. What becomes immediately evident from them, is the fact that the initial text-world is already, in strict terms, a character-accessible one, since there is only one narrator (the ‘I’) through whose fictional mind readers can gain access to the text world. When a narrative is fixed with the point of view of one particular character, the reader has no other choice than to accept the information on the text world as given, since this is the only possible way for her to construct a Storyworld at all. As Gavins explains, “[f]ocalized narratives present only what one character believes to be the case and, as such, can be seen to constitute an epistemic modal world which, furthermore, is only character-accessible in nature.” By working the concept of field of vision into the text world framework, by redefining the nature of logical and imaginative recentering, and by reformulating the notions of participant- and character-accessibility, the effects of fixed first person narration on the engaged narrative experience can be analyzed.

I earlier proposed to use the term field of vision as an elaboration of the concept of focalization, with emphasis on the colored and ideological nature of every fictional minds’ view on the Storyworld and the reader’s ability to project her consciousness into a fictional minds’ field of vision. Taking immersive simulation of a fictional minds’ field of vision to be a cognitive feat on the reader’s part, we can further integrate the idea of focalization as a narratological concept allowing for tracing ‘who perceives’ in a narrative within a cognition based account of the narrative experience. The crux here is the idea that a reader does not only construct mental representations of narrative worlds, but that she has to be metaphorically ‘present’ in the text to be able to do so, while at the same time she remains outside of the narrative in the Actual World as reader. This means we are no longer talking about focalization as a narrative technique, but of field of vision-taking as the stylistic effect of certain linguistic features encountered during the reading experience. By cognitively grounding the analyses of textual features like personal pronouns, naming, transitivity, and, as we will see shortly, speech and thought representation and modality, we are now able to analyze the literary effect of focalization, taking it to be the output of these linguistic features’ functioning within the reader’s narrative experience.

94 Idem: 16.
Within the text world theory framework, Direct Speech and Thought, Indirect Speech and Thought and Free Indirect Discourse are commonly thought to cause world-switches.\(^{96}\) Those techniques have the power to create subworlds within the world building model, due to their temporal, pronominal or deictic shifting of set parameters in the Storyworld. According to Paul Simpson, “the techniques of speech and thought presentation are crucially tied up with the concept of point of view.”\(^{97}\) For Leech and Short “subtle interactions between speech and thought representation and point of view have become one of the richest and most open-ended areas of interpretative significance in the novel.”\(^{98}\) It might not be surprising, then, that Simpson goes even further, so as to say that speech and thought representation techniques straddle the gap between what he calls spatio-temporal point of view and psychological point of view.\(^{99}\) The first can be roughly equated with what is more commonly termed narrative viewpoint, while the second is another name for focalization. Whatever the terminology used, both Simpson’s and Leech and Short’s claims about Speech and Thought Representation indicate its importance in light of the construction of, in my terms, field of vision. \textit{Lolita} and \textit{Pale Fire}’s first person narratives can both be considered as individual speech acts, in which a narrator addresses one or more readers. As such, we might say that all instances of speech and thought representation in those novels are embedded within the Direct Speech (or Thought) their narrators address to their readers. This calls for analysis of these embedded speech and thought acts, within the context of the overarching direct speech act. Considering the slanted nature of the narratives, the category of Free Indirect Discourse holds noteworthy analytical promise.

The use of Free Indirect Discourse in first person narratives is less common than in narratives with a third person narrator and/or omniscient narration. Some ‘clues’ for Free Indirect Discourse are “altered pronouns, distal deixis and backshifted verbs, serving to bring the represented speech and thought into line with the narrative framework.”\(^{100}\) What makes the occurrence of Free Indirect Discourse in first person narratives so remarkable is that, instead of mixing the voice of the narrator with a character as it does in other narrative types, in this case it mixes the voices of the narrator-NOW and the narrator-THEN. This means that it has the potential to play a significant role in readers’ experience of narratives, since their simulation of the narrator’s mind has to take place for all the narrator’s guises presented at once in Free Indirect Discourse. On the level of imaginative recentering, the reader’s consciousness-projection will have to engage in acts of multiple and simultaneous simulation, triggered by the Free Indirect Discourse world-switch, which can occur in tandem with other (sub)world building prompts.

Returning to Werth’s categorization of subworlds, I merge Hildago-Downing’s categories (b) and (c) following Gavins’ text world model. Gavins puts much emphasis on the linguistic system of modality and its capacity to conjure up modal worlds, which are subworlds in the text-world framework. First, let us define what ‘modality’ refers to

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\(^{100}\) Idem: 30.
within the framework of immersive simulation. In its narrow linguistic sense we can say that modality is “a linguistic category referring to the factual status of a state of affairs. The expression of a state of affairs is modalized if it is marked for being undetermined with respect to its factual status, i.e. is neither positively nor negatively factual.” When dealing with literary narratives, however, we might broaden this definition in order to encapsulate the speaker’s commitment to the nature of the modalized expression. “Modality”, for Simpson, “refers broadly to a speaker’s attitude towards, or opinion about, the truth of a proposition expressed by a sentence. It also extends to their attitude towards the situation or event described by a sentence.” This notion of modality as tied up within a speaker’s own viewpoint better mirrors the actual situation of the literary narrative context, in which a speaker is a fictional mind whose functioning is to be followed by the reader. Furthermore, Simpson notes that modality “is an important part of the interpersonal function of language,” which is concerned “with the linguistic devices by which narrators slant and orientate their narratives towards readers.” I thus take modality to refer both to the factual status of a proposition, and the speaker’s attitude towards it.

Subworlds can be conjured up by modal constructions, including the use of modal verbs and hypothetical and conditional constructions. Gavins distinguishes between deontic, boulomaic and epistemic modality, having to do with obligation, desiring/wishing and believing respectively. Epistemic modality furthermore includes perception modality, which “conveys the degree of commitment to the truth of a particular proposition by reference to some form of human perception.” The process of immersive simulation is substantially influenced by modality, as the majority of modal expressions in these novels are part of the mental functioning of the narrators the reader is simulating (“[t]here might have been no Lolita at all had I not loved, one summer […]”). The reader is also often addressed and enticed by the narrators, using modal expressions, to imagine certain states of affairs. In Lolita, we encounter such appellations from narrator to reader many times. For example: “Imagine me, reader, with my shyness, my distaste for any ostentation […]” As such, modality can be used as a manipulative tool: It is a means for narrators to influence how readers perceive them and the events they are presenting.

To summarize, based on cognitive poetic insights, textual features playing a role in the reader’s engaged narrative experience are those of deixis, pronominal reference, transitivity, Speech and Thought Representation and modality. They influence the reader’s consciousness-projection on the levels of both logical and imaginative

104 Idem: 34.
recentering, providing her with the linguistic prompts for taking on fictional minds’ fields of vision. Aided by the narrative’s formal textual features, the reader engages in world construction on different world levels, whereby her engaged narrative experience is given form and fiber.

2.3 The engaged narrative experience

Emotional engagement with narratives is quite a slippery concept, mainly because it is usually defined in relation to other terms describing the narrative experience. In order to get a better grasp on the role emotions play in an engaged narrative experience, we need to take another look at the concept within the context of immersive simulation.

2.3.1 Emotion, empathy and simulation

In his inspiring study on reading, cognition and emotion (The Oceanic Mind, 2011) Michael Burke relates the earlier mentioned discovery of mirror-neurons to emotional engagement with narratives. For him, the experience of a simulating individual hinges on “emotive or empathic ‘projection’.”\(^{109}\) He furthermore uses the term ‘disportation’ to refer to “a heightened emotive state that occurs in affectively-engaged individuals while reading literature.”\(^{110}\) Burke also observes that according to Stamenov and Gallese the unconscious nature of mirror neural activity provides the observer with a feeling of empathy or familiarity.\(^{111}\)

Regarding ‘transportation’, Philip Mazzocco and colleagues note that it “can be thought of as an integrative melding of attention, imagery, and emotion, focused on story events. Transported readers see and respond emotionally to story events.”\(^{112}\) And when Slater and Rouner talk about ‘absorption’, they have in mind the reader’s vicarious experience of characters’ emotions and personality.\(^{113}\) Busselle and Bilandzic use the term ‘narrative engagement’ to refer to the reader’s narrative experience. Their studies show that this experience has distinct dimensions, among which is emotional engagement. Emotional engagement appears to consist of emotion evoked by the narrative, as well as of empathic emotions for characters.\(^{114}\)

As Keith Oatley and Mitra Gholamain point out, in fictional simulation readers identify with a character and then run the actions of this fictional mind on their own “planning processor”:

“In real-world planning, we have a goal, and we arrange action as steps in the plan to achieve it. In running a fictional simulation, we allow the text to guide our planning process, to steer us

\(^{110}\) Idem: 232.
\(^{111}\) Idem: 38.
\(^{114}\) Idem: 804.
through the actions of the narrative. Emotions are then experienced in relation to the goals and plans we have adopted, much as emotions occur in relation to goals in everyday life […] m\textsuperscript{115}

What Oatley and Gholamain describe here appears to be an extreme form of empathic emotional engagement with fictional characters. Susin L. Faegin points out that having emotions that consist in empathizing with a fictional character’s emotions is actually imagining having emotions. m\textsuperscript{116}

Readers as simulators are as much the ones experiencing the emotions as are the fictional minds being simulated. On the one hand readers might participate in characters’ emotional states due to the process of immersive simulation, on the other they might react to what happens in the Storyworld, which can mean reacting to the emotions/actions/opinions-behavior/utterances of simulated characters, non-simulated characters and events in the narrative. Experiencing a character’s emotion can be said to involve both readers’ phenomenal and access consciousness on the level of the Storyworld, while reacting emotionally to a character or the narrative has these same properties in the Actual World. This double experience of emotions can lead to an ambiguously charged engaged narrative experience, due to the different sources of the emotive input. When it comes to \textit{Lolita} and \textit{Pale Fire}, readers have to deal with ethically charged themes such as sexual abuse and murder, while the narratives are presented to them in stylized fashion by rhetorically skilled narrators. As we will see in the next chapter, readers experience much unease when reading those novels, precisely because they empathize with and abhor their narrators, often at the same time. Chapters 4 and 5 address the ambiguous nature of readers’ engaged narrative experiences of \textit{Lolita} and \textit{Pale Fire}, by analyzing the cognitive-affective workings of the language and thematic content of the novels.

**Conclusion**

The analyses of \textit{Lolita} and \textit{Pale Fire} provided in the following chapters can best be seen as offering fine-grained investigations of readers’ purported narrative experiences of those novels. They are not performed in order to provide new interpretations of these narratives, but to explain the role of language and the reader’s mind in constituting an engaged narrative experience. In doing so, they aim at a better understanding of what constitutes the phenomenology of reading fictional narratives.


\textsuperscript{116} Faegin, S. L. (1997): 56.
Chapter 2. Lolita, Pale Fire and the Critics

1 Introduction: Quantitative-qualitative analysis and literary interpretation

Chapter 1 has made it evident that ‘mind’, ‘world’ and ‘style’ are key issues in this study. An estimation of the workings of textual features in Lolita and Pale Fire that influence the reader’s engaged narrative experience therefore concerns the author’s mind (which stylistic choices are made?), the narrators’ and characters’ minds (how are their mental experiences and worldviews (re)presented textually?), and the reader’s mind (which semantic and affective properties do readers/can readers be expected to ascribe to the stylistic texture and the consequently presented mental functioning of narrators and characters?). This three-way focus on the mind in order to describe the reader’s engaged narrative experience is based on and elaborates Palmer’s claim that narrative fiction is the presentation of fictional mental functioning and that studying a novel thus entails studying this fictional mental functioning.\(^{117}\) The grounds on which to assess this mental functioning, as reader, lie in both the real world and the world constituted by the narrative. How the latter is perceived is greatly, if not mainly, influenced by the linguistic patterning of a narrative. The literary author creates, or rather constructs, characters and narrators in the novelistic universe using the linguistic medium; readers re-construct this universe and its inhabitants with the help of, again, language. Moreover, the stylistic texture of a novel lays the groundwork for the process of immersive simulation, which, as has been proposed in the first chapter, is a prerequisite cognitive ability on the reader’s part in order to understand and engage with the narrative, and especially with narrators and characters. Therefore, it can be said that much interpretive power is to be found in the style of a novel, the word ‘style’ here referring to “the linguistic characteristics of a particular text”, adhering to Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short’s basic definition.\(^{118}\)

Studying style, however, is not as straightforward an enterprise as this definition might seem to imply. In the present case, the ultimate goal of stylistic analysis of Lolita and Pale Fire is to offer insight into readers’ engaged narrative experiences of these novels. As we have seen in the previous chapter, we can assume that textual features such as deixis, pronominal reference, transitivity systems or the grammar of experience, speech and Thought Representation and modality, play a role in shaping immersive simulation and consequently the reader’s experience of the narrative. However, since every narrative is different, we cannot expect those features to come to the fore in the same way in every narrative. So how do we decide which specific linguistic characteristics of a text are of consequence for the narrative experience of a certain narrative? Regarding Lolita and Pale Fire, I propose to ground this decision by gaining entrance to the novels, as it were, via two related points of entry, having to do with style and the act of reading.

First, I discuss general tendencies in literary reviews of Lolita and Pale Fire to be found in canonical newspapers and (literary) magazines of the Anglo-Saxon world following the novels’ publication dates (Chapter 2). I distill recurring issues regarding


theme, style and characters from the reviewers’ accounts of their reading experiences, and relate those to later insights by Nabokov scholars. This Discourse Analysis of Nabokov criticism then provides focus and context for the second point of entry: A descriptive computational analysis of the styles of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* (Chapter 3). I carry out different types of multivariate analysis on the language of the novels, in order to get a clearer picture of the similarities and/or differences between the two novels and between different parts of each novel based on the frequency, distribution and consistency of the words that are used. More specifically, I employ different *stylometric techniques* to offer descriptions of the styles of the novels: Cluster Analysis, Principal Components Analysis and contrastive analysis using Craig’s Zeta. In literary studies, it is not common practice to employ statistics or quantitative analysis of any kind when questions of literary criticism and interpretation are at stake. Consequently, Chapter 3 not only provides the analyses mentioned, but also entails a large amount of reflection on the methods used. Nabokovian literary criticism and descriptive statistics thus function as joint search lights for finding thematic and stylistic elements in the novels that are relevant for describing readers’ engaged narrative experiences.

Chapters 2 and 3 deal with one of the three questions posed at the start of this chapter’s introduction, namely: Which stylistic choices are made? We could elaborate this question somewhat more, by stating that it entails both the conscious and unconscious choices of the author. It can be answered by looking at the style of the novels on a higher, overarching level, which in its turn leads to another, much closer look at the linguistic characteristics of the novels. The second question (How are the mental experiences and worldview of narrators and characters (re)presented textually?) elaborates on the first one, and is central to Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of this study. It can be answered by taking into account the distribution, frequency and consistency of words, but this needs to be complemented by detailed manual annotation and analysis, based on cognitive poetic insights regarding the workings of specific language features - which features precisely is determined by the outcomes of the descriptive statistical analyses as well as the discourse analysis of literary criticism on *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*. Answering those first two questions lays the groundwork for dealing with the third, and most difficult, question to be dealt with: Which semantic and affective properties do readers/can readers be expected to ascribe to the stylistic texture and the consequently presented mental functioning of narrators and characters? Here, when dealing with the minds of readers rather than ‘minds in a text’, we take one foot out of the texts, while firmly leaving the other behind. In summary, by taking literary criticism, the literary-linguistics scholar’s own observations, and statistical findings into account, the attempt of explaining readers’ engaged narrative experiences of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* is imbued with a specific focus, based on both qualitative and quantitative analyses.
2 From Lolita to Pale Fire

One of Nabokov’s most cited, but probably least understood, quotes can be found in his famous afterword to Lolita:

“Lolita has no moral in tow. For me a work of fiction exists only in so far as it affords me what I shall bluntly call aesthetic bliss, that is a sense of being somehow, somewhere, connected with other states of being where art (curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy) is the norm.”¹¹⁹

This quote aptly shows the three most important fields of interest in Nabokov’s works evident in academic Nabokovian literary criticism: ethics, aesthetics, and metaphysics. These topics are concretized in his novels in the form of narrators and characters, with their specific mind-sets and world views. On the surface, his oeuvre contains quite diverse types of characters: From psychiatric patients to university teachers, from book editors to kings in exile. They inhabit worlds like ours, which are nevertheless characterized by a subtle strangeness and a sense of Unheimlichkeit. The characters themselves are first and foremost responsible for the seemingly aberrant state of Nabokov’s novelistic worlds: They all possess great subversive potential. Humbert Humbert, Lolita’s infamous narrator, is a pedophile, and in Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle (1969) brother Van Veen and sister Ada are engaged in a lifelong incestuous love affair. Of course, pedophilia and incest (sadly) also occur in the real world, but in Nabokov’s narrative universes someone is never ‘just’ a person with a certain pathology. Humbert, for example, is not only a man who likes young girls; he is also a gifted rhetorician, inclined to engage in aesthetic reflection of an admirable sort. For that matter, most of Nabokov’s protagonists have an intense urge to engage themselves in acts of narration, of writing or of looking for stories. In The Real Life of Sebastian Knight (1941), V aims to rewrite the life of his deceased brother, while Humbert claims to ask for forgiveness for his sins by transforming his ‘nymphet’ Lolita into a literary character in his novel ‘Lolita’.

As stated, academic criticism on Nabokov’s works focuses on the overarching three themes of ethics, aesthetics, and metaphysics. The specific nature of the narration and narrators in his novels and stories is almost always seen to be of more than average importance with respect to this theme- construction. Considering these thematic strands are strongly linked in Nabokov’s works, academic criticism mainly focuses on one of these three aspects, relating it to the other two. The aesthetic issue has proven to be the most prominent and long lasting, and is often studied in combination with questions revolving around ethics. Especially the earlier form of Nabokov criticism can be characterized by this specific attitude. Most ‘aesthetic’ scholars conclude that Nabokov’s novels portray the impossibility of a meaningful synthesis between art and morality.

Regarding Lolita, for example, Page Stegner states that narrator Humbert confronts his own vulgarity, and uses his imagination and the medium of language to transform it into something aesthetically sound. The irony then is, Stegner observes, that Humbert is in the end unable to separate the domain of morality, located in physical life,

and that of art, located somewhere else: “Humbert perverts life, and art eventually perverts him because his life becomes art. [...] Ultimately, distinctions have to be made, if one is to function in this world, between aesthetics and morality – between art and life.”¹²⁰ In Nabokov and the Novel Ellen Pifer reaches a similar conclusion. In the aptly named chapter ‘On the Dark Side of Aesthetic Bliss’, Pifer claims that Humbert often confuses his gift for creative perception, his artistic sensitivity, with moral virtue.¹²¹ He also tries to pull his deeds out of the ethical domain and tries to contemplate them wholly as art. His failure to do so is evident from the fact that, in the end, Humbert still has to give in to feelings of guilt for what he did to Lolita.¹²² Pifer’s ideas are echoed by David Rampton, when he describes Humbert’s longing for an enchanted world where nymphets live: “[H]e yearns for a private world constructed according to exclusively aesthetic criteria. His story records the consequences of trying to live in such a world.”¹²³

Pale Fire expresses the precarious balance between art and life in a different way. Peter Rabinowitz states that the novel’s central concerns arise from the relationship between poem and commentary, between the poet and his critic. “But,” he goes on, “the novel’s ambiguity prevents us from knowing just what that relationship is. Thus, we may say vaguely that Pale Fire has something to do with the nature of imagination, the nature of criticism, and the relation of truth to illusion.”¹²⁴ So the conceptual pair of ‘life’ and ‘art’ is conceptualized in Pale Fire in terms of ‘truth’ and ‘fiction’ in Rabinowitz’s view. Lucy Maddox points out that readers are often aware that narrator Kinbote is actually V. Botkin, a Russian émigré who teaches literature at Woodsworth University. But whereas V. Botkin is a dull, extremely normal individual, once transformed into Kinbote he has a firm “belief in the literally life-giving and life-sustaining power of art” and he needs this belief in order “to establish a satisfying version of his own identity.”¹²⁵ As Kinbote, he is also assured of the knowledge that he is actually the exiled King of Zembla, King Charles, and as such he has hopes of being immortalized in Shade’s poem. “But,” as Maddox goes on to state, “even exiled kings are mortal and vulnerable, and their lives are in constant danger.”¹²⁶ So Maddox views Kinbote’s commentary as an attempt to ensure that V. Botkin is immortalized: To this end, Kinbote comes up with a multi-layered world of imagination, only ensuring that in the end he is responsible for Shade’s murder, whose poem is not about Zembla and King Charles at all, except in the eyes of one mentally unstable Russian émigré. Thus, the general ‘verdict’ in this aesthetic criticism is that Nabokovian aesthetics does have a moral; if you transform life into art, it becomes impossible to live, to survive.

This type of criticism is partially responsible for the often heard admonition that Nabokov is a pure aestheticist, relying on an art for art’s sake ethos. The early 90’s of the last century saw a change in Nabokov criticism, when the aesthetic paradigm was to make

¹²² Idem: 166.
¹²⁴ Rabinowitz, P. J. (1977): 139-140.
¹²⁶ Ibidem.
way for more metaphysics-based criticism. However, the metaphysics-approach soon had
to clear the field as well, due to the up and coming ethical turn within the humanities. It
has nevertheless led to some lasting insights into Nabokov’s works. Especially Vladimir E.
Alexandrov’s Nabokov’s Otherworld (1991) offers interesting observations, elaborating on
the relationship between ethics, aesthetics, and metaphysics in new ways. Alexandrov’s
goal was to pull Nabokov out of the strictly aesthetic discourse of earlier critics, in order
to show that “an aesthetic rooted in his intuition of a transcendent realm” lies at the base
of his art. The attempts of Alexandrov and his peers notwithstanding, ‘ethical’ critics
such as Leland de la Durantaye and Michael Wood have been the main forces within
Nabokov research for the past two-and-a-half decades. They approach Nabokov’s works
with ethical and moral questions as starting points, and, again, contextualize their findings
within an aesthetic context. According to De la Durantaye, Nabokov’s works quite
explicitly require such an approach. He views Lolita, for example, as ‘unquestionably
ethical’ due to the novel’s compositional matter, its style:

“Lolita places moral questions at the center of its fiction and makes one of its central and explicit
themes the line between acceptable and unacceptable behavior, between moral and immoral
acts. A reader responsive to these elements is in no way reading into the novel private
preferences or reading against its special grain – no matter how programmatic and peremptory
Nabokov might have been in claiming, as he often did, that his novel had ‘no moral in tow’.”

Furthermore, De la Durantaye views the novel as conceptualizing the borderline between
readers’ private reactions to a narrative and their aesthetic evaluation of it.

Especially Lolita invites scholars to view it in light of ethics. This might seem self-
evident; after all, it tells the story of a grown man, Humbert, who has been sexually
involved with an underage girl, Lolita, for two consequent years. Following the novel’s
publication, reviewers did not lack in haste to have their say about it. Nabokov’s formerly
close friend and literary critic Edmund Wilson, rejected the book because he viewed it as
unethical and unrealistic. In a letter dated November 1954, he wrote to Nabokov: “Nasty
subjects may make fine books, but I don’t feel you have gotten away with this. It isn’t
merely that the characters and the situations are repulsive in themselves, but that,
presented on this scale, they seem quite unreal.” Fortunately for Nabokov not
everyone agreed with Wilson. The English writer Graham Green, for one, gave Lolita the
honor of being listed as one of the best three books of the year 1955 in the London Sunday
Times.

Just after its publication, ethics and aesthetics became joint points of attention
within both academic and journalistic criticism on Lolita. Reviewers soon discerned the
Janus-faced and reader-oriented nature of the novel: They acknowledge that there is a
love story in there; a comic strain that only barely keeps within moral bounds; that its

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129 Idem: 11.
130 Idem: 11.
style is ingenious, multi-faceted and intimately bound up with its subject; and ultimately, that Lolita is a novel readers must engage with, whether they want to or not.

In the Anchor Review (1957), F.W. Dupee aptly touches upon all of these points, when describing his reactions to Lolita’s narrator Humbert.

“Mr. Nabokov has devoted much art to making ‘Lolita’ yield reactions which I can only describe as ‘human’. True, his hero is a thorough creep and no pitiable sick man or aspiring sick soul. He is contrived in such a way that he resists the charity of the clinic and refuses to be vaporized into allegory. Entangled in some of the most intricately sordid situations ever presented by a novelist [...] his situations are always assuming familiar forms, his horrid scrapes become our scrapes. The book’s general effect is profoundly mischievous, like that of some diabolical distorting mirror in some particularly obscene amusement park. The images of life that ‘Lolita’ gives back are ghastly but recognizable. If Mr. Nabokov’s methods are the usual methods of comedy, they are here carried to new extremes.”

This quote touches upon the essentially ‘constructed’ nature of narrator Humbert, with whom the reviewer appears to identify in an uncomfortable way. Wayne Booth’s early academic criticism on Lolita also mentions “the reader’s inability to dissociate himself from a vicious center of consciousness presented to him with all the seductive self justification of skillful rhetoric.” Such a view is also evident in Lionel Trilling’s review of the novel in the Encounter of October 1958. He claims to react viscerally to Humbert’s sexual longing for Lolita: “[O]ur response to the situation that Mr. Nabokov presents to us is that of shock. And we find ourselves the more shocked when we realise that, in the course of reading the novel, we have come to virtually condone the violation it presents.” The ambiguous nature of not only Lolita, but especially Humbert is the main point of Trilling’s review. For him, as well as for Dupee, an involuntary type of identification with Humbert appears to take place, which is so subtly effected to nearly go unnoticed by the reader. Trilling goes on to specify his feelings of unease toward the novel:

“[I]t is likely that any reader of ‘Lolita’ will discover that he comes to see the situation as less and less abstract and moral and horrible, and more and more as human and ‘understandable’. Less and less, indeed, do we see a situation; what we become aware of is people. Humbert is perfectly willing to say that he is a monster; no doubt he is, but we find ourselves less and less eager to say so. Perhaps his depravity is the easier to accept when we learn that he deals with a Lolita who is not innocent, and who seems to have very few emotions to be violated; and I suppose we naturally incline to be lenient towards a rapist - legally and by intention H.H. is that - who eventually feels a deathless devotion to his victim.”

Trilling also mentions that there are passages in the book that contain moral implications to which he is unsure how to respond, and he cites a short passage from Humbert’s visit to Lolita when she is seventeen and pregnant. In this passage, Humbert elaborates on

135 Idem: 93-94. Italics in original - PW.
136 This is the passage from Lolita Trilling comments on: “And there she was with her ruined looks and her adult, rope-veined narrow hands and her goose-flesh white arms, and her shallow ears, and her unkempt armpits, there she was (my
the intense nature of his love for Lolita and explicitly addresses his imaginative jurors. He anticipates their reactions of jeering at him, of not believing him, and vehemently declares that the world should know how he has always felt and still feels for Lolita. Trilling does not explicitly mention this direct address to the jurors, or Humbert’s personalized use of ‘you’ to address them, but he is sensitive to what Tammi Pekki calls “a feature that can be characterized only as a definite type of reader-consciousness: a quite remarkable sensitivity towards those responses that belong to the receiving end of the narrative-communication process […]” in Nabokov’s novels.137 Trilling states that he is “not sure that with it, as with other passages in which H.H. speaks of the depth and wild solemnity of his love and remorse, Mr. Nabokov has not laid an emotional trap for the reader.”138 Importantly, his unease with Humbert is not a negative thing per sé: He states that for him both the novel’s “ambiguity of tone” and “its 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” are some if its main attractions.139

Especially Trilling’s last quoted remark conveys an awareness of the entanglement of the style and content of Lolita: both its tone and intention are ambiguous and require some ‘action’ on the reader’s part. In the Spectator of 6 November 1959, Kingsley Amis provides us with an even more pronounced statement regarding this relatedness of form and theme:

“We know well enough that every style has a way of infiltrating what is being presented, so that, offered as the vehicle of Humbert’s soliloquy, this style is involved with the entire moral tenor of the book. Thus Humbert is not only decadently sophisticated and tortuously imaginative and self-regardingly detached, he is also all of these things as he describes his seduction of the twelve-year-old Lolita and his long history of cohabitation with her.”140

In this quote, the idea of style infiltrating what is being presented, which Amis takes to be common knowledge, is joined by the observation that Lolita’s style is actually Humbert’s style: It is “the vehicle for his soliloquy”, and furthermore has bearing on “the entire moral tenor of the book”. Humbert’s apparent detachedness and imaginativeness when describing his ‘affair’ with Lolita, is thus imbued with a profound ethical quality.

In the New Statesman of 7 November 1959, reviewer Walter Allen goes as far as to claim that Humbert not only delivers his plea using a certain style which reflects on its

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139 Ibidem.
content, but that his “brilliance, the insolent ease with which he manipulates the English language, is part of his character. It becomes at times almost a form of exhibitionism, a manic showing-off, which by contrast heightens the intensity of the moments of self-discovery, whether realized as perceptions of beauty or as perceptions of moral truth [. . .].” Interestingly, he refers to the same passage as Trilling in order to illustrate his point, showing a similar sensitivity to the novel’s reader-conscious nature. Allen feels this passage is “almost unbearably poignant” and describes his own reading experience of it as follows: “It is as though he [Humbert] - and the reader - are seeing the real Lolita for the first time; all his defenses are down, and in that moment he realizes imaginatively the full extent of the evil he has done her.” Allen appears to offer a straightforward reading of this passage, and he might be the victim of one of Humbert’s ‘emotional traps’, as Trilling calls them. Allen has stepped into Humbert’s world and into Humbert’s shoes: Not only Humbert, but “the reader” too, sees Lolita for the first time, and Allen believes Humbert’s remorse to be honest at this point.

Naomi Tamir-Ghez comments on Humbert’s alleged sincerity in her aptly titled article ‘The Art of Persuasion in Lolita’, stating that the reader is especially made to condemn Humbert’s violence towards Lolita nearing the end of the novel, when Humbert faces the seventeen year old Lolita: “At the end of the narrative he at last gives up the cynicism underlying his rhetoric, and his tone becomes more sincere.” However, she also has some doubts about Humbert’s honesty, since she questions why “a clever rhetorician like Humbert” did not realize that telling his story “from the point of view of the experiencing self is more damaging for Humbert than advantageous.” She states that if he would have started his tale with a blunt, honest admission of guilt, readers would have no trouble feeling sympathy for him. Tamir-Ghez touches upon the, in Lolita’s case hardly tenable, distinction between experiencer-narrator and narrator-after-the-facts. What makes the case of Lolita so interesting, in this respect, is the often blurred boundary between the narrator Humbert who narrates the story of the earlier Humbert and Lolita, and the ‘embedded’ narrator, that is the earlier Humbert himself narrating events at the moment of occurrence. By pouring his confession into the genre-mould of memoir, Humbert not only constructs a tribute to Lolita or a legal defense - his goals according to himself - but he ingeniously intertwines his ‘new’ persona (the remorseful Humbert) with his older self (the Humbert oblivious to Lolita’s pains).

A view slightly different from Tamir-Ghez’s is probably best summed up by Maddox’s statement that “[Humbert’s] words generate meaning: he did not understand himself or Lolita until he began to write.” This would mean that the reader is not merely a judge of Humbert’s sincerity, but more of a peer, at his side for the entire duration of the writing process, which is a process of coming to understand himself. In combination with Humbert’s stylistic conjuring, this perspective-play between

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142 Idem: 108. ['defences' spelt as such in original - PW]
144 Idem: 74.
145 Ibidem.
experience-narrator and narrator-narrator is a recurring topic of debate in literary criticism on *Lolita*.

Humbert’s linguistic power over the reader is evident as a point of interest for critics not only when speaking of the relationship narrator-reader, but also of that between Humbert the narrator/character and Lolita. Trilling notes that the reader is shocked by the realization that, despite the fact that Humbert is committing outrageous immoral acts with a young girl, “no woman has been so charmingly evoked, in such grace and delicacy, as Lolita [...].”

Amis implies that we, readers, do not know the ‘real’ Lolita, but only have access to Lolita as she is described, presented to us, by Humbert: “[Humbert] could not care less about what [Lolita] was really like. She is a ‘portrait’ in a very full sense, devotedly watched and listened to but never conversed with, the object of desire but never curiosity. What else did she do in Humbert’s presence but play tennis and eat sundaes and go to bed with him?” However, Lolita also often appears to be a not quite so innocent girl, who knows she holds power over Humbert and is not shy of using it (see Trilling’s earlier quote as well). Of course, Lolita is always described by Humbert, so the reader’s view of Lolita is inherently biased; a fact of which Amis is acutely aware.

3 From *Pale Fire* to *Lolita*

Whatever critics’ ultimate value judgment on *Lolita*, they all view the book as deeply moving, whether it is because of its topic, its humor, its language, or all of the above. *Pale Fire* is more subject to debate, in this respect. It is seen as much less moving than *Lolita*; critics actually often compare *Pale Fire* to Nabokov’s earlier bestseller in order to explain their feelings toward it. Interestingly, they find quite a number of similarities between the novels’ narrators, who they both view to be eccentric personalities, manipulative masters of language, and extremely aware narrators, that is, they know they are writing for an audience and are not shy of exploiting this awareness.

In the *New Statesman* of 9 November 1962 Frank Kermode describes Humbert and Kinbote as prototypical Nabokovian narrators, in that “Nabokov’s novels are usually concerned with elevated, amoral states of mind [...].” Moreover, he sees both narrators as enjoying a state of “aesthetic bliss”; but while Humbert’s state is induced by his disinterested, obsessive love for Lolita, Kinbote’s is upheld by way of his - similarly disinterested and obsessive - intoxication with his own text. And it is precisely this last aspect of *Pale Fire* that proves to be, in the best case scenario, an interpretive challenge to critics - and in the worst case, an insurmountable stumbling-block, oftentimes leading to a negative assessment of the novel.

Whereas Kermode evaluates *Pale Fire* as a worthwhile, although very challenging novel, George Steiner concludes in an earlier review that it “is a pedantic witticism spun

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150 Idem: 145-146.
out at great length and solemnity [...].\textsuperscript{151} And in the \textit{Partisan Review} of the summer of 1962, Dwight Macdonald pays Nabokov some respect saying that “[h]e has written one small masterpiece, ‘Lolita,’ which combines comedy – high and low – social satire, feeling, and an exuberance of mood and language that has rarely been displayed in our literature since the Elizabethans and Laurence Sterne”, but \textit{Pale Fire} is nothing of the sort.\textsuperscript{152} Macdonald calls it “the most unreadable novel I’ve attempted this season”\textsuperscript{153}, full of “high-class doodling”, and “as boring as any exhibition of virtuosity disconnected from feeling and thought”.\textsuperscript{154} Kinbote’s unrelenting emphasis on his own text, detailing the history of Zembla’s King Charles ‘through’ Shade’s poem, proves a much harder obsession for critics to deal with than Humbert’s intense longing for Lolita.

At first glance, this seems quite paradoxical: Why would we evaluate a pedophile’s rhetorical tricks to cover up his horrendous actions above those of a scholar, who is somewhat detached from reality but otherwise quite harmless? Critics are much more positive about Humbert’s language, whose “word-play leads back to the love-play always”\textsuperscript{155}, who tells his - or Lolita’s - story “with sparkling brilliance”\textsuperscript{156}, than about Kinbote’s. As Steiner puts it, “neither the acrobatics of a passionate comber of dictionaries nor the occasional stroke of deep, private candor can make ‘Pale Fire’ glow.”\textsuperscript{157} In the \textit{Sunday Telegraph} of 11 November 1962, Nigel Dennis appears quite fond of the novel, yet acknowledges that it might not be the most ‘readable’ one: “Still, in the end, one must admit that ‘Pale Fire’ is not likely to be popular. It is too full of strange words, rather too over-written, and hard to get the hang of.”\textsuperscript{158} Critics appear a bit uncomfortable with \textit{Pale Fire} for different reasons than when it comes to \textit{Lolita}. Whereas in \textit{Lolita}’s case readers are granted access to the mind, history and feelings of an ethically questionable narrator through his language, in \textit{Pale Fire}’s Kinbote’s language is precisely what appears to prevent readers from gaining access to not only his inner self, but the entire world surrounding him.

The earlier quoted Peter Rabinowitz was one of the first to see \textit{Pale Fire}’s ‘language and reality issue’ for what it really is. In ‘Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences’, he comments on the novel’s interpretive impenetrability and assigns special relevance to the claims that novels like \textit{Pale Fire} show how inadequate critical terminology actually is; critics and scholars differ greatly in their opinions of its literary value, its meaning and, most importantly, about what is actually really happening in \textit{Pale Fire}.\textsuperscript{159} Rabinowitz illustrates this:

“Mary McCarthy argued that Kinbote was really a member of the Russian department named Botkin; Andrew Field claimed that Kinbote had in fact been invented by Shade; and Page

\textsuperscript{151} Steiner, G. (1982 [1962]: 141.
\textsuperscript{153} Idem: 137.
\textsuperscript{154} Idem: 138.
\textsuperscript{155} Hollander, J. (1982 [1956]): 82.
\textsuperscript{156} Allen, W. (1982 [1959]):
\textsuperscript{157} Steiner, G. (1982 [1962]): 141.
\textsuperscript{158} Denis, N. (1982 [1962]): 143.
\textsuperscript{159} Rabinowitz, P. J. (1977): 121-122.
Stegner suggested that perhaps, to the contrary, Shade had actually been invented by Kinbote. Kevin Pilon wrote a chronology of Pale Fire as if all events - including those in Zembla and those in Shade’s poem - had really occurred. John Stark, on the other hand, insisted that actually only ‘Nabokov and Pale Fire (in a sense) are real; any layer inside them (actually in the novel) is imagined, and none of those inside layers is more real than any other’ [...].

Rabinowitz states that yes, the novel “has something to do with the nature of imagination, the nature of criticism, and the relation of truth to illusion,” but we, readers, are unable to elaborate on what exactly is the novel’s thematic engagement with these topics. He argues that it is so ambiguous in nature and interpreted so divergently, because it exploits the force of the differences between what he calls the ideal narrative audience and the narrative audience. The first type of audience is the one “for which the narrator wishes he were writing”, it is the ideal audience “from the narrator’s point of view”. The narrative audience, in contrast, is determined by asking “What sort of person would I have to pretend to be - what would I have to know and believe - if I wanted to take this work of fiction as real?” and it is a role that is forced upon the reader by the text in order to assign meaning to it. This means that there can be, and quite often are, differences between the narrative audience and the ideal narrative audience. Rabinowitz explains this in terms of distance:

“The distance between the narrative audience and the ideal narrative audience tends to lie along an axis of ethics or interpretation. The ideal narrative audience agrees with the narrator that certain events are good or that a particular analysis is correct, while the narrative audience is called upon to judge him.”

And it is on this ethical and interpretive scale of distance where Pale Fire confounds critics. Readers are unable to perceive the nature of this distance, it is inherently ambiguous, because it is not clear which ideal narrative audience the text forces readers to take on.

Rabinowitz’s ideal narrative audience clearly echoes Prince’s narratee, but Pale Fire’s narratee, i.e. the reader who perfectly understands and interprets the novel, might just be indefinable. Rabinowitz’s main point is that actual readers do not know if, within the narrative world as ideal narrative audience, they should believe that Zembla is real, that Shade wrote the poem and not Kinbote, whether Kinbote is actually someone named Botkin, whether Kinbote made up Shade and his poem or whether Shade made up Kinbote and his commentary, etcetera. Readers do not and cannot know which facts the ideal narrative audience has at its disposal in order to assess truth-status to these ‘facts’ within the narrative world and are therefore unable to join that audience. In this respect, readers of Pale Fire experience a lot of uncertainty, since in determining this ideal

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160 Idem: 122. Italics in original - PW.
161 Idem: 139-140.
162 Idem: 134.
164 Idem: 127.
165 Idem: 137. Italics added - PW.
166 Idem: 138-139.
audience they often appear to be at an almost complete loss. Can readers be sure about Kinbote’s motives of writing his commentary, even if they would take this particular person’s existence, that of Zembla, Shade, and the poem, for granted? Of course, Kinbote explains his motives for writing right at the start of his commentary, but then again, does he really want his ideal narrative audience to believe him or rather have them read between the commentary’s lines, mirroring his own interpretive exercise regarding Shade’s poem?

Pale Fire’s “planes of narrative”, writes Steiner, “conspire against each other cunningly.” To this we could add that the novel also contains planes of ideal narrative audiences which conspire against each other as cunningly, if not more so. In the sense that we cannot even decide for whom Kinbote is actually writing, he might just be the most unreliable narrator to be found in literary fiction. This inherent sense of unreliability, causing uncertainty in reader’s interpretations and evaluations of the novel, is both reflected in and constituted by Kinbote’s obtrusive language. In the New Republic of 4 June 1962 Mary McCarthy eloquently describes the reader’s role in constructing the novel that is Pale Fire: When it is

“fitted together with the help of clues and cross-references, which must be hunted down as in a paper-chase, a novel on several levels is revealed, and these ‘levels’ are [...] planes in a fictive space, rather like those houses of memory in medieval mnemonic science, where words, facts, and numbers were stored till wanted in various rooms and attics [...].”

Pale Fire’s reader-consciousness, to repeat Tammi’s useful term, is thus of a very different nature than Lolita’s.

Conclusion

From the previous discussion of literary criticism on Lolita and Pale Fire, we can distill recurring topics, which aid to focus and contextualize the computational analyses featured in the next chapter. The criticism implies that both novels’ narrators are devised in such a way as to implore readers to reflect on reality, art and the moral nature of both. Repeated mention is made regarding the topics of identity; imagination (including truth-fiction-reality); mnemonics (remembering); narrative perspective/narrators (including distance-identification); morality; and character description. These topics influence the computational part of this study in two ways: First, they have crucial bearing on the specific choices made in the employment of stylometric techniques, so that the analyses can provide relevant background for questions concerning the engaged narrative experiences of these two novels (Chapter 3). Second, they provide focus during both computational and manual annotation of specific language features, and consequently during their analysis and interpretation (Chapters 3-6). In this way, quantitative descriptive methods and qualitative interpretative ones strengthen one another, while first and foremost strengthening literary scholarship on Lolita and Pale Fire.

Chapter 3. Stylometric Analysis of Lolita and Pale Fire

1 Introduction: Words and numbers

In 1987, John Burrows laid the groundwork for what we now know as computational literary studies. In his book Computation into Criticism he uses descriptive statistics to characterize the idioms of characters in Jane Austen’s novels. He shows that different characters make use of markedly different kinds of words and syntax, and that there appears to be a chronological stylistic development in Austen’s novels in this respect. Burrows combines descriptive statistics and linguistically based close-reading strategies in order to show that these can be fruitfully used in tandem, when trying to answer in essence traditional literary questions of interpretation. He is, however, well aware of criticism that literary scholars are very likely to direct at him at the time, and he anticipates this criticism as follows:

“A graph or a table may be a poor substitute for a well-informed analysis of detail and is certainly no substitute for a great novel. And yet, to the extent that it can clarify things that we dimly sense in the novel, it has its virtues […]. To the extent that it draws attention to things that we had not sensed, it can take us back to the novel with a fresh awareness of its subtleties.”

The italicized sentences I believe to be essential in this quote. They provide use with a relevant set up for dealing with questions of literary interpretation in Lolita and Pale Fire: On the one hand, computational analyses might help us lay the finger on why readers do dimly sense things in the novels; why Pale Fire is seen to have something to do with imagination, truth, reality, and why Lolita’s narrator prompts processes of identification and triggers feelings of unease in readers. It can help decide on which words, word sequences, and collocations play a part in the cognitive effort of theme construction and in the construction of narrative perspective and focalization on micro-level, based on detailed exploration and visualization of the novels’ styles. It can also help to show which passages stand out or show similarities on macro-level. On the other hand, this same exploration and visualization can lead us to find stylistic patterns or fore- or backgrounded form and content in the novels that we did not expect to find. To this end, stylometry can be used as a discovery tool for finding textual features on both micro- and macro-level that influence interpretation processes and the reader’s engaged narrative experience. Computational methods are thus put to use as bi-directional tools of discovery and description.

The nature of this kind of application of stylometry to questions of literary interpretation, understanding and reader engagement is, for a great part, derived from computational methods used in authorship attribution studies. These studies generally involve such methods as Cluster Analysis, Principal Components Analysis (both CA and PCA are forms of multivariate statistics) and Student’s T-test. At first glance, it might

seem a bit strange that the present study uses those same methods to examine stylistic differences and similarities between texts and text-parts by one and the same author. As David Hoover notes, “[m]ultivariate authorship attribution assumes, at least tentatively, that the frequencies of high-frequency words tend to be consistent across an author’s texts and to show consistent differences between authors […].”\footnote{Hoover, D.L. (2003b): 341.} However, studies dealing with computational stylistic-interpretive analysis of one author’s oeuvre or even just one novel or play do exist, and Hoover acknowledges that “[t]he fact that multivariate analysis can distinguish variations in authors’ styles clearly shows that those styles are not monolithic […].”\footnote{Idem: 342.} In what follows I give an overview of the research questions, main tenets and findings presented in those studies. Section 2 illustrates how computational methods and interpretive criticism are currently brought together, and how this relates to the goals of the present study. Section 3 reflects more thoroughly on the respective methods they use or propose to use, while elaborating on my own choices qua method and data preparation in the subsequent analyses of *Pale Fire* and *Lolita*.

## 2 Stylometric interpretive analysis: Why and how

We might start thinking about the ‘why’ of stylometric interpretive analysis by asking why style, taken to be the linguistic characteristics of a particular text, lends itself to computational analysis. David Hoover, one of the most prolific scholars within the field of computational literary studies, answers this question by characterizing style as essentially *distributed, patterned* and *comparative*. Especially prose style has these specific properties, although this may not always be clear to the naked eye. Furthermore, he sees style as chiefly *linguistic*: “An author expresses a philosophy, world view, themes, tones, topics and characters linguistically. More obviously, the linguistic elements of grammar, lexis, morphology, phonology, figures of speech, cohesion and collocation are expressed linguistically.”\footnote{Ibidem.} He adds that in some cases, authors’ styles might also invite one to look at graphological features, illustrations, or even physical characteristics of the text.\footnote{Burrows, J.F. (1987): 119.}

Burrows comments that stylistic differences can “though they will not always do so, incorporate everything from idiosyncratic tropes and figures, through characteristic ‘key-words’ and images, syntactical forms, and local instances of ‘foregrounding’, to unobtrusive (but statistically demonstrable) habits of expression”.\footnote{Ibidem.}

It is obvious from Hoover’s and Burrows’ lists of linguistic characteristics accounting for stylistic differences that words are not the only text-features to play a part in the computational analysis of style. However, stylometric studies dealing with interpretation almost invariably focus on most frequent words alone. Examples are Burrows’ earlier mentioned study of Jane Austen’s novels, McKenna and Antonia’s article on the styles of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, and Hoover’s investigation of style variation in William Golding’s *The Inheritors*, George Orwell’s *1984* and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture*
of Dorian Gray. This might not be that surprising since, as Hoover explains, words occupy a special position in computational stylistic analysis, because they are “easily identifiable and countable, compared with figures of speech or syntactic patterns. They are also very frequent, which makes computational methods both necessary and appropriate. In addition [...] words are clearly, if not unproblematically meaningful.”

With the proposed stylometric and cognitive poetic analysis of Nabokov’s novels in mind Hoover’s last remark is not to be taken lightly, since characterizing the reader’s engaged narrative experience of those novels is invariably focused on how style and meaning interact. Without denying the semantic possibilities inherent in graphological features, I feel that it is quite safe to say that the semantic power of words in Lolita and Pale Fire is often greater than that of, say, commas or hyphens. This view is supported by the fact that Nabokov criticism ascribes much interpretive value to the language of Nabokov’s novels, while it does not mention graphological features as having distinctive bearing on their interpretation. Having said this, it should also be noted that there are literary forms that greatly depend on their graphological features for interpretation, such as the image-poems of the surrealists. Certain graphological features may also acquire remarkable semantic properties in specific works of prose: Michael Burke, for example, argues that the many unfinished sentences ending with dots and hyphens in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby trigger what he calls reader-disportation. On a more stylometric note, Larry L. Stewart decides on including different graphological features in his multivariate analysis of the styles of Charles Brockden Brown’s novels Wieland and Carwin. Punctuation marks and sentence and paragraph length were included because he found that adding these variables increased the sensitivity of the analysis in a sample of fourteen late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century novels.

As noted above, considering the importance generally ascribed to the language rather than the graphological features of Nabokov’s novels, the following analyses of Lolita and Pale Fire will be based on their language. For the most part, these analyses are performed on the basis of the most frequent words of the novels, but some give more weight to consistent and thus characteristic word use rather than frequency. Principal Component Analysis, Cluster Analysis and consequent Zeta analysis either plot the distribution of most frequent words or allow for finding words that set novels or text-blocks apart based on consistent word use. In this way, the analyses are also used as tools for finding backgrounded and foregrounded textual features, which will aid in extrapolating significant passages and linguistic phenomena to feature in the analysis of the reader’s engaged narrative experience of the novels in Chapters 4 and 5.

From a cognitive stylistic based perspective, foregrounding can be defined as “the use of either unusual linguistic forms or an unusually high or low density of particular linguistic forms, these being sufficiently prominent to contribute to the overall interpretation of a text, including controlling the attention paid to different

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Foregrounding has a content as well as a language component, together contributing to the reader’s theme construction. Interestingly, Catherine Emmott links foregrounding to the production of ‘affective response’ in readers. She argues that foregrounding can “stimulate emotional involvement in interpreting a theme rather than simply [add] to our understanding of the propositional content of a text.”

Foregrounding thus contributes to theme construction in not only a formal and semantic way, but also in an affective way. Louwerse and Van Peer also mention foregrounding as a function in order to highlight literary themes and Miall’s and Miall and Kuiken’s empirical studies show foregrounding devices’ abilities to induce affect.

In addition to bringing foregrounded elements into focus, stylometric analysis can also lead to the discovery of what we might term backgrounded elements. Sanford and Emmott note that, up till now, “there has been relatively little detailed stylistic analysis of background items. […] [W]hen used strategically, deliberate backgrounding can, in its own right, be rhetorically significant.” Such background items are harder to classify or discover than foregrounded ones, since they do not ‘stand out’. However, since literary language is, echoing Hoover’s earlier quoted observation, in essence patterned and distributed, computational tools offer new possibilities in this area. Statistical tests such as Principal Component Analysis and Cluster Analysis offer insight into not only the deviations but also the consistencies in the style of a given set of texts, enabling us to shed light on pervasive patterns in most frequent word- and most frequent word sequence-use. Although these patterns are pervasive, readers might not consciously perceive them as such - since there are limits to what the human mind can absorb - but their narrative experience is nevertheless influenced by backgrounded patterns. For example, when Wayne Booth describes “the reader’s inability to dissociate himself from a vicious center of consciousness presented to him with all the seductive self justification of skillful rhetoric” while reading Lolita, stylometric analysis can help us explore the backgrounded nature of precisely this skillful rhetoric.

In the same vein, stylometry can shed light on critics’ general view that Pale Fire’s language is a bit ‘too much’, and that, as Steiner writes, Pale Fire’s “planes of narrative conspire against each other cunningly.” When Dennis writes that Pale Fire “is too full of strange words, rather too over-written, and hard to get the hang of”, he echoes a sentiment that can be produced by way of inadvertent foregrounding, which can be described as foregrounding that seems ‘out of place’. Sanford & Emmott comment that any regularity that is irrelevant to the pattern of coherence in a text, is a distraction. They relate this kind of inadvertent foregrounding to “bad style”, but also appear to see some sort of middle road between bad style and (apparently) conventionalized creative

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foregrounding: “foregrounding that does not follow the normal felicitous usage, which may also have special effects.”

For critics *Pale Fire’s* main characteristic appears to be its slipperiness of theme, or in Rabinowitz’s words, “we may say vaguely that *Pale Fire* has something to do with the nature of imagination, the nature of criticism, and the relation of truth to illusion”; we might thus expect patterns of inadvertent foregrounding to show in computational analysis, that can be related to readers’ construction of *Pale Fire’s* slippery theme. Moreover, finding and analyzing patterns of (inadvertent) foregrounding and backgrounding in the novel also allows for a linguistic characterization of *Pale Fire’s* different planes of narrative.

The previous paragraphs indicate that stylometric analysis can be used as a tool to visualize both lower-level and higher-level patterns of stylistic differences and similarities. By looking at the lower level of most frequent words, we can access the higher levels of syntactic structure, semantic meaning, narrative structure, motives and theme construction. This analytical interplay between levels is also present in other stylometric studies, such as Stewart’s investigation of different narrative voices in Charles Brockden Brown’s *Wieland* (1798) and *Carwin* (1803-1805). Stewart asks “whether quantitative analysis could indicate if Brown had created in Carwin a character and narrator with a distinctive voice, whether what we call the character Carwin is a distinct literary or linguistic entity. Is the voice of Carwin similar in the two texts and can it be differentiated from other narrative voices in *Wieland?” He uses Principal Component Analysis and Cluster Analysis to compare the styles of the different chapters of both novels and takes into account most frequent word-use and, as mentioned earlier, specific graphological features. Stewart successfully relates the statistical findings to existing literary criticism of the novels, making the step from words and graphological features to questions of literary criticism, interpretation and understanding.

In her study of Elisabeth Wolff and Agatha Deken’s canonical 1782 Dutch novel *Historie van mejuffrouw Sara Burgerhart* (*The History of Sara Burgerhart*), Karina van Dalen-Oskam concerns herself with a similar issue: She attempts to find out if the presumably 26 different characters who write letters and other texts in the novel can be distinguished from one another based on their styles. Her overall goal is different though, in that she wants to see if the individual styles of the novel’s two authors are discernible in *Sara Burgerhart* and if the different writing characters can be linked to either Wolff or Deken. Van Dalen-Oskam uses a different (although related) technique than Stewart in order to find similarities and differences in characters’ and authors’ styles. She uses bootstrap consensus trees for her analysis, “because the bootstrap consensus tree is a harmonization of as many different cluster analyses based on word frequencies as the scholar indicates.” Her analyses yield interesting results, that also point to the need for fine-tuning of existing methods for analysis. Regarding authorship style, she finds that Wolff and Deken have a joint style that is different from their individual styles. When it

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190 Rabinowitz, P. J. (1977): 139-140.
comes to discerning the styles of the 26 characters, things are not as clear: When there is sampling involved, different styles of (sets of) characters do not significantly differ from one another.\(^{194}\) van Dalen-Oskam then asks why it is that many readers nevertheless recognize the letter writers in the novel and zooms in on their styles using Burrow’s Zeta and the freely available tool AntConc.\(^{195}\) Her preliminary zooming-in has an exploratory character and thus only hints at the tools’ possibilities in explaining felt differences in style. Like Stewart, van Dalen-Oskam places her statistical findings firmly within the broader literary research context surrounding the authors Wolff and Deken en their novel *Sara Burgerhart*. This context leads her to critically reflect on the methods used, and their results, in light of existing literary criticism.

McKenna and Antonia start their investigation of the styles of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* from a different perspective. They use Principal Component Analysis, Cluster Analysis and the Mann-Whitney-test featuring most frequent words to better discriminate between interior monologue, dialogue, and narrative, and then to discriminate between the different narrative styles of the text. They put much emphasis on the importance of the relationship between formal properties of a text, under which header they list word frequency counts, and the interpretation of the meaning of the text.\(^{196}\) Using those different multivariate techniques leads them to focus on the ‘Nausicaa’ episode in *Ulysses*, in which two modals, two causal conjunctives and certain prepositional phrases are seen as discriminators.\(^{197}\) Following a Bakhtinian line of thought they interpret the use of these formal language features in an ideological way, concluding that the protagonist of the ‘Nausicaa’ episode, Gerty MacDowell, is ironically portrayed as a self-deceptive person.\(^{198}\) Their insistence on the strong relationship between form and meaning, and the integral role they propose common words play in this respect, is taken up in the present study. Statistical tests featuring most frequent words revolve around numbers and common words, which are not the typical research topics within interpretive literary studies. However, these words and numbers are meaningful when it comes to literary understanding, as MacKenna and Antonia convincingly argue:

> “First, the common words of the language control the syntactic and grammatical structures upon which so much meaning depends. They impact upon the relationship between form and content, and without them the structures that govern meaning would be at best elliptical. Secondly, the common words have proven to be a significant part of the matter of our sentences, and that significance is twofold: the numerical weight of the words themselves, but more importantly their capacity to generate statistically significant discriminations between a range of styles.”\(^{199}\)

These insights regarding the importance of common words and their role in meaning-construction also underlie Craig’s article on the dialogue of characters in plays by Ben Jonson. Craig argues that multiple Principal Component Analyses of sections of character

\(^{194}\) Idem: 446.  
\(^{195}\) Idem: 448-450.  
\(^{197}\) Idem: 361-364.  
\(^{198}\) Idem: 370.  
\(^{199}\) Idem: 355.
dialogue show a contrast, or rather a continuum, between a formal, impersonal style on the one hand and an interlocutory and more dialectic style of character dialogue on the other. He mainly argues the existence of this distinction based on the observation that the words ‘the’, ‘of’ and ‘and’ are opposed to the words ‘I’, ‘my’ and ‘you’ in his PCA graph. Whereas the first three are characteristic of description and narration, and longer chains of nouns and clauses, the second set suggests personal interaction and reflexiveness. Like Stewart, Craig relates his findings to the existing critical discussion of Jonson’s plays, making countable, ‘objective’ structures “comprehensible in familiar literary terms”.

Anticipating the following computational analyses of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*, however, there are two other noteworthy aspects of Craig’s study. First, with regard to the formal-interactive continuum noted earlier, he comments: “Its importance in quantitative terms relative to the total variation in the data suggests that it must play a part in the process of composition, and must figure in the experience of reading or hearing these texts, […].” Craig’s study is an illustration of this seemingly straightforward statement: He discerns sets of very common words clustering together in his PCA graphs, which he then brings together under the umbrella-terms ‘formal’ and ‘interactive’, based on linguistic theory, existing Jonson criticism, and other (non-)literary studies. In doing so, Craig highlights the importance of quantification, but also of contextualizing statistical findings within existing literary and linguistic research traditions.

The second aspect worth mentioning is Craig’s successful attempt of looking at frequencies of only one word-variable, in this case ‘the’, in order to trace the connections between patterns of character-dialogue development during one play and the specific words that have a part in it. These frequencies, he argues, cannot explain all the variations in a pattern, since there are other very common words than ‘the’ whose frequencies also play a role. But by selecting and highlighting its occurrences and meticulously tracing its distribution, reflecting on the frequencies of one word does “help to show something of the underlying stylistic patterns.” Since Craig’s study is an article and thus limited in scope, he only presents a partial picture of his tracing of ‘the’, but it is evident that he does not trace its occurrence in isolation; he relates it to other marker-words in both the ‘formal’ and ‘interactive’ set and interprets its use by taking the co-occurring action and plot moment in the play into account.

As noted earlier, stylometric analysis can help the researcher find those linguistic building blocks in texts that can be expected to bear on questions of interpretation on the higher structural and narrative levels of syntactic structure, semantic meaning, narrative structure, motives and theme construction. To reach this goal, careful consideration of the available array of (multivariate) statistical tests is in order, as well as transparent reflection on and presentation of the choices made for data preparation. As in forms of non-statistical analysis of literary texts, the focus and scope of analysis can be expected to

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201 Idem: 223.
202 Idem: 222.
204 Idem: 235-236.
change during the analytical process, which can result in a range of different types of analyses performed on the same data or the application of similar kinds of analyses on different data. In the next section those issues are addressed in detail, with specific attention for the appropriateness of multivariate statistics in laying the groundwork for answering the earlier posited questions concerning the narrative experience of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*: Why do readers sense that *Pale Fire* revolves around the themes of imagination, truth and reality, and that the novel is constructed of different, and often irreconcilable, narrative plains? And why does *Lolita*’s narrator prompt processes of identification and trigger unease in readers, who also experience difficulties in unraveling the novel’s thematic knot of ethical and aesthetical concerns?

Considering the bi-directional description-discovery nature of the analyses, the following section not only discusses proposed methods and data preparation, but also includes actual statistical analyses of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*. In this way, the dynamic character of the analyses is shown most clearly and the transparency of the analytical process and accompanying choices is kept intact. The results are interpreted following standard practices in computational literary studies, and are in the first place aimed at describing the styles of both novels and discovering foregrounded and backgrounded elements. Like Craig, I adhere to the idea that meaningful quantification can suggest that certain words or other linguistic elements must almost certainly play a part in the composition and reading of these texts. In the next chapters, these elements are then placed under the microscope. By tracing their occurrences and distributions in detail and in context, the reader’s engaged narrative experience can be characterized.

As is evident from the studies by Craig (1999), Burrows (1987, 1992) and Stewart (2003) discussed earlier, quantification in itself is not meaningful, but the interpretation given to the figures makes it so. “[F]rom a literary point of view,” Burrows remarks when speaking of the language of Jane Austen’s characters, “the resemblances and differences between idiolects and the signs of change within the larger idiolects are either in keeping with, or highlight the points of controversy in the corpus of criticism of [a single author’s] novels.” So Burrows bestows a criticism based interpretation of Austen’s character idiolects upon the patterning of the linguistic data, the results of his statistical analyses. Just like Craig’s notion of the formal-interactive continuum in Jonson’s character idiolects, this is an interpretation based, in the first place, on quantified data; It is also an interpretation based on a deep understanding of the oeuvre of a certain author and accompanying literary criticism, but it is an interpretation nonetheless. In order to discern the relevance or irrelevance of certain results, that is, certain quantified patterns in the language of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*, it is necessary to engage in an indispensable feat of interpretation, relating the results to main topics and issues in Nabokov-criticism (as presented in Chapter 2). Furthermore, description of the data and results is also done against the background of cognitive poetics and the theory of immersive simulation as advanced in Chapter 1.

Interestingly, most interpretive stylometric studies (McKenna and Antonia’s being the exception, and to a lesser extent Craig’s) do not posit an engagement with a specific

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literary-linguistic theory of comprehension or interpretation. They aim to describe patterns of language in numerical terms, starting from a research question or hypothesis either based on existing criticism or on the researcher’s intuition. In both cases, contextualization of the results produced by the variously employed statistical tests is of great importance. However, part of the interpretive power of those studies is somewhat lost, due to the lack of a firm theoretical framework for interpreting the results. On the one hand, this is to be expected, since most stylometric studies, even those that purport to tackle interpretive questions, do not focus on issues of interpretation of comprehension in the first place. Mostly, those studies aim to assess the effectiveness of various types of statistical analysis for characterizing either authorial style or styles of individual texts (novels, reviews, plays etc.), or to establish which linguistic units yield the most accurate results in this respect (words, collocations, word sequences, vocabulary richness). Since the present study is not primarily concerned with testing one or more methods, but with how these methods can provide background for questions concerning the reader’s engaged narrative experience, the cognitive poetic framework immediately comes into play when describing linguistic patterns in terms of quantified data. Integrating insights from a computational, a criticism based, and a cognitive poetics perspective, helps decide which marker words and text passages are the focus of analysis in the following chapters. Those chapters provide in-depth, contextualized interpretive analysis of marker words, traced and highlighted throughout the narratives, again with some help of computational tools and methods. And by unraveling the linguistic texture of key passages in the novels, we are one step closer to explaining narrative experiences of Lolita and Pale Fire.

3 Data preparation, method, and descriptive statistical tests of Lolita and Pale Fire

3.1 Data preparation & method

3.1.1 Most Frequent Words (MFW)

Hoover has shown that, for novels as opposed to literary reviews, words are more effective than word sequences or collocations in correctly clustering texts and authors. The present study thus follows the practice of using the MFW as the data for analysis. This entails that the number of variables used in the analyses is equal to the number of word types occurring in the data. Hoover defines a word type as “a unique sequence of alpha-numeric characters not broken by a space or by any punctuation […]”. A word

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209 Hoover, D.L. (2010): 251. The final part of this definition reads “[…] except the hyphen or the apostrophe.” However, since Hoover himself treats hyphenated forms and contractions as single words and thus word types, I do not believe this an essential part of the definition.
token, then, is an instance of a word type, which is a unique form. Burrows describes a word type as “the aggregate of its many appearances as a word-token.”

The frequency counts and graphical representations produced by the statistical tests of Lolita and Pale Fire thus express the individual instances of word types (variables) as word tokens (linguistic data). It is important to note, as Burrows does, that of the number of word types found in the raw frequency tables of multivariate statistical analysis, “the top fifty, whatever they may be, make up about half of all the word-tokens in most texts written in English.”

This means that by looking within those top fifty word tokens, we are able to get a comprehensive glance into the structures and patterns of language found in the texts under consideration.

Both kinds of multivariate statistics employed in this study, Cluster Analysis (CA) and Principal Component Analysis (PCA), focus on the occurrence and distribution of highly frequent words in texts. In stylometry, it is common practice to follow up CA’s and PCA’s with distribution tests such as Student’s $t$-test, the Mann-Whitney test, and the calculation of $z$-scores. Burrows, for example, calculates $z$-scores for single pairs of Austen’s characters, in order to find out why some characters’ dialogue loaded in unexpected places on his PCA graphs. In doing so, he ‘zooms in’ on differences and resemblances between pairs of characters and between the general mean for Austen’s dialogue and each character. McKenna and Antonia perform both a $t$-test and a Mann-Whitney test to compare two groups made up of narrative sections of Ulysses that cluster together in their PCA. This allows for them to see which words have frequencies that discriminate significantly between the two groups. In the present study, however, another measure of textual difference will be used to reflect in more detail on the differences and similarities between text blocks: Craig’s Zeta.

This measure avoids some of the drawbacks of the distribution tests described above. First, $t$-testing does not allow for words with zero frequencies in one of the text blocks to enter into the analysis, while Zeta analysis does. The exclusion of zero frequency words would be a shame in terms of the possibility to discover (inadvertently) foregrounded language elements, since they can be expected to only occur in certain text blocks or even just one time in an entire novel in total. Second, the described tests all privilege high-frequency words. As Burrows notes, these words play an important role in characterizing vocabulary, but Zeta analysis brings something extra to this characterization based on frequency: It actually ignores the frequency of the word, while concentrating on how consistently it occurs instead. Highly frequent words can play a role in Zeta analysis, but do not necessarily do so; only when their pattern of occurrence

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210 Ibidem.
216 Hoover, D.L. (2010) only mentions this drawback with regard to the $t$-test, but inspection of the $z$-score analyses and Mann-Whitney tests by Burrows and McKenna & Antonia reveals a similar predilection for high frequency words in those types of distribution tests.
is consistent enough, they will show up in the analysis with a score to be reckoned with. Zeta analysis thus functions as a ‘follow-up’ tool of micro-analysis to the macro-analyses of CA and PCA, enabling the search for word use characteristic of specific passages and the localization of very local differences.

3.1.2 The effects of genre difference

Both Hoover and Burrows note the very strong effect of genre differences in authorship attribution studies. Hoover comments that genre effects are often even stronger than those of authorship, and Burrows urges us to restrict the possible effect of genre difference. The corpus in this study is controlled for genre, but also for point of view and date. Both novels are memoires, featuring first person narration, and are relatively close to each other chronologically. Of course, the notion of ‘genre’ is in itself a problematic one, for what actually defines a certain genre of writing? Instead of aiming for a comprehensive answer to that question, I transpose Hoover’s argument in this respect to my own choices for Lolita and Pale Fire as case studies, and the deletion of specific parts in both novels for analysis.

When Hoover wants to find out if the Brontë sisters actually write alike, as he expects based on their shared background, he tries to restrict genre effects by “taking the ‘histories’ - the first-person retrospective narratives that each of them embeds in her novels” as his database. As he states, this does not eliminate the difference entirely, since one sister records histories in letters and journals, while the other two present oral recounting from character to character. However, the ensuing PCA graph neatly distinguishes between all three sisters’ histories, showing the adequacy of this type of analysis when controlled for the genre effect of ‘historization’, as one might call it.

Both Lolita and Pale Fire are novels that present similar first-person retrospective narratives as their main body. In fact, both are memoirs of a sort, presented in the guise of respectively a confession and a literary commentary. Humbert’s tale is quite straightforwardly autobiographic, while Kinbote’s disguises itself as essayistic commentary on a poem, based on mainly biographical facts of the poet Shade’s life. There are numerous ‘insertions’ in both novels: Humbert includes letters by other people, quoting them from memory, and he claims to recount dialogue verbatim. Also, there are abstracts out of travel guides, encyclopedias and teen magazines to be found in his narration, which, again, he almost always states to remember correctly. Kinbote embeds his own tale of Zembla within the medium of academic commentary, but he also quotes a small amount of dialogue and, most importantly, includes abstracts of Shade’s poem in his commentary, as well as manuscript versions of passages or his own made up versions of them. However, since the overarching structure of both novels is undoubtedly

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[221] Ibidem, see Graph 10.
provided by the ‘history’ or ‘memoir’ genre, just like in the case of the Brontë sisters, PCA should be able to overlook those smaller insertions in terms of statistical relevance.

Interestingly, both memoires are also recounting for overlapping audiences. Their narrators address different audiences within their narratives, but their main target is ‘the reader’, as they both often address her using personalization. Humbert’s narrative is sometimes directed to his jurors, but the fictional novel ‘Lolita’ which is presented in the actual novel Lolita is very much reader-oriented. Similarly, Kinbote may sometimes address Sybil Shade, the poet’s wife, his university colleagues or his gardener, but in the end it is the reader of his commentary to the fictional poem ‘Pale Fire’ that is the main addressee in Pale Fire. In this way, these novels’ narrators are very much alike. As Tammi notes, when Kinbote states “‘I trust the reader has enjoyed this note’[,] [h]e could well be speaking for Humbert […]”.

In order to restrict the possible effects of genre difference as much as possible, one section of Lolita and two sections of Pale Fire are removed completely from the analyses. Lolita features a ‘Foreword’ to the novel ‘Lolita’, Humbert’s actual memoir ‘written’ by him. The ‘Foreword’ is supposedly written by John Ray Jr., a psychiatrist who claims to have been given the manuscript that is ‘Lolita’ by Humbert’s lawyer, a friend of his. Since this ‘Foreword’ is not narrated by Humbert and is no ‘insertion’ into the narrative of ‘Lolita’, it is deleted from the text of Lolita used for analysis. A similar decision was made in order to control for genre difference in the stylometric analyses of Pale Fire. This novel starts with Kinbote’s introduction to the poem ‘Pale Fire’, written by the poet John Shade according to Kinbote, which is then printed in full. Kinbote’s lengthy memoir-cum-commentary follows, making up the main body of the novel, which ends with an ‘Index’ comprising definitions of words having to do with the kingdom of Zembla. Here the genre difference is almost immediately obvious, since ‘Pale Fire’ is a poem, not a narrative, and the same goes for the ‘Index’. Deleting these three passages from the corpus enables comparing ‘like with like’ as much as possible, providing the statistical tests with more power and validity.

### 3.1.3 Function words, homographs and hyphenated forms

It is not a straightforward decision whether or not to disambiguate function words and homographs for statistical testing. Hoover states that in his own work on authorship attribution, “disambiguating function words sometimes increases and sometimes decreases the accuracy of analyses”, while also referring to Baayen et al. (1996) who conclude that disambiguation improves the accuracy of authorship attribution in general. Other studies do not even explicitly address the issue of disambiguation. McKenna and Antonia only state that they prepared the text of Ulysses for their computer programs in accordance with “protocols”, which include discrimination of homographs. Stewart does not mention it at all, but a look at one of his frequency tables shows no

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disambiguation of function words or homographs. As there is no consensus on the practice of disambiguation, the texts under consideration in this study provide guidance in this respect.

*Lolita* and *Pale Fire*’s texts have not been subject to a disambiguation of function words, or homographs, mainly because of the size of the texts. *Lolita* contains a total of 111,192 word tokens, *Pale Fire* adds up to 68,062. Since this amount of words is quite small compared to the corpora used in traditional authorship attribution studies, containing numerous novels of different authors, discrimination of homographs would decrease the number of word tokens for certain word types, thereby decreasing the power of the statistical tests. Burrows states that not separating homographic forms might blur some nice distinctions. This is a relevant point, but the possible blurring of distinctions will be countered in the next chapters when some of the function words are analyzed in more detail.

The separation of hyphenated forms and contractions is another matter that needs to be addressed. Hoover mentions that treating hyphenated forms as single words seems the most straightforward choice, “though in some analyses one might well want to analyse the elements of such words separately.” In his own study of Dickens, Collins, Besant and Barr he leaves the contractions as they are because “in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries […], contracted forms were increasing in frequency, so that they seem likely to be stylistically meaningful.” I let hyphenated forms and contractions stand as they are in *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* as well, but for a different reason: They almost exclusively occur in the dialogue of both novels and, as noted earlier, the amount of dialogue is negligible in terms of quantification. The constant use of non-hyphenated forms in the narration prevents that, as Burrows mentions might happen, “the frequencies for ‘not’, for the personal pronouns, and for some auxiliary verbs are distorted” in the analyses.

### 3.1.4 Personal pronouns and culling

It is standard practice in stylometric studies on authorship attribution to delete personal pronouns and remove those word types from the analyses for which one text or text-block provides more than 80% of the occurrences. However, most of the more interpretive-driven quantitative studies on style do include personal pronouns in their analyses. Stewart does not discuss the issue of pronoun deletion at all when looking at *Wieland* and *Carwin*’s narrators, but several personal pronouns can be found in a frequency table accompanying a PCA graph. McKenna and Antonia, quite surprisingly, do not mention personal pronouns in any way when discussing the “protocols” they follow in

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229 For studies in which this is done or proposed, see for example Hoover, D.L. (2002, 2003b, 2010); Binongo, J.N.G. and Smith, M.W.A. (1999); Burrows, J.F. (1992).
preparing the text of *Ulysses*. They also do not comment on culling whatsoever, so presumably this has not been done for their PCA analysis, but the ensuing *t*-tests and Mann-Whitney tests automatically exclude those words with a frequency of zero in one of the text-blocks. Craig also does not comment on retaining personal pronouns in his analysis. They do play an important part in his analysis, as is evident from his discussion of the PCA’s plotted in his study (Figures 1 to 4), which puts much focus on personal pronouns. The issue of culling is not given any mention in this study, as is the case in Burrows’ groundbreaking study into Austen’s character dialogue. However, Burrows actually takes personal pronouns as the starting point for his entire study. He comments on the relevance of personal pronouns for his project of literary-statistical analysis as follows: “They make an appropriate point of departure because they occur infrequently enough to be approached in something akin to the familiar idiom of literary analysis, yet frequently enough to illustrate some rudimentary form of statistical analysis.”

These stylometric studies focusing on comprehension and interpretation paint an implicit picture of standard practice regarding deletion of personal pronouns and culling: When questions of interpretation are at stake, driven by and purporting to contribute to, existing critical discussion of literary texts, personal pronouns and highly frequent words in a single text-block are considered important word types, and are not to be excluded from the analysis. Following this observation, preparation of the texts of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* does not include deletion of pronouns or any form of culling. This allows for better locating differences in subject matter and theme between text-blocks, as well as shifts in focalization and narrative perspective.

### 3.1.5 Text-blocks and standardization

Since the present study is concerned with describing stylistic variation within and between two novels, the complete texts have been broken up into smaller units for analysis. In their insightful study on the application of PCA to stylometry, Binongo and Smith conclude that a suitable value of text-block size will normally fall between 3000 and 4000 words. Trial and error splitting of *Lolita*’s and *Pale Fire*’s texts resulted in an optimal text-block size of 3500 word tokens, resulting in 31 text blocks for *Lolita* and 19 text-blocks for *Pale Fire*. This size allows for an amount of word-token residue in each novel’s final text-block that is also of a suitable size for statistical analysis: For the performed CA and PCA this means that *Lolita*’s final text-block is made up of 5889 words, while *Pale Fire*’s contains 4658.

As Burrows comments, since the text-blocks result in unequal word-token residue, standardization is in order for them to be compared meaningfully.

Standardization is also necessary in order to compare data for word-types, and not for

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text-blocks. Hoover finds that for analysis with frequent words as well as frequent sequences, standardized variables “almost invariably produce more accurate results than analyses based on variables that are not standardized.” Standardization of the data was achieved by running the ‘Stylo’ package on R. It allows for the production of a MFW list for the entire corpus, containing words with standardized frequencies from the desired frequency ranges for analysis. In contrast to PCA and CA, Zeta analysis of the kind proposed here (see section 3.2.2 below) does not require standardization; raw and standardized frequencies give the same results.

3.2 Statistical analysis of Lolita and Pale Fire

The following stylometric analyses of Lolita and Pale Fire are presented in the order in which they were performed whenever possible, since for the most part the application of a specific type of analysis follows from the results obtained from a previous (different or similar type of) analysis. This way of presenting the statistical procedures, the results they provide us with, and the concomitant interpretation of those results mirrors the analytical and research process as closely as possible. The bi-directional analytical set-up of discovery and description allows for both a top-down and bottom-up interpretation of the results against the background of critical literary discussion; it also accounts for the zooming in on specific passages and word-types, and the consequently zooming back out to contextualize the statistical findings. Furthermore, it upholds the notions of reliability and repeatability of the presented analyses, and follows Hoover’s important statement that “[t]he greater the extent to which one or more sections of a text or one or more texts group together and separate clearly from other sections or texts over a range of analyses, the more likely that further analysis by other methods will reveal a significant stylistic difference.” (Hoover, 2003b: 356)

3.2.1 Principal Components Analysis & Cluster Analysis of MFW

PCA and CA both provide the opportunity to explore the styles of Lolita and Pale Fire in more detail, starting with an overarching view of the novels’ linguistic texture. They allow for comparisons between the novels and for intra-textual comparisons. With regard to PCA, we can transpose Burrows’ thoughts on comparing characters onto the comparison between narrators: PCA graphs of word types allow for finding resemblances and differences between narrators in a novel “or draw comparisons and contrasts between [narrators] from different novels,” as well as interconnections of various coefficients. In this sense, the present study’s use of PCA is also reminiscent of Stewart’s application of the technique, in order to determine whether the different narrators in two novels by the

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236 Idem: 103 (Appendix).
same author can be said to have distinct narrative voices. CA is similar to PCA, in the sense that both techniques are employed in order to discover which (parts of) texts are stylistically similar or different, based on either word counts or counts of word sequences. “Cluster analysis,” comments Hoover, “effectively measures the similarity and difference of authors, texts, or parts of texts by taking into account large numbers of features simultaneously, emphasizing and facilitating the comparisons on which style so intimately depends.” Since the present study deals mainly with comparison of text-blocks, those are referenced as the standard analytical units in the remainder of this chapter.

Although PCA and CA share characteristics, mainly qua goals, they rely on different underlying statistical calculations. Also, their graphic output is different: CA yields a dendogram in the form of bar graphs, in which text-blocks are automatically clustered together, while PCA allows for visual representations of the spread of variables (word-types) plotted against the background of text-parts, in what is termed a scatterplot. PCA graphs can also be said to require a greater feat of interpretation on the researcher’s part, since data is not simply clustered together, as in CA. Hoover comments that PCA is often more difficult to interpret than CA, but that “PCA plots of the texts are often very useful in spite of the difficulty of interpretation because they provide more information than cluster analyses [...].” In the spirit of reliability, both PCA’s and CA’s of Lolita and Pale Fire are performed and presented, in order to gain a perspective on their styles as complete as possible.

For all PCA’s and CA’s presented here, using MFW as data, multiple analyses were carried out based on the 50 to 800 MFW, with an increment of 50. The graphs shown are representative of the majority of analyses; when one or more of the analyses yield an observably different spread of words/text-blocks, which results in different clustering or different grouping together of words/text-blocks, this is mentioned. All analyses are performed using Classic Delta as a measure of difference, recommended by Rybicki et al. as the usual choice for analyses of texts in English. This measure relies on z-scores, so it uses standardized word frequencies, and is dependent on the number of text-blocks analyzed and on a balance between these text-blocks. As explained in section 3.1.5, such a balance has been aimed for by using same-sized text-blocks; and standardization of the data is performed to account for the residual amount of word-tokens in both novels’ final text-blocks.

245 Classic Delta was first introduced by J.F. Burrows in Burrows (2002). Rybicki et al. (2014) explain its functioning as follows: “Mathematically speaking (Argamon, 2008), it is simply Manhattan distance applied to normalized (z-scored) word frequencies.” 14.
A first overall comparison between the two novels was performed using PCA. Figure 3.1 shows the results of a PCA using the covariance matrix. This figure actually shows two different graphs plotted against each other: One is the word-plot based on the covariance matrix, the word-list with standardized frequencies; the other shows the output of a statistical step in which the covariance matrix “is multiplied through the original table of standardized frequencies for each text”, or in this case each text-block. We can then read the graph as follows: The plotting of the text-blocks of the two novels shows that their styles differ from each other quite clearly, since *Lolita*’s blocks cluster to the left of

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247 All PCA’s presented in this study are based on the covariance matrix, not the correlation matrix. This choice was made after all analyses had been carried out using both the covariance and the correlation matrix. Resulting graphs showed similar distributions of the data, but in the covariance-based graphs the first two principal components not only account for more of the variation in the data, the words and text-blocks also separate and cluster more clearly. Note: It is unclear whether Stewart, L.L. (2003) performs PCA based on the correlation or covariance matrix; Craig, H. (1999) uses the correlation matrix without further comment; the same goes for McKenna, C.W.F. & Antonia, A. (2001).

The PCA based on the 50 MFW presents a similar clustering and spread of words and text-blocks, only loading on different coordinates in the graph. The analyses using the 100 to 800 MFW consequently present almost identical graphs. Minor differences occur in most PCA’s presented in this study, but since the positions of clusters and word-/text-block-spread on the scatterplot in itself is important, not the specific coordinates attached to it, consistent clustering and spread is the most important factor for interpretation of the graphs.

248 As the process is explained in Borrows, J.F. (1992): 92-93.
the graph, while *Pale Fire*’s group together on the right. They are separated only on the horizontal axis, representing the first principal component (PC1). The fact that *Lolita*’s cluster ranges more widely on the vertical axis than *Pale Fire*’s, with this axis representing the second principal component (PC2), implies that Nabokov’s earlier novel is more diverse in its use of word-types. The text-block-plot is a product of the word-plot, and thus the entries toward the right of the graph reflect comparatively high frequencies of words in *Pale Fire*, while the same goes for the entries toward the left for *Lolita*. It also means that the reverse is the case: Entries toward the left of the graph reflect comparatively low frequencies for *Pale Fire*, and those to the right for *Lolita*.

Concretely, this results in the observation that ‘the’ is the most characteristic *Pale Fire* word, followed by ‘of’, ‘his’, ‘he’, ‘in’ and ‘him’. *Lolita* is characterized first of all by ‘I’ and ‘her’, ‘she’, ‘my’, ‘me’, ‘was’, ‘you’ and ‘and’. This pattern can be interpreted as showing that in text-blocks where the first set of words tend to be frequent, the second set of words are not, and the other way around. As Craig points out, “[h]igh frequencies of the definite article indicate a concentration of nouns, characteristic in turn of description or narration [...] [whereas] [a]nd suggests longer chains of nouns and clauses, and thus exposition.” In addition, words like ‘I’, ‘my’, ‘me’ and ‘you’ point to “personal interaction”, “reflexiveness” and possibly dialogue. This is interesting in the respect that, while both novels are memoirs explicitly directed at readers, real and imagined, *Lolita* appears to have, in the broad terms sketched in this PCA graph, more of a dialogue set-up than *Pale Fire*: The ‘I’ in the word-plot is Humbert the narrator and this ‘I’ is the word farthest removed from the *Pale Fire*-side of the plot. ‘The’, as a *Pale Fire*-word, likely indicating a high amount of description and narration, is conversely the farthest removed from the *Lolita*-side. Combined with the abundance of personal pronouns referring to a male third person, this overall view of *Pale Fire*’s linguistic texture hints in the direction of outward description of things and people, while *Lolita*’s appears to be more inward-focused, more reflexive, more concerned with the inner life of the main narrator.

This interpretation of the PCA graph can be linked to the earlier critical discussion of the novels, and warrants that the distribution, frequency and, above all, context of the words mentioned are central to more detailed analysis in the following chapters. Brunyé et al. (2009) have shown that when people read simple sentences with the same propositional content of someone doing something to an object, the perspective taken by the reader depends on whether a 1st, 2nd or 3rd person pronoun functions as subject. Sentences with ‘I’ and ‘you’ as subject trigger an internal perspective, while ‘he’-sentences prompt external perspective taking. In subsequent tests featuring longer and more detailed descriptions of the referent, the ‘he’-sentences were still interpreted as containing external perspective cues. While Brunyé et al. speak of perspective, what

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249 Idem: 93.
250 Ibidem.
251 Ibidem.
252 Following the interpretation of PCA graphs Craig presents in Craig, H. (1999).
254 Ibidem.
is actually measured in these experiments is how pronoun forms can trigger different types of focalization. After all, they measure if readers perceive the event being described through the eyes of a bystander or through those of the active agent, so their question is: ‘Who perceives?’ From a cognitive poetic standpoint, such perspective-taking is seen in the light of the reader’s consciousness projection, triggered or hindered by pronominal usage.

This empirical research is important in light of the uneasy identification with Humbert that readers report to feel when reading Lolita, as well as their finding Kinbote just a bit of a weird person. Humbert’s self-reflexiveness as a firm established ‘I’, and consequently the reader’s self-reflexiveness, following the theory of immersive simulation presented in Chapter 1, can very well be expected to play a role in this respect, as can Kinbote’s consequent referring to ‘he’, ‘his’, etc. from an outside position when referring to his earlier self or his other personas. ‘she’ is a Lolita-pronoun, which is not surprising, considering Humbert’s many descriptions of his nymphet. Regarding the second person pronoun ‘you’ (loading on the Lolita-side, but near to the Pale Fire-side), Helen de Hoop and Lotte Hogeweg observe that both generic and deictic use of ‘you’, in everyday communication as well as the literary medium, trigger processes of self-referencing in readers.255 Elaborating on Wechsler’s theory of self-ascription and empirical research by de Hoop and Tarenskeen they investigate the use of ‘you’ in a Dutch novel256, arguing that the process of self-ascribing ‘you’ takes place by the reader, even when the second person pronoun gets a generic reading, and that this accounts for the arousal of empathy or at least identification.257 This “identification effect of second person pronouns”258, as they aptly call it, is essential to explaining the reading experiences of Lolita and Pale Fire. Both the generic and deictic uses of ‘you’ in the novels are analyzed in the following chapters. Related words of address are also included in the analyses, such as when Humbert addresses ‘my reader’, or Kinbote ‘my poet’s reader’. The contextualized use of personal pronouns and different forms of personalization is thus interpreted comparatively in order to explain processes of identification and distancing that readers experience during their engaged narrative experiences of those novels.

In addition to the broader right-left division showing words that are highly (un)characteristic for both novels in general, the specific location of the text-blocks against which they are plotted should also be taken into account. It is interesting to note that text-blocks PF_6, PF_7 and PF_8 form ‘satellites’ to the word ‘the’ in the plot. This indicates a relatively high density of description and definiteness in these combined text-blocks, demanding in-depth analysis. It is also interesting to note the position of PF_19 in this respect. This is the text-block containing the final words of Kinbote’s commentary and it is closer than any other Pale Fire-section to the Lolita-cluster. It also lies at the bottom of the Pale Fire-cluster, again indicating a linguistic texture differing from this

256 Dit is van mij (2009) [This is mine - translation PW] by Saskia de Coster.
258 Ibidem.
novel’ other text-blocks. Its different linguistic texture becomes even more evident when CA’s of Lolita and Pale Fire are performed.

According to Hoover, CA “works in such a way that the further to the [right] that two texts or groups of texts join into one cluster, the more similar they are in terms of the frequencies of all [specific amount - PW] of the words considered simultaneously.” For CA’s based on the 200, 250, 550, 600, 700, 750 and 800 MFW, PF_19 clusters together with Lolita rather than Pale Fire. For the three analyses with the highest number of MFW used, it actually clusters ‘on top’ of the Lolita-pile of dendograms. Figure 3.2 shows the result of such a CA based on the 700 MFW. This means that PF_19 has a very different stylistic footprint than the other Pale Fire text-blocks and clusters. Maybe even more remarkably, every time PF_19 finds itself in Lolita-company it forms a cluster with L_31, Lolita’s final passage. Conversely, L_31 clusters incorrectly one time (450 MFW) within the Pale Fire-conglomerate. Looking back at Figure 1, the PCA also clearly shows L_31’s peculiar status: It diverges from the main Lolita-cluster, in the form of an outlier near to the horizontal axis, and is virtually opposed to L_6 and L_4 at the graph’s upper limits.

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260 In total, this leaves us with correct clustering per novel for half of the CA’s performed. However, as Hoover notes: “Recent work (Hoover 2001, 2004b, 2007) has shown that, however reasonable the assumption that the most frequent words are the most appropriate words to use for authorship attribution, in practice, increasing the size of the word list to include all of the 600 to 1200 of the most frequent words, regardless of type, almost invariably increases the accuracy of an analysis of novel-sized texts.” (Hoover, D.L. 2010: 253-254) The repeated incorrect clustering of PF_19 when the 600, 700, 750 and 800 MFW are used, which all fall in Hoover’s ‘new’ delineation of MFW, can thus be seen as pointing towards an existing difference in linguistic texture between PF_19 and the other Pale Fire text-blocks, and to its actual similarity to L_31.
The specific and consistent incorrect or peculiar clustering of the endings in the performed analyses is interesting for a number of reasons. First, literary criticism in general ascribes much interpretive power to the endings of novels: Readers are often inclined to reread an ending, in order to truly grasp its meaning and importance. A second point is related to this: Endings more often than not have the function of providing closure, of closing the interpretive circle, but also giving readers some food for
thought.  

How remarkable is it, then, that precisely those highly semantically laden passages of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*, their endings, are stylistically alike? This asks for a deeper understanding of their similarities, which can be achieved by performing contrastive Zeta analyses between PF_19 and the rest of that novel, as well as for L_31 and the remaining text-blocks of *Lolita*. The results of these analyses are shown and explained in section 3.2.2.

The PCA in Figure 3.1 shows the results based on comparing MFW-use in *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*, where those novels are compared to each other. PCA can also provide some starting points in order to get a better grip on the intra-textual differences within the individual novels. Figure 3.3 presents the results of a PCA of the 31 text blocks of *Lolita*, Figure 3.4 those of a PCA of *Pale Fire*’s 19 text-blocks. The word-plot and text-block spread of *Lolita* provide much food for thought. First, L_31 is still an outlier, but this time L_6, L_16 and even L_29 share that special status. Second, L_6 and L_29 overlay strongly with two of the *Lolita*-key words, as observed in Figure 3.1: L_6 with ‘her’, L_29 with ‘I’. L_16 and L_31 do not load onto words one-on-one, but L_16’s position on the extreme left and north of the graph indicates its diametrical opposition, stylistically speaking, to L_31 (on the extreme right, upper-hand corner), L_29 (extreme right) and L_6 (most southern position in the graph). Contrastive Zeta-analysis will shed further light on the reasons for this distribution in the next section.

At this point in the analysis, returning to *Lolita*-criticism adds an extra dimension to the observations made based on Figures 3.1 and 3.2: L_6, L_29 and L_31 feature some of the novels most ‘notorious’ passages, in which Humbert performs an act or describes something (or both) that makes critics feel uncomfortable. They consistently describe these passages as prompting ambiguous feelings towards and interpretations of the narrative. First, L_6 features the description of Humbert’s first real sexual encounter with Lolita. This is the infamous scene in which Humbert describes not only his own pleasure in caressing his stepdaughter, but also sketches a dubious image of Lolita as a little seductress, enjoying Humbert’s sexual attentions. This passage lays bare an issue that no critic of *Lolita* has yet resolved: Does Humbert seduce Lolita, or does she seduce him? Second, L_29 features a passage which many critics believe to contain one of the moments in the novel when Lolita’s pain might just actually be getting through to Humbert. In this passage Humbert remembers seeing Lolita “from the bathroom through a chance combination of mirror aslant and door ajar”, discerning something like a look of “helplessness” on her face, a look he is unable to really describe (deeming it also to be one of “rather comfortable inanity”). Has Humbert really noticed Lolita’s pain, critics continually ask; does he try to lessen it through a description of his memory; or, even worse, has he observed it and then gone on to blatantly ignore it? Third, L_31 contains what is often called Humbert’s epiphany, when he relates to his readers that he realizes, and has done so for some time, that he has stolen Lolita’s childhood. While standing at

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261 As put forward in, amongst others, Burke, M. (2011), in which he provides a cognitive poetics’ based analysis and interpretation of the ending of *The Great Gatsby*.

262 PCA’s based on the 50, 100 and 150 MFW for *Lolita* yield loadings on different coordinates, but similar word-plots and spread of text-blocks. The plots of *Pale Fire* are similar throughout the entire range of analyses.

the edge of a highway he has been speeding along to escape the police, on his trail for murdering Quilty, he remembers hearing the sound of children at play rising up from a valley and confesses remorse for his deeds. L_31 also contains the final words of Humbert’s statement, in which he wishes Lolita a happy and healthy life, confesses his knowledge of how much he hurt her all those years ago, and, importantly, how much he has always loved her and always will. This passage continues to dazzle critics: Is Humbert truly remorseful or is he merely posturing to get into good grace with his readers and jurors?

To find such generally deemed important passages of *Lolita* in such remarkable positions in the PCA graphs, brings to mind Burrows’ earlier quoted observation that “[a] graph or a table may be a poor substitute for a well-informed analysis of detail”, but that “it has its virtues to the extent that it can clarify things that we dimly sense in the novel.” Contrastive Zeta analysis of these passages can thus be linked to existing interpretations of and reactions to *Lolita*, and jointly they lead to avenues of further linguistic inquiry in the following chapters. This does not mean that computational or cognitive poetic analysis will ‘solve’ critics’ ambiguous interpretations of and feelings towards these passages, but it can characterize the stylistic basis of critics’ engaged narrative experiences of these passages and the general vibe the book exudes as a whole. Text-block L_16, which is also a distinctive outlier in Figure 3.2, does not contain passages featuring prominently in *Lolita*-criticism. Still, it stands out stylistically speaking. In this case, the PCA graph functions as a tool of discovery, or, in Burrows words: “[I]t draws attention to things that we had not sensed, it can take us back to the novel with a fresh awareness of its subtleties.” The follow up Zeta analysis can then function as a searchlight to find out in what respects L_16 is stylistically different from the rest of the novel, and thus lead to further paths of analysis.

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265 Ibidem.
Another interesting point for further, in-depth analysis, is the plotting of ‘him’, ‘his’ and ‘he’ not far from ‘I’ and ‘you’. Although overall comparison between Lolita and Pale Fire presented ‘I’ and ‘you’ as Lolita-words and the third person male pronouns as Pale Fire-words, their positions in Figure 3.3 show that, when Lolita is analyzed intra-textually, this second set of pronouns’ relative frequency can be said to be at least somewhere in the vicinity of ‘you’, and slightly less in that of ‘I’. What makes this plotting even more interesting, is the fact that ‘we’ loads comparatively close as well, while ‘she’ and ‘her’ occupy a position far removed from the first, and other second and third person pronouns. A tentative hypothesis that warrants looking into in the next chapters is that Humbert, presumably the main referent of ‘he’ etcetera, since Humbert the narrator refers to Humbert the experiencer either as ‘I’ or ‘he’, is working his rhetorical magic to include ‘you’ (the reader) and ‘we’ (either Humbert and the reader or Humbert and Lolita) into his narrative and inner world using dialogue techniques or inclusive constructions. Zeta analysis (see section 3.2.2 below) strengthens this hypothesis and provides more linguistic starting points to analyze this process of inclusion in more detail.

![Figure 3.3](image)

Principal Components Analysis of all text-blocks of Lolita based on the 200 MFW (covariance matrix)
An intra-textual PCA of *Pale Fire* yields a quite different picture. As can be seen in Figure 3.4, *Pale Fire* really is more consistent in terms of style than *Lolita*: The spread of its words and text-blocks is much more condensed. However, there are some clear text-block outliers that require more detailed analysis, as well as some unexpectedly loaded word-types. As in Figure 3.1, text-blocks PF_6,7 and 8 load comparatively close and around the variable ‘the’. They can thus be considered consistent outliers in both inter- and intra-textual comparison. A ‘new’ outlier in Figure 3.4, and the most obvious one, is PF_13. On the one hand, this is quite surprising, since the CA of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* clusters PF_13 neatly together with PF_14 and 15; on the other, PF_13 is the uppermost *Pale Fire* text-block plotted in Figure 3.1, which points to its somewhat more diverse nature compared to the other *Pale Fire* text-blocks. Its position in Figure 3.3, however, is much more extreme than that in Figure 3.1. There are no first clues as to how PF_13 might stylistically diverge from the other text-blocks in the analyses, since there are no words plotted in its vicinity; it lies somewhat to the right of the graph, and so can be expected to show more linguistic similarities with the words plotter higher up on that side, but Zeta analysis is needed to get a grip on its linguistic texture.

Regarding the word-plot, the first thing to notice are the almost overlaying coordinates of ‘I’ and PF_19, the text-block containing the novel’s ending. This goes some way to explain the position of PF_19 in Figure 3.1, as the closest *Pale Fire* text-block to the *Lolita*-cluster. Bearing in mind the self-referential and perspective-taking inducing effects the first person pronoun can have, this concomitant word and text-block plotting prompts further analysis of this passage, as well as tracing of this specific pronoun throughout the novel. Interestingly, PF_19 and ‘I’ also lie across the graph from ‘the’ and its cluster of text-blocks, which again plays into the need for further analysis of the dialogue versus description/narration distinction. Another interesting observation to be made from Figure 3.4 is the fact that although ‘me’ and ‘my’ cluster nicely together near ‘I’, ‘he’ is actually not paired with ‘his’ or ‘him’, key *Pale Fire* words according to Figure 3.1, but is clustered with ‘she’ and ‘her’. ‘She’ and ‘her’ are unexpected words to pop up in this graph, since in the overall PCA of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* these two pronouns are the second and third furthest removed from the *Pale Fire*-cluster. In addition, they are plotted almost ‘against’ PF_18, another text-block that needs looking into in some more detail.
3.2.2 Zeta analysis

Based on the PCA’s and CA’s in the previous section, the following text-blocks have been selected for further stylistic exploration, based on their remarkable position in one or more of the graphs, and in some cases also their position near to or coinciding with specific words: In the case of Lolita, Zeta analysis is performed comparing L_6, L_16, L_29 and L_31 with the remaining text-blocks of that novel; in Pale Fire’s case, a similar exercise is carried out based on comparing PF_13, PF_18 and PF_19 with the remaining text-blocks, as well as comparing the cluster PF_6,7,8 with the remainder of the novel.

Zeta analysis is used in this study to extend our understanding of Lolita and Pale Fire’s styles beyond the MFW of the text-blocks.\textsuperscript{266} As Hoover explains, Zeta analysis is especially interesting as a method for locating characteristic vocabulary, which in the

\textsuperscript{266} See section 3.1.1, pp.54-56, for an explanation of the benefits of Zeta analysis compared to other statistical procedures measuring local stylistic differences, such as Student’s $t$-test and the Mann-Whitney test.
present case means locating marker words that are used consistently in one text-block, while used much less consistently or not at all in the text-blocks for comparison. The specific form of Zeta analysis used here has also been termed CraigZeta by Hoover, since it is an alternative, developed by Hugh Craig, to the initial version of Zeta created by John Burrows. Craig’s measure of Zeta (which will be referred to simply as ‘Zeta’ in the remainder of this chapter) simultaneously creates sets of marker words and anti-marker words, so that stylistic differences between text-blocks are easy to spot. As noted, Zeta does not use frequencies as basis for the analysis, but takes into account how consistently words occur. The figures presented below thus include words already encountered in the PCA’s and CA’s, which are mainly personal pronouns and function words, but they also show the consistency of content words. In this way, Zeta analysis not only allows for a rendering of stylistic differences based on distinctive words, but it actually sets out some pathways for more detailed follow-up analysis, revolving around the recurring topics in Lolita- and Pale Fire-criticism: identity; imagination (including truth-fiction-reality); mnemonics (remembering); narrative perspective/narrators (including distance-identification); morality; and character description.

As Hoover states, it may not seem very surprising that morphological and semantic families exist among authors’ characteristic words, but “it is unlikely that the number or extent of such patterns would be discovered without a computational analysis.” Moreover, he states that Zeta analysis provides “access to patterns too subtle, extensive and numerous to be readily accessible to traditional stylistic analysis.”

Reflecting on the results from the multivariate analyses in the previous section and those of the follow up Zeta analyses allows for locating different subtle and consistent stylistic patterns, as well as related instances and patterns of back- and foregrounding, which are analyzed from a cognitive poetic standpoint in Chapters 4 and 5.

All outputs of the performed Zeta analyses presented here take the form of a set of marker words and anti-marker words for specific (sets of) text-blocks compared with all other text-blocks of Lolita or Pale Fire. For every comparison, each text is sliced into samples with a word-size of, subsequently, 50, 100 and 150, in order to check for consistency. A text-slice overlap of zero is opted for in every case, meaning that, in the case of samples containing 100 words, the first sample contains words 1 to 100, the second sample 101 to 200, etcetera. In order to take hapax legomena into account, the rare occurrence threshold is set to zero. As Eder suggests, the filter threshold, reminiscent of the value p, a common degree of statistical significance, is set to 0.1. If the ‘craig.zeta’ method is selected, a filter threshold of 0.1 filters out words of weak discrimination strength. By setting the filter threshold to 0.1, words with relatively high discrimination strength will appear in the Zeta output. In this way, the Zeta analyses will offer a better understanding of how the language of certain text-blocks actually differs from that of others. They thus aid in discovering which linguistic markers need to

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269 Idem: 271.
270 Zeta analysis is performed running the library Stylo() on R, using the function oppose().
be analyzed in more detail in order to characterize readers’ engaged narrative experiences of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*.

Figures 3.5 to 3.8 show the graphical output of marker and anti-marker words for the text-blocks L_6, L_16, L_29 and L_31, all individually set off against all other text-blocks, taken together, in *Lolita*. Figure 3.5 shows the words that are ‘Preferred’ in all text-blocks as a whole when compared with L_6, constituting its set of marker words. The words ‘Avoided’ in the larger conglomerate of text-blocks, its anti-marker words, are, vice versa, the marker words of L_6. The lower the rank-number, the more discriminative a specific word is as (anti-)marker word.

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**Figure 3.5 Zeta analysis of Lolita, L_6 contrasted with remainder of novel**

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272 All four figures are based on Zeta analysis with sample sizes of 100 words. In analyses based on 50 or 150 words, the order is sometimes different. Since these analyses are performed on relatively small language corpora, such differences in rank are to be expected. The most important thing to note, however, is that these marker and anti-marker words re-occur throughout Zeta analyses based on different word-size samples and thus indicate a real stylistic difference between text-blocks.
As expected from looking at Lolita’s PCA graph (Figure 3.3), part of the opposition between L_6 and the rest of the novel is based on the ‘her’, ‘she’ - ‘he’, ‘his’-distinction. In addition to a word’s rank, the placement of a word on the horizontal Score-axis also needs to be taken into account. Words with a relatively high negative score on the ‘Avoided’ side indicate strong L_6 marker words, while those with a relatively high positive score on the ‘Preferred’ side indicate strong marker words for the rest of the novel.

The rank and score of ‘my’ as a marker word for L_6 immediately jump out in this graphical rendering of the performed analysis. L_6 is highly focused on female characters, Lolita and her mother (‘haze’, ‘she’, ‘her’, ‘carmen’, ‘mrs’, ‘lo’, ‘mother’), but the ‘my’ in this passage refers to Humbert and is the highest scoring personal pronoun in the Zeta analysis. We can hypothesize that critics’ feelings of unease when reading this passage of seduction has something to do with ‘my’ occurring consistently in this text-block, as a pronoun triggering Humbert’s focalization and the reader’s consciousness projection into his field of vision. Readers of this passage then view the scene as playing out through Humbert’s eyes, which could account for unwanted processes of identification with Humbert and the consequent perceiving of Lolita as the little temptress Humbert describes her to be, while at the same time recognizing that she is a child being abused.

As a marker word of the rest of Lolita, ‘would’ is interesting to note, since it is the only verb functioning as marker word in the right side of the graph. The other words are personal pronouns, function words and numerals. As was argued in Chapter 1, modality can play an important part in the processes of perspective-taking and immersive simulation. As an auxiliary modal verb, ‘would’ has the ability to create subworlds in the Storyworld and to cause readers’ perspectives to immerse deeper into the Storyworld. In the same vein, ‘had’ and ‘been’ could be of importance for the reading experience, since they not only form the past tense construction ‘had been’, but can also be part of modalizing ones, such as ‘could have been’.

Figure 3.6 shows the results of Zeta analysis comparing L_29 and the rest of Lolita. Interestingly, the PCA of Lolita shows almost overlapping plotting of ‘I’ and L_29, but that pronoun does not appear to have any discriminative strength according to the performed Zeta analysis, in which consistency of use rather than numerical pervasiveness is the key criterion. In addition, Figure 3.6 places ‘he’ on the L_29 side of marker words, while ‘his’ is found on its anti-marker side. It might be hypothesized that L_29’s distinctiveness has something to do with a fair amount of dialogue (either Direct Speech or Indirect Speech in that passage, or maybe even the occurrence of instances of Free Indirect Discourse), since ‘he’, ‘said’ and ‘you’ rate so high. The words ‘no’, ‘mean’, ‘dick’ and ‘well’ echo Lolita’s more colloquial use of the American-English language, which could mean that her voice is heard in this passage, or rather is voiced through Humbert’s, more than in other passages in the novel. This is an interesting point of inquiry pursued in Chapter 4, especially if we take into account critics’ estimation of this passage as one in which Humbert remembers either seeing and acknowledging or seeing

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273 See the earlier discussion of work by Brunyé et al. regarding this issue in Chapter 1, section 2.2.4, pp.23-32.
and ignoring Lolita’s pain. By analyzing the occurrence of specific instances of Direct Speech, Indirect Speech and Free Indirect Discourse, as well as the particular pronominal texture of this text-part, the issue of Lolita getting a voice here - or at least the reader getting a glimpse into her mind - can be assessed in more detail.

Figure 3.6 Zeta analysis of Lolita, L_29 contrasted with remainder of novel
In Figure 3.7, the ending of *Lolita*, L$_{31}$, is compared with all previous text-blocks of the novel. This visual representation of (un)characteristic words is very telling, in that the left side of the graph features ‘he’, ‘him’ and ‘his’ as most characteristic Zeta words, accompanied by the pronoun ‘you’ and the reflexive ‘myself’. Since L$_{31}$ contains both Humbert’s dubious epiphany of realizing Lolita’s hurt and his, again, dubious confession of guilt (to his readers and jurors) and true love for Lolita (to her and to his readers and jurors), this insistent use of pronouns referring to a male party is unexpected. However, L$_{31}$ also includes most of the passage where Humbert murders Quilty (another marker word), thus ‘he’ and the like can be expected to occur quite consistently; still, it is interesting to note that no trigger words for dialogue are marker words, since this passage contains the densest amount of dialogue in *Lolita*; only ‘you’ points somewhat in this direction. Interestingly, like in the Zeta analysis of L$_{6}$, we see the modal verb ‘would’ popping up as a marker word for the rest of the novel.

The final contrastive analysis for *Lolita*, comparing L$_{16}$ with the rest of the novel, cannot be interpreted against a critical background like that of the previous text-blocks.
Figure 3.8 nevertheless provides a wealth of information on its linguistic texture, compared to the rest of *Lolita*. Since L_16 does not plot near to distinctive words in the intra-textual PCA graph of the novel, the results of the Zeta analysis are that much more surprising. The marker words of L_16 are mostly content words that hint at description of scenery ('trees', 'blue', 'town', 'green') and travel ('tour', 'town', 'along', 'street'). *Lolita* is often said to be an ode, either a comic or a serious one, to the American landscape; L_16 is a text-block containing much descriptive text on Humbert and Lolita’s travels through the United States. However, of more interpretive interest in this context is the fact that ‘lo’, ‘Lolita’ abbreviated, is the highest ranking and scoring marker word of this passage. Such an embedding of ‘lo’ in the description of scenery and travel could indicate that she is just another one of the things Humbert observes, describes, and even ‘travels’ in a figurative sense: She is one of his nymphets on his quest to find the ultimate nymphet out of space and time, as well as something Humbert very much enjoys to look at, like he enjoys looking at a painting he likes or scrutinizing a dress he has bought for
her - his eyes travel over her constantly, as many instances of outward description of Lolita by Humbert evince; descriptions which he provides in such a way as to offer (distorted) insight into her inner self. Critics note Humbert’s outward fixation with Lolita on numerous occasions. Amis, for example, notes that Humbert “could not care less about what [Lolita] was really like. She is a ‘portrait’ in a very full sense, devotedly watched and listened to but never conversed with, the object of desire but never curiosity. What else did she do in Humbert’s presence but play tennis and eat sundaes and go to bed with him?" It is not only interesting to look at the specific outward and (‘pretend’-)inward descriptions of Lolita in this passage, but also to trace them throughout the entire narrative, so as to get a better grip on one of those other recurring themes in Lolita- and Pale Fire-criticism: character description.

Again, there is something going on with personal pronouns in the Zeta analysis. For the first time, ‘we’ is a marker word for one of the two sets of texts. Its rank as second marker word for L_16, just below ‘lo’, indicates its divergent use when compared with the rest of the novel. The ‘we’ in L_16 can be expected to be Humbert and Lolita, traveling and sightseeing together - but this means that in the rest of Lolita, Humbert and Lolita are much less a pair and much more an ‘I’, a ‘she’ and a ‘he’, all marker words on the right side of the graph. Following this observation, analysis of the occurrence of personal pronouns referring to Humbert and Lolita, as either individuals or as a pair, in combination with names and adjectives, is called for. Figuring out when Humbert presents himself as an individual or as part of a pair or group (‘we’ is not exclusively used to refer to Humbert and Lolita, of course) allows for explaining processes of reader-inclusion and of distancing from and identifying with characters, constituting an important part of the reader’s narrative experience.

Figures 3.9 to 3.12 present the output of the contrastive intra-textual Zeta analyses of Pale Fire. Text-blocks PF_13, PF_18 and PF_19 are individually compared with the rest of the novel; text-blocks PF_6, PF_7 and PF_8 are taken together as one larger reference corpus because of their clustering in Figure 3.4, and then compared with the remaining text-blocks. More than is the case for Lolita, the results of the consequent Zeta analyses of Pale Fire are interpreted from a higher vantage point, since a preliminary glance at the marker and anti-marker words for the text-blocks and the novel-residues allows for the observance of some stringent stylistic trends in terms of consistent word use. Related to this, it should also be kept in mind that the text-blocks of Pale Fire selected for Zeta analysis, based on the performed PCA’s and CA’s, are almost all to be found towards the end of the novel and much closer to each other. This can well be expected to have a different effect on the reader’s engaged narrative experience of this novel when compared to Lolita. Therefore, the need for contextualization of the detailed

analyses of specific linguistic elements and passages in the next chapters cannot be stressed enough.

The main lines of inquiry that pop up as requesting more detailed analyses in the following chapters are: The use of personal pronouns and other reference words for the narrator Kinbote and the King he is narrating about, the role of negation, the workings of modal verbs and, again, personal pronoun use that triggers (for example through personalization) or hinders reader-inclusion. Three of the four text-blocks compared intra-textually in Lolita using Zeta as a contrastive measure allowed for interpretation of the results in light of literary criticism, since they include passages that are generally deemed as key in the novel. For Pale Fire we do not have these starting points, and a first interpretation of the results requires a look back at the content of the text-blocks themselves in somewhat more detail than for Lolita, in order to establish links between the words used and recurrent topics in Pale Fire criticism.

The output of the Zeta analysis comparing PF_13 with the rest of the novel (Figure 3.9) shows some interesting word rankings for modal verbs, negation and pronoun use. In this text-block, the main narrative events are Kinbote telling of the Zemblan King giving a letter to his Queen, Disa, using the chamber maid Fleur as a messenger, and Kinbote providing the dialogue between him and Shade following his relating this episode to the poet, who questions Kinbote’s knowledge of such an intimate scene of which he was not a part. Kinbote then goes on to offer some reflection upon the nature of art and truth. We can see an opposition between personal pronouns occurring in the marker words of PF_13 and those of the rest of the novel. There is definite focus on ‘her’ and ‘she’ in PF_13, which is not surprising given the presence of the two female characters in this episode, and ‘he’ follows suit, referring to either the King in the past, or Shade or Gradus in the present. The rest of the novel is characterized, in contrast, by the tripartite pronominal set of ‘my’, ‘I’ and ‘me’, referring mostly to Kinbote. This pronoun-split appears to mirror the general set-up of the novels’ narrative plains, where ‘he’ refers to the King and ‘I’ to Kinbote, whom the reader suspects to be one and the same person. This default set up lays the groundwork for interpreting some of the pronouns occurring in the Zeta output of the other analyses, since their specific usage in the other text-blocks might be interpreted as indicators of an intermingling of narrative plains. As Steiner argues, Pale Fire’s plains of narrative can be seen to conspire against each other cunningly, and analyzing pronoun use in the novel can shed more light on how this narrative mechanism actually functions.

Another, related, stylistic feature to be looked into in this respect is how Kinbote steers his readers through his commentary, Shade’s poem, and the Index. As can be seen from the marker words for the novel’s residue on the right, ‘line’ and ‘note’ indicate the persistent presence of Kinbote’s reader-directed appellations to look up certain lines in the poem and other notes that Kinbote has written to it. The way the reader is addressed by the use of personal pronouns such as ‘you’ or ‘Humbertian’ utterances like ‘my reader’, and its effect of shifting the reader back up to the level of the Actual World of reading, is analyzed in Chapter 5. Finally, the occurrence of no less than two modal verbs

as PF_13 marker words needs to be noted, namely ‘would’ and ‘could’, as well as the presence of the word ‘not’, which can be coupled with these modal verbs. As is the case for *Lolita*, the occurrence of modals opens up paths for analyzing the workings of imagination and mnemonics in the novel in greater detail.

The narrative content of PF_18 (Zeta analysis output in Figure 3.10) focuses on the final moments of Gradus’ pursuit of the Zemblan King. Interestingly, not only the pronouns ‘he’ and ‘him’, referring to Gradus and the King, rank highly for this text-block, but also the inclusive ‘we’, which is almost exclusively used in this passage to state utterances like “we know” by Kinbote (three occurrences). Interestingly, this pronoun is coupled repeatedly with the mental verb277 ‘to know’. This becomes even more relevant, interpretively speaking, when contrasted with the marker word ‘one’ (personal pronoun) for the rest of the novel: The use of ‘one’ is a more generic way of referring to the

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general public, which for Kinbote mostly consists of his readers, than ‘we’, which can be hypothesized to trigger greater reader-inclusion. The occurrence and interplay of these pronouns is analyzed in detail in Chapter 5. Again, we see the ‘I’, ‘me’ - ‘he’, ‘him’ opposition in Figure 3.10, which, when coupled with the ‘one’ - ‘we’ distinction can shed light on the workings of Pale Fire’s narrative plains and processes of consciousness projection and identification. Modality also appears to play an important role in distinguishing PF_18: The verbs ‘can’ and ‘know’ have modalizing properties, which can expected to be triggered, partially because the negative ‘no’ is one of the text-block’s other marker words.

Then for the ending of the novel, featured in PF_19, in which Gradus (or rather an escaped madman wishing revenge on the judge from whom Kinbote rents his house) shoots Shade. Following this event, Kinbote then hurries to loot Shade’s poem, ‘Pale Fire’, from his house, starts to read it and is indignant about it not being about Zembla or his King’s history on first glance, but then he discovers Zembla in it ‘between the lines’. Figure 3.11 shows a pattern we have seen before in the other Zeta analyses, but with
some meaningful alterations. First, the ‘me’, ‘I’, ‘my’ cluster of personal pronouns is to be found on the left hand side of the graph this time, making it marker words for PF_19, rather than for the rest of the novel, as is the case in the Zeta analyses based on PF_13 and PF_18. This time, ‘myself’ is also added to the list, be it with a somewhat lower rank. Interestingly, the right hand list of marker words does not include any male third person singular pronoun.

If this had been the case, a reversal of narrative plains, featuring either the story of the King or the story of Zemblan expat Kinbote, would be a sound interpretation of the word list. Since it is not, there might be a more complex intermingling of narrative plains going on, in this case partially triggered by the occurrence and workings of pronouns such as ‘she’, ‘their’, ‘they’, ‘them’ and ‘ours’ as contrast words for the first person pronominal bias of PF_19. This preliminary observation is strengthened when a first look at the narrative itself is taken into account, where Kinbote reflects on the fate of Zembla by exclaiming “my King, my Kinbote”, suddenly mixing up characters from two different narrative plains as a mirror image of the mixed up pronominal usage. The sudden
addition of the third person plural pronouns in this Zeta analysis is also telling in this respect, since it is the first time they rate as distinctive words for the novel (or a text-block, as it is). Suddenly, there appears to be a group of ‘others’ existing antithetically to ‘I’; ‘he’ is not the opposite of ‘I’ anymore - has Kinbote thus ‘become’ King? And what is the reader’s role in all this? The marker words of the rest of Pale Fire include ‘lines’ and ‘our’, both words that are semantically related to the earlier mentioned ‘line’ and ‘we’. Such word-types influence the reader’s pathway through Pale Fire’s narrative plains and thus her engaged narrative experience, requiring in depth analysis in Chapter 5.

The final contrastive intra-textual analysis of the novel concerns the similarities and differences between the text-blocks PF_6, PF_7 and PF_8, taken as one reference corpus, and its remaining text-blocks. In this part of the novel, Kinbote tells of the King’s escape from Zemblan captivity. The ‘standard’ narrative plain divide is evident in the output of the performed Zeta analysis: marker words for PF_6-8 include ‘king’ and ‘he’, but also ‘was’ and ‘were’, indicating not only narration of a third person, but also narration of past events in Pale Fire’s case. In addition, the third person plural pronoun ‘them’ appears as the lowest ranking marker word for the reference corpus. Where this particular word rated as a marker word for the novel’s residual text-blocks in Zeta analysis of PF_19, it now ranks on the other side of the graph, where it is somewhat more expected, as a counterpart to ‘he’. The negative ‘not’ is this time a marker word of the greater amount of text-blocks, which distinguishes this specific Zeta analysis from the others, since in those the negative ‘not’ or ‘no’ ranks on the left side of the graph. Finally, ‘line’ and ‘you’ are both reader-oriented marker words for the novel’s residual text-blocks. One of the telling examples of the specific use of ‘you’ in text-block PF_6-8, where it suddenly jumps out in the middle of a ‘he’-focused narrative passage, is when Kinbote is describing the King’s flight, uses the generic form of ‘you’, placing both himself and the reader in the King’s shoes: “and if you paused you heard your heart thumping”. Such foregrounded instances of personalized address can tell us much about the reader’s inclusion into or exclusion from the narrative world, depending on these instances’ linguistic contextualization. A final observation regarding PF_6-8 is that it contains one of Pale Fire’s most quoted statements on the nature of art and reality in Nabokov-criticism, which is in itself an indicator that this text-block has stylistic bearing on readers’ theme-construction where imagination, truth and reality are considered: “the basic fact that reality is neither the subject nor the object of true art which creates its own special reality having nothing to do with the average reality perceived by the communal eye”.

4 Conclusion

To conclude, the PCA’s, CA’s and Zeta analyses of Lolita and Pale Fire respectively indicate that more detailed analysis of the occurrence and patterning of personal pronouns, (modal) verbs, negation, and description of characters are to be the focal points in the following chapters. Since the present study is concerned with the reader’s engaged narrative experience of the entire novels under consideration, word-tokens falling under these categories are not traced and analyzed in isolation, but within their specific contexts. Sometimes this means special attention must be paid to consistent, that is backgrounded, ways of collocation, while at other times it entails careful consideration of unusual, that is foregrounded, usage. In addition, the specific narrative context needs to be taken into account, that is, the way the mentioned linguistic elements are embedded in terms of focalization and narrative set-up, including the speech situation.
Since they are also constructive of narrative mechanisms like focalization, contextualization is even more essential.

The analytical set-up proposed in the present chapter is continued in the rest of this study. Based on the output of the previous analyses, special attention will be paid to those passages that seem to be stylistically different, in order to get a better grip on the workings of the novels’ linguistic texture as a whole. Stylometric methods are used when the linguistic data requires their application, for example when cognitive poetic interpretation of style elements suggests searching for specific collocations. The computational literary methods used in this chapter have furthered the analytical goal of description and discovery of Lolita and Pale Fire’s styles. Functioning as search lights, they have provided starting points for more detailed analyses, based on the language of the novels and existing literary criticism. In using both the novels’ language and readers’ interpretations of and reactions to it as primary sources and starting points for explaining engaged narrative experiences, the following chapters aim to provide deeper insight into the why and how of those experiences.
Chapter 4. Lolita’s Engines of Desire

1 Introduction: Coming full circle - Language, minds and worlds

Chapters 4 and 5 encompass the interpretive analytical exercises of Lolita and Pale Fire, as informed by the theoretical, critical and quantitative-qualitative reflection presented in the previous chapters. Based on the theory of immersive simulation (Chapter 1), analyses of critical discourse on the novels (Chapter 2), and stylometric distant reading insights into their respective linguistic textures (Chapter 3) we are now in a position to fine-tune the analytical close reading toolset required to characterize the engaged narrative experiences those novels provide for.

Figure 4.1 shows how the different levels of Storyworld construction discussed so far fit into the analytical project of describing narrative experiences.

This figure echoes the account of Storyworld construction put forward in Chapter 1, but based on the stylometric analyses in the previous chapter, we can now give it more substance. The stylometric analyses took into account both Most Frequent Words (MFW) (Principal Component Analysis and Cluster Analysis) and word-consistency (Zeta Analysis). As such, the overall stylometric analysis focuses on lexical features that prove to be fore- or backgrounded in the context of the novels. Based on their patterning and cognitive poetic insights, hypotheses about their functioning in the novels’ macro- and micro-structure were then formulated. Although words make up the main body of a novel, they are not isolated entities; they function within larger units and systems of

language. In addition, words and their language contexts are undeniably dependent on language-processing minds to semantically process them and thus give them meaning. And just like words, minds reading novels are contextually based, that is, they interpret language based on their earlier and current linguistic and embodied experiences of the world in which they live and read, as well as the Storyworld they are currently engaging with. With this in mind, I will now explain how different stylistic features inform the narrative experience as presented in Figure 4.1, putting special emphasis on the dotted section on the outskirts of the Storyworld, which nevertheless lies in the centre of the narrative experience, especially in full first person narratives like Lolita and Pale Fire.

As explained in Chapter 1, the linguistic systems of modality and transitivity, coupled with the notion of Deictic Shifting, function as (sub)world building and experience-encoding processes in the act of reading. These systems interact when, for example, a sentence like this is processed:

\[
(1) \text{I used to be very shy, but nowadays I think I would be up to giving a presentation in front of a room full of people.}^{280}
\]

Let us presume that this utterance is spoken by a male speaker to a female hearer in the context of face-to-face communication. The first part of the sentence (“I used to be very shy”) provides a trigger for the hearer to simulate the speaker’s position, allowing the hearer to elaborate on their mutual world-construction via character-accessible subworld building (to a different time and presumably place). The hearer deictically shifts together with the speaker to make sense of the utterance, which can be characterized as a relational process type in terms of transitivity, since the speaker ascribes a certain attribute or identity to himself in this utterance.\(^{281}\) If this sentence-part would make up the entire utterance at this moment of conversation, a subworld as sw1 in Figure 4.2 would be the result.

If we take the second part of the sentence into account, things become more complicated. First, the speaker encodes what he believes using a mental process type verb (‘think’) and thereby produces an epistemic modal subworld (sw2): he believes

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\(^{280}\) My example: PW.

something is the case. In addition, he reinforces the possible nature of what he believes by using a modal construction (‘would’) in describing the nature of the possible state of affairs, thus bringing another subworld (sw3) into being. The world building process of the entire utterance can thus be represented visually as in Figure 4.3, where sw3 is embedded within sw2. If the speaker would then go on to speculate some more about his presentation abilities in front of a lot of people, he might add something like:

(2) Although, maybe I would be rather scared if I had to do it all on my own.282

In that case, the modal adverb ‘maybe’ gets linked to the reiterated modal ‘would’, deictically shifting the first part of the sentence back up to the level of sw2, to which it has a clear link based on context, content and linguistic feature and to which it offers an alternative. sw 4 is thus brought into play, and has its own embedded subworld due to the hypothetical ‘if’ clause creating yet another possible state of affairs by putting forth a prerequisite for sw4 to come into being.

A seemingly simple set of sentences as in (1) and (2) not only shows the intricacies of world building, but also offers a first look into how immersive simulation takes place when engaging in any form of communicative interaction. As David Herman notes, “Cutting across differences of narrative genre, communicative context, and storytelling media, is a common focus on the what-it’s-like dimension of experiencing minds, insofar as they are affected by what is going on in the narrated world.”283 Even in a relatively short example such as this, the hearer needs to follow the speaker’s mental functioning across world boundaries if she aims to fully grasp what he wants to convey. She follows his experiencing mind as it is characterized by relational and mental process type verbs, having to do with how he would feel in a certain situation. In order to ‘get’ what he is saying, she not only has to understand it in a logical, semantically valid way, but also in an engaged way: In a split second, the hearer’s utterance will invite her to imagine what the situation is like for him - an invitation that is given greater force through the cognitive processing of modalizing constructions and specific experience-encoding verbs. The hearer has now grasped the speaker’s utterance in a holistic way and is able to voice an informed reaction.

The previous example allows for an illustration of the base-line Storyworld construction involved in narrative understanding, where one person tries to grasp the content of another person’s utterance. When it comes to novels, there is of course a lot more going on than in a relatively simple communicative context between two participants in the actual world. Novels comprise much longer narratives and allow for multiple speakers (narrators, characters) to have their say, challenging and stimulating the reader’s simulating mind. Every story is someone’s story, and this becomes extremely clear when there is one fictional mind primed as narrative agent, thus becoming the main ground for readers’ Storyworld construction. This is where we need to return to Figure 282

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282 My example - PW.
4.1, to consider more fully the relationship between the three different ‘main’ world-
levels: Actual World, Storyworld and Narrator’s Storyworld.

In both Lolita and Pale Fire, readers have to rely on one primed narrator to provide
them with information on how to construct the Storyworld of those novels. In addition,
since the only way readers gain access to other fictional minds in those narratives is via
the narrator, they are constantly immersed in the narrator’s subworld (Narrator’s
Storyworld). As such, both novels problematize readers’ Storyworld and subworld
construction: On the one hand, readers constantly engage in immersive simulation to
follow the narrators’ mental functioning - a cognitive act of consciousness projection they
must engage in, otherwise they will not be able to construct any Storyworld at all. On the
other, readers are made acutely aware of the fact that they are simulating unreliable
fictional minds, through both pre-announcements (e.g. John Ray Jr.’s ‘Foreword’ to
‘Lolita’) and inconsistencies in narrative content (e.g. Kinbote’s colleagues’ behaviour
towards him vs. what he tells us about his likeability). All of this means that the
representation of the events and actions of characters, including the narrator, in the ‘real’
world to which the narrative refers (a Possible Actual World in Marie-Laure Ryan’s
terms) is continually mediated, and possibly undermined, through an unreliable
narrator’s field of vision. The construction of the Storyworld then, the holistic mental
model the reader constructs in order to assign meaning to and engage with the narrative,
is the most complex dimension of narrative worldmaking in cases such as Lolita and Pale
Fire’s. What is more, we might hypothesize that the discrepancy between the Storyworld
and the Narrator’s Storyworld that results from this complex act of world building on the
reader’s part, is the cause of the uncanny or unagreeable feeling readers experience while
reading the novels. This act can be characterized on the basis of form and content, and the
way the reader engages with the narrative at hand via their mediation. It is a process in
which the intricate patterning of back- and foregrounded language, motives and themes is
of great consequence for the reader’s engaged narrative experience, which is guided and
formed in subtle ways. In this light, Herman’s following claim is of importance:
“[N]arrative provides a discourse context in which different accounts of someone’s mind
can be proposed, tested against other versions, and modified or abandoned as necessary -
based on the goodness-of-fit between the ascribed mental states and the whole pattern of
the person’s experiences, conduct, and demeanor.”

For the narratives at issue here, “the whole pattern of the person’s experiences, conduct, and demeanor” in the
Storyworld is provided by the same ‘person’ that supplies readers with the material to
ascribe mental states to that person, and in doing so build a Narrator’s Storyworld.
Hence, in narratives were one narrator has full control of the field of vision, but is
suspected to be of the unreliable type, the reader must follow the narrator’s mental
functioning, but also flesh out the Storyworld from between the lines. Interestingly, both
Humbert in Lolita and Kinbote in Pale Fire make sure that their readers never completely
lose themselves in the consciousnesses and experiences of the narrators, since their
narratives have a double function: Humbert is also writing his novel ‘Lolita’ as testimony
for his own defense during his trial for murdering Quilty, while Kinbote’s narrative is

284 Idem: 159.
literary commentary-come-history of Zembla-come-literary commentary-come-...in perpetuity, so it seems. This allows both narrators to trigger their readers to deictically shift back up at different times in their narratives, allowing for Storyworld construction and immersive simulation to take place somewhat outside of their solipsistic minds - although in many cases, there is ingenious layering of world building going on at those moments as well, adding to the complex dimension of worldmaking.

I believe that the specific nature of the complex Storyworld building that readers perform while reading *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* can be characterized by tracing their immersive simulative narrative experience of those novels, as their cognitive capacities are stimulated by linguistic triggers. The analysis of readers’ pathways through the novels, as experiencing minds, starts at the level of tracing (sub)world construction instantiated by instances of Deictic Shifting and modality, characterizing those worlds through transitivity analysis. It is completed by taking into account stylistic features that have proven to be significantly foregrounded and backgrounded in (parts of) the novels, based on the word-types yielded by the stylometric tests in Chapter 3. These features are: pronouns, modal verbs, in-/exclusive constructions, Speech and Thought Representation, character description, negation, chains of reference, and reader appellations. These linguistic features are at the centre of the cognitive stylistic informed analyses of Storyworld construction and immersive simulation in the present and next chapter, which aim at characterizing readers’ engaged narrative experiences of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*.

2 *Lolita*

The cognitive stylistic analyses presented in this chapter, characterizing readers’ engaged narrative experiences of *Lolita*, focus on six sections of the novel in particular: The Foreword, L_1, L_6, L_16, L_29 and L_31. Four of those sections, including the novel’s ending (L_6, L_16, L_29 and L_31), proved to be significantly different, stylistically speaking, based on Principal Components Analysis (see Chapter 3, Figure 3.3, p.69). Three of those four sections (L_6, L_29 and L_31) feature scenes that are deemed to have high narrative impact by Nabokov scholars and critics, and those scenes are extracted and looked at in greater detail. In addition, the start of the novel - or rather the two starts of the two novels *Lolita* (by Vladimir Nabokov; The Foreword) and ‘Lolita’ (with Humbert Humbert as ‘author’; L_1) - is analyzed. The Foreword invites readers to start building and coloring a Storyworld of ‘Lolita’ even before Humbert’s story properly begins. Since this is not Humbert’s narrative, this text-part was left out of the statistical tests in the previous chapter, but it has a special status of its own in the context of readers trying to engage with *Lolita*. The beginning of Humbert’s novel ‘Lolita’, on the other hand, did feature in the descriptive statistical test, but did not come out as a stylistically foregrounded section. However, beginnings of novels are generally taken to be very important in terms of world building, since they set the scene, quite literally, for what is

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285 This categorization of the text-parts follows the partitioning and classification of *Lolita’s* text as argued in Chapter 3, section 3.1.5, pp.59-60.
to come. They prompt the first instances of Deictic Shifting and provide readers with world building elements and function advancing propositions that will create a base-line for their Storyworld construction. Throughout the analyses of the six sections, constant reference is made to the higher-level linguistic and stylistic patterning in the novel, so as to analyze readers’ engaged narrative experiences in their proper light, that is within the context of the novel as a whole. The overall analysis thus combines Distant and Close reading, is based on both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis, and aims for a clear and insightful picture of how style and content function in readers’ engaged narrative experiences.

3 Through the looking glass... and into Lolita’s Storyworld

Taking up the novel Lolita, the reader immediately finds herself confronted with cues inviting Deictic Shifting. For one, if she is a somewhat experienced reader this act cognitively prompts the scenario of reading narrative fiction - what we could maybe call a ‘literary’ scenario -, where she is willing to background her everyday surroundings in favor of engaging with the work of literary fiction at hand. Taking part in this scenario will be a mostly unconscious effort and opens up the possibility of the reader recentering her phenomenal consciousness towards the Storyworld of Lolita. The first glimpse of this Storyworld is provided by a ‘Foreword’, the first paragraph of which makes it clear that this is not a paratextual novelistic element referring to the domain of the Actual World in which the current reading act is taking place: The narrator at this point informs the reader that a) “‘Lolita, or the Confession of a White Widowed Male,’ such were the two titles under which the writer of the present note received the strange pages it preambulates”, that b) “Humbert Humbert,” their author, had died in legal captivity, of coronary thrombosis, on November 16, 1952, a few days before his trial was scheduled to start”, and c) that he received those pages by way of their author’s lawyer, his “good friend and relation, Clarence Choate Clark, Esq.”. Based on the first two utterances, the reader can infer that the novel ‘Lolita’ following this foreword is not Nabokov’s Lolita, but the character-narrator Humbert’s ‘Lolita’. In addition, readers that are aware of Nabokov’s familial ties in the Actual World will also dismiss him as current narrator since Humbert’s lawyer C.C. Clark is not to be found in the Nabokov family tree - and if she is not aware of that information at this point, the signing of the foreword by “John Ray, Jr., Ph.D.” will provide interpretive closure in this respect. John Ray also provides readers with a definite temporal framing, mentioning Humbert’s death on November 16, 1952; a date that is comparatively close to Lolita’s first publication in 1955.

The first paragraph of the ‘Foreword’ is thus densely packed with world building elements, laying the groundwork for the reader in order to flesh out the Storyworld.

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The first recentering move she has to make is one into an underspecified Storyworld, that appears to be like the Actual World in the 1950’s, but is not populated by the same entities, and the editor of the ‘Lolita’-pages will provide some more information on this world in the rest of the foreword. In addition to the world building elements separating the Storyworld in which ‘Lolita’ is written and the acts that are described in it have presumably taken place from the Actual World of reading, the current narrator sets himself up as a trustworthy individual with an intellectual reputation (claiming to have received an award for earlier work). This is an important aspect of the reader’s Storyworld construction based on the foreword as a whole for two related reasons: 1) The ‘Foreword’ can be seen as a form of pre-announcement on a metafictional level, and 2) The nature of the positioning of narrator and reader in the ‘Foreword’ appertains to specific master narratives in contemporaneous society and storylines, and is pertinent to the story that follows.

Drawing on Conversation Analysis, Sanford and Emmott apply the term pre-announcements to written narratives. In Conversation Analysis, they are usually viewed as utterances signaling “a speech act or story event which is about to occur (e.g., then he told me this; then this happened).” Tailoring the concept for textual analysis, Sanford and Emmott define it as a “device which is used for a particular type of emphasis, being useful for indicating key plot moments, particularly where the significance of the event might otherwise be missed. This appears to be a strategy for putting the information that follows into broad focus, so that the whole event is focused on.” There is some debate on the attention focusing qualities of relatively short pre-announcements, like those provided in the examples above, since text-change detection experiments do not yield significant effects for amplified depth of processing following pre-announcements. However, since such experiments can only measure small changes on word level and not changes on a semantic, interpretive level, the current working hypothesis is that pre-announcements, as Emmott, Sanford and Alexander state, “might raise the interest in the key-events of the story, perhaps making participants less likely to bother about small wording issues.” Rethinking the idea of pre-announcements in fictional written narratives some more, we could say that the ‘Foreword’ to Humbert’s novel/confession ‘Lolita’ is a longer stretch of firmly defined text constituting a pre-announcement on the highest level of narrative framing. This is of consequence for the reader’s engaged narrative experience of the following narrative, especially since the reader is explicitly addressed by the narrator in this foreword and is consequently positioned vis-à-vis not only John Ray and the ‘Foreword’, but to Humbert and his narrative as well.

Following the account of immersive simulation proposed in Chapter 1, the reader of a novel needs to follow a fictional mind’s functioning in the Storyworld to make sense of it, but the reader will also always be a non-fictional mind that can be rhetorically addressed in a narrative. As such, the reader can be invited to take on a certain position

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towards narrators, characters and narratives by way of personalization of the communicated content. Following Herman’s account of Positioning Theory, “positioning is a relevant parameter for analysis on several levels: the level of the characters; the level of the reader’s engagement with the text, given the specific narrative techniques deployed; and the level of narrative’s bearing on more or less dominant storylines, or master narratives, about the way the world is.”

In the foreword, John Ray positions himself in relation to Humbert on a character-level; he positions the reader in relation to John Ray, Humbert and the Storyworld, deploying the narrative technique of personalization; and he positions himself and the reader in relation to a dominant storyline and master narrative. These levels are not neatly separated in terms of position-taking, which all starts with the issue of personalization.

As Sanford and Emmott explain, “Personalization is a way of portraying information such that references are made to the way you might feel, how you might react, etc., rather than how a person might feel or react, which is less personal.” In John Ray’s foreword, the reader is personally addressed four times, two times in combination with an explicit reference to the moral or ethical theme of the novel to come, and two times with reference to very specific types of readers. The first personalized reader-address is found between brackets, embedded within a sentence in which the current narrator comments on the merits of (not) changing characters’ names out of respect for their privacy: “While ‘Haze’ only rhymes with the heroine’s real surname, her first name is too closely interwound with the inmost fiber of the book to allow one to alter it; nor (as the reader will perceive for himself) is there any practical necessity to do so.”

With this personalized address, emphasis is put on the apparently important role Lolita’s name will play in the narrative to come. If the reader would not have perceived that role for herself, she will be triggered to do so via this discursively (a personalized reader-appellation) and typographically (emphasis precisely because of the brackets that appear to downplay the information) foregrounded pre-announcement. She is also positioned vis-à-vis John Ray here, being put on a par with him, since it is expected that she will have the same view on the name’s importance in the novel as he does. This idea is reinforced by the use of “one” in the first part of the sentence, which can function as an inclusive pronominal device. The first reader-directed utterance establishes an image of John Ray’s ideal reader, who agrees with him on what he has to say on ‘Lolita’. The second instance where the reader is mentioned - not addressed - nicely complements the first reader-directed utterance, in providing the reader with the opposite, that is, John Ray’s notion of a very non-ideal reader: “For the benefit of old-fashioned readers who wish to follow the destinies of the ‘real’ people beyond the ‘true’ story […].” Note that there is no direct personalized address to the reader here, and the adjective “old-fashioned” has a negative ring to it, especially after John Ray’s further characterization. This statement is quite unsubtly sarcastic and informs the reader on how she should not

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read the narrative to come, according to the current narrator. On a deeper level, this entire paragraph has an even more profound positioning effect: The reader should not read for truth, because that is not the issue at stake when interpreting a novel. Having provided the reader with some ‘facts’ about ‘real’ people and places in ‘Lolita’ s Storyworld, she should now be content and move on, with John Ray, to matters of real importance. This is the first step of John Ray’s argument, aimed at positioning the reader towards ‘Lolita’ as a work of art, demanding an aesthetic reading stance.

In presenting his views on good and bad readers, John Ray thus lays the rhetorical groundwork for the rest of the foreword, which presents a very subtle rhetorical tour de force. In the next paragraphs he quietly leads his readers to agreeing on taking on his reading strategy, by providing reading cues in a personalized way, and in doing so, he consequently colors ‘Lolita’ s Storyworld in advance: It is a Storyworld in which form determines beauty and provides meaning, not one in which content holds interpretive sway. John Ray’s foreword here takes on the guise of a persuasive argument, where he argues his case of not omitting certain scenes from the novel, his stance towards its narrator and thematic content, and finally its moral lesson. The narrative techniques used to present this narrator’s views all play into the positioning of the reader towards him, Humbert and ‘Lolita’. In this case, those techniques are personalization; the order of presentation of the three foregrounded motives of Art, Narratorial authority, and Morality; and the labored defense on the editorial choices made.

To start, John Ray explicitly appeals to the reader a second time, in a way that positions them both on common ground: “Viewed simply as a novel, ‘Lolita’ deals with situations and emotions that would remain exasperatingly vague to the reader had their expression been etiolated by means of platitudinous emotions.”298 The modal ‘would’ triggers subworld building, conjuring up a possible state of affairs in which the novel’s situations and emotions are of a sort of ‘light’ version; the reader mentally constructs this further underspecified subworld, following John Ray’s mental functioning, and is stimulated to dismiss its reality within the Storyworld context. The reader then deictically shifts back up to the Foreword world-context, where John Ray goes on to state that there are no explicit obscenities in the novel. Quite paradoxically, he then immediately starts defending his editorial choices in light of the novel’s possible offensiveness to certain types of readers, those who can deal with explicit scandal, but not with its implicit variety (R1 refers to the inept reader, R2 to the editor):

“If, however, for this paradoxical prude’s [R1] comfort, an editor [R2] attempted to dilute or omit scenes that a certain type of mind [R1] might call ‘aphrodisiac’ […] , one [R2] would have to forego the publication of ‘Lolita’ altogether, since those very scenes that one [R1] might ineptly accuse of a sensuous existence of their own, are the most strictly functional ones in the development of a tragic tale tending unswervingly to nothing less than a moral apotheosis.”299

Interestingly, the reader is invited to simulate the “paradoxical prude” with “a certain type of mind” and his objections, but also the editor, in this hypothetical situation. The

298 Ibidem.
299 Idem: 4-5.
epistemic subworld so created smartly inverts logical argumentation here, in that the inept reader becomes a pervert reading for “aphrodisiac” scenes, while the editor and the reader herself become the sensible judges of art, since they are sensitive to the aesthetic and moral fiber of the book. Note that generic ‘one’ is used two times in this sentence, where the first time it refers to the editor, the second time to the inept reader. This double-faced use of ‘one’ is not the expected linguistic choice here, since the narrator should be expected to strive for clarity and not for semantic ambiguousness caused by unnecessary use of similar pronouns for different anaphoric referents. There is a strict alternation in terms of reference in this excerpt, to the inept reader R1 and the sensible editor R2, and the use of ‘one’ is stylistically remarkable in this respect. Rather than being foregrounded, this generic pronominal reference appears to be a backgrounded stylistic device, leading the reader to simulate both the inept reader and the editor, whom she is, very possibly unconsciously, led to concur with in the end, but not without being totally disentangled from the inept reader. Consequently, the reader might take on both reading-stances at once, based on the foreword as pre-announcement, while reading ‘Lolita’. Before we have even begun to read the novel ‘Lolita’ proper, already there appears to be a discrepancy between how the current narrator wants us to build up the Storyworld, focusing on form rather than content, and how we might actually be inclined to flesh it out, based on form and content - and a content of a rather precarious nature, at that. Here, in John Ray’s apparently persuasive argument for reading for Art and through Art for Morality, we can see the foreshadowing of Humbert the narrator’s smooth rhetorical tricks, which are at least as Janus-faced.

It is interesting to note that the current narrator, who appears to be a medical professional of some sort, emphasizes the possibility of reading ‘Lolita’ as a work of novelistic fiction. Near the end of his Foreword, he also mentions that it can be read as a case history and states that above all, it should inspire us to be better educators. However, most of his foreword focuses on how readers should read ‘Lolita’ as a novel, and more specifically on how they should appreciate its structure and evaluate its narrator’s character and the nature of its content. This is remarkable in itself, since John Ray does not appear to deem a novel to have that much merit, as he states the we can view ‘Lolita’ “simply as a novel”. In the excerpt quoted above, John Ray’s rhetoric not only cognitively triggers a ‘novel-reading’ scenario in the reader’s mind, but also foregrounds the tension between Art and Morality; he continuously insists on the absence of the latter in the novel’s situations and descriptions, but then immediately feels compelled to defend himself as editor, the novel itself and, of course, its ‘author’ Humbert Humbert. The reader is positioned firmly vis-à-vis Humbert in the foreword in terms of the tension between Art and Morality. After vehemently condemning Humbert’s opinions and actions, his unreliability, abnormality and even “moral leprosy”, John Ray concludes his account of “H.H.” by praising his literary competence: “But how magically his singing violin can conjure up a tendresse, a compassion for Lolita that makes us entranced with the book while abhorring its author!” This is a
foregrounded utterance due to the use of a foreign word (“tendresse”), the exclamation mark at the end of the sentence, and because of its content: Based on John Ray’s previous argument, we would expect his admiration for Humbert to exist only on the level of form, but here the level of content comes into view as well. The sentence is ambiguous in this sense, since it can be read in two ways. Either John Rays is describing Humbert’s tenderness towards and compassion for Lolita, which results in a positioning of two characters vis-à-vis each other that departs from how he has positions Humbert and his stance towards others in the Storyworld in the entire previous paragraph; or it can be read as another appraisal of Humbert’s rhetorical skill, preparing the reader for experiencing feelings of tenderness and compassion for Lolita through his artful descriptions in the novel to come. Furthermore, by using the inclusive pronoun ‘us’ to denote both himself and ‘Lolita’’s readers, John Ray triggers a consciousness projection on the reader’s part that results in inclusion in his field of vision; the reader is now positioned towards ‘Lolita’ Storyworld and its narrator in a precarious way, where the boundaries between reading for form and reading for content are vague, and Narratorial authority is simultaneously questioned and affirmed.

Following these lavish poetical observations on John Ray’s part, he presents his readers with just one sentence on ‘Lolita’’s worth as a case history in psychiatric circles. After nonchalantly mentioning that “As a work of art, ['Lolita'] transcends its expiatory aspects,” he states what appears to be his final say on the matter of the book’s worth: “[S]till more important to us than scientific significance and literary worth, is the ethical impact the book should have on the serious reader. […] ‘Lolita’ should make all of us - parents, social workers, educators - apply ourselves with still greater vigilance and vision to the task of bringing up a better generation in a safer world.” So, John Ray expects the serious reader, which he very likely takes to be his ideal reader, to learn something from Humbert’s story, a lesson which apparently has to do with raising our children well. The inclusive ‘us’ rears its head again, this time reinforced by the use of ‘ourselves’. By inviting the reader to focus on the this moral lesson, in a very strict sense, John Ray diverts her attention from the ethical issue that is actually at stake in the novel, and that is the center of attention in almost the entire foreword: The engagement of the reader with the novel’s aesthetic qualities and its ethical content. The position of John Ray’s final verdict of the novel at the end of his foreword is meaningful, since readers pay extra attention to beginnings and endings of almost all types of texts. The sheer bulk of the part of the foreword dealing with a different type of ethical question, however, will not weigh lightly on the reader and can be expected to inform Storyworld construction in a considerable way.

The Foreword to ‘Lolita’, taken as a pre-announcement on a metafictional level, sets up a base-line for Storyworld building by the reader when she turns the page to ‘Lolita’. As we have seen, the narrator of the foreword, John Ray, attempts to position the reader towards himself, the novel to come and its narrator in a way that seems quite

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302 Ibidem.
303 Idem: 5-6.
clear at first sight: Readers are invited to reflect on the role of Art, Morality and Narratorial authority. However, closer inspection based on personalization, subworld building, stylistic fore- and backgrounding and content analysis reveals that the specific direction of the positioning is ambiguous in many ways. Indeed, in the foreword we already see the complex dimension of world building in action, when readers are triggered to imagine different states of affairs, simulate different positions in and towards the Storyworld and its inhabitants and situations, and consequently are manipulated in their engaged reading experience of the foreword itself and the narrative to come.

4 ‘Lolita’ - Beginnings

The reader is now poised for the true action, which begins with first person narrator Humbert’s concise though dense eulogy on Lolita, followed by some scraps of autobiographical information, and an exposition on those young girls he terms ‘nymphets’ and whose admirers he calls ‘nympholepts’. Running throughout the narrative’s opening (L_1), is the story of Humbert’s first love, Annabel, and how he sees their interrupted sexual encounter as the basis for his obsession for nymphet Lolita in later life. Taken as a function advancing proposition at the start of the narrative, the Annabel story more specifically fulfils a character- or person-advancing role: It propels the discourse forward and invites the reader to color her mental representations of the characters in the narrative through the cognitive feat of parabolic projection. Even without the knowledge of its explicit intertextual character, the Annabel story is key in Humbert’s creation of a Storyworld centered around himself and Lolita. However, since Nabokov critics are part of a rather uniform interpretive community of professional readers, its intertextual potential is taken into account as well. There are, of course, more function advancing propositions and world building elements setting the scene and driving the narrative forward at the start of ‘Lolita’, positioning narrator, characters and reader in a specific constellation. In order to characterize these important moments of initial world building, we will now take a closer look at the first chapter of ‘Lolita’ in its totality, and the way pronouns, different verb process types, personalization and focalization inform the engaged narrative experience of the opening (L_1) of the novel.

Humbert’s narrative is constructed by way of, often relatively small, chapters. In the Foreword, the narrator emphasizes the importance of Lolita’s name to the reader. Humbert’s narrative starts with a lyrical appraisal of her name and person, then introducing Annabel as her precursor, concluding this first chapter with personalized address not to the reader of ‘Lolita’, but to the jury Humbert has in mind as his primary audience. The first chapter is quoted here in full, annotated for subworld construction between brackets. NS denotes linguistic triggering of the Narrator’s Storyworld, NSSW denotes that of a Subworld within the NS, SSW that of a Subworld within the

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306 The cognitive stylistic analysis of the start of Humbert’s novel ‘Lolita’ takes into account its first 3500 words, following the text-part division taken as input for the descriptive statistical analyses in Chapter 3.
Storyworld, and AWSW that of a Subworld in the Actual World (see Figure 4.5 for a visual rendering of the chapter):


(NSSW1) She was Lo, plain Lo, in the morning, standing four feet ten in one sock.

(NSSW2) She was Lola in slacks.

(NSSW3) She was Dolly at school.

(NSSW4) She was Dolores on the dotted line.

(NS) But in my arms she was always Lolita.

(NSSW5) Did she have a precursor? She did, indeed she did.

(NSSW6) In point of fact, there might have been no Lolita at all had I not loved, one summer, a certain initial girl-child. In a princedom by the sea.

(NS) Oh when?

(NSSW5) About as many years before Lolita was born as my age was that summer.

(AWSW1) You can always count on a murderer for a fancy prose style.

(SSW1) Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, exhibit number one is what the seraphs, the misinformed, simple, noble-winged seraphs, envied. Look at this tangle of thorns.”

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In terms of world building elements, a background is provided here, against which the main events in the discourse will be set.\footnote{This background is grounded in the consciousness projection of the reader along the lines of Humbert’s fictional mind, for although the passage may be focused on Lolita, the reader gets to know her through Humbert’s field of vision alone. From almost the first reading-moment on, the reader is invited to engage in immersive simulation with narrator Humbert, due to the first person narration in a world building context, where Lolita is the focalized object of the narrator, who repeatedly talks about her in terms of possession. Humbert here conjures up four subworlds (Narrator’s Storyworld Subworlds 1-4) that exist on the same world level, by characterizing Lolita’s relation to the Narrator’s Storyworld through relational process type verbs and establishing a firm link between her position as a character (which is apparently many-faceted) and the value of her nicknames. The first person possessive pronoun ‘my’ is used abundantly in the first sentences, pulling the reader into Humbert’s experiencing mind. However, there is an almost complete absence of the pronoun ‘I’ in this chapter, except for one mention in Narrator’s Storyworld Subworld 6 (“…had I not loved…”). This is quite remarkable, since we are dealing with a first person account here. If we take a look at Figure 3.3 (see p.69), we can see that, indeed, L_1 as a whole can be found on the other side of the graph from where the “I”-focused text-parts in \textit{Lolita} are plotted. Most first person narratives are firmly focused through, but also on, the ‘I’,}{\textit{cf. Gavins, J.} (2003): 130.}
especially in their opening scenes, where the narrator-protagonist sets himself up as the center of the Storyworld. In this specific case, the narrator appears to rhetorically circumvent the use of ‘I’, by substituting it by the possessive ‘my’, which, on the surface, downplays the focus on the narrator, while putting it more firmly on the character Lolita. Below the surface, however, the reader is still very much invited to simulate Humbert’s mental functioning: He puts different ‘labels’ on Lolita by naming her in certain contexts, using relational process type verbs (Narrator’s Storyworld Subworlds 1-4), then takes his readers back to Lolita’s apparent precursor via a time shift by asking himself a question (Narrator’s Storyworld Subworld 5), triggering Narrator’s Storyworld Subworld 6 by way of a modalizing negative construction. He then pulls the reader out of his reverie with the short “Oh when?”, quickly diving back into the time shift. Then something unexpected happens: Humbert gives us the one-liner “You can always count on a murderer for a fancy prose style.” With this statement he straddles the boundaries of different worlds; it is uttered from his own Narrator’s Storyworld, but is of consequence for the reader as a world building element on Storyworld level, and can even be said to trigger subworld construction in the context of the Actual World. Although ‘you’ in this utterance is of the generic rather than deictic type, initial self-ascription by the reader is likely to be triggered. As a consequence, the reader is now engaging herself with the narrative, via this statement, within three different world-contexts: The Narrator’s Storyworld, the Storyworld and an Actual World Subworld. An utterance like this is thus foregrounded in terms of world building and impacts construction of the Storyworld, giving the reader some breathing space within the exclusive first person narration of a possibly unreliable narrator. When she is then addressed as one of the “Ladies and gentlemen of the jury”, a Storyworld subworld is created, since this is as possible state of affairs that could have existed in the Storyworld had Humbert not died before the start of his trial. Importantly, the reader is now explicitly prompted to view ‘Lolita’ within the communicative context of a defense trial. As Herman notes, “judgments about the meaning of a narrative are a function of particular communicative situations, which are in turn shaped by the process of telling and interpreting stories.” Supported by John Ray’s foreword, the reader is set to interpret Lolita as a novel, starting from a literary-reading scenario, but at the start of that very novel, the narrator immediately brings another communicative situation, and other fictional minds to simulate, into play. The imperative expression ending the chapter is thus directed at the reader simulating a jury-member, firmly opening up possibilities of engaged reading in terms of legal and moral judgment.

As a world building and function advancing story opening, this chapter not only sets the background for a holistic Storyworld to be fleshed out by the reader, but it also sketches the backdrop for the reader’s engaged narrative experience of the novel as a whole. In just these 169 words, the novel’s main themes and motives are touched upon. The reader is made aware of Humbert’s elaborate writing style, the fact that he is writing his text for his defense trial, and the obsessive and objectifying character of his admiration for the young girl Lolita. In terms of content, Art, Morality and Narratorial unreliability

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are all primed. In terms of form, the reminiscing on Lolita and her precursor plays into the construction of the mnemonic-imagination theme. The complex construction of modalization plus negation within the memory simultaneously prompts readers to imaginatively recenter themselves deeper into the Narrator’s Storyworld, investing strongly in an engagement with the narrator’s fictional mind and narrative. Humbert’s semi-personalized statement on prose and murderers offers the reader an opportunity to step out of the bounds of his solipsistic Narrator’s Storyworld, a step that gains more weight in the creation of a possible state of affairs in the Storyworld proper, in which Humbert is on trial. This back-and-forth play of (sub)subworld building, where the reader has to simulate different fictional minds (narrator, characters, her own under different circumstances) on different world levels, is evident in the language and content of this short first chapter. Already we can see glimpses of the complex dimension of worldmaking that characterizes readers’ engaged narrative experience of the novel, where boundaries between worlds are not always easy to define and sometimes almost too easy to cross.

The rest of L_1 is more typical of first person narration, in that it revolves around the story told by Humbert about not just Lolita, but also himself. He describes his childhood upbringing within the well-to-do class of European society in the early 1900’s, and looks closer at his first love affair with the girl Annabel, before setting forth his thoughts on what he calls ‘nympholepsy’. Yet Humbert is not one to tell a straightforward story, and invites the reader to focus on his writing style once again when talking about the death of his mother: "[N]othing of her subsists within the hollows and dells of memory, over which, if you can still stand my style (I am writing under observation), the sun of my infancy had set: surely, you all know those redolent remnants of day suspended, with the midges, about some hedge in bloom or suddenly entered and traversed by the rambler, at the bottom of a hill, in the summer dusk; a furry warmth, golden midges." The reader constantly has to switch between different communicative frames, which are blended in Humbert’s narrative: Chapter 1 ends with an appeal to the jury, and this communicative setting is reinforced by Humbert stating that he “is going to pass around in a minute some lovely, glossy-blue picture-postcards” to support his account of his childhood. With the account of his mother’s death following shortly hereafter, he then switches back to the novelistic narrative setting, directly addressing the reader via the hypothetical construction cited above. In terms of world building, ‘you’ is used differently here from Humbert’s first epistemic statement in chapter 1; the present two instances in the example function as forms of deictic address and thus firmly position the reader in the Actual World at this point. There is a stronger sense of personalization induced by this deictic ‘you’, because of its stronger indexical nature. Following Wechsler’s theory of self-ascription, as well as the outcomes of the experiments of Brunyé et al. discussed in the previous chapter (see Chapter 1, section 2.2.4, pp.23-32), the force of this deictic use of ‘you’ can be explained:

\[\text{Nabokov, V. (2000): 10.}\]
\[\text{Idem: 9.}\]
First-person (exclusive pronouns) designate the speakers as the self-ascribers, second-person pronouns designate the addressees as self-ascribers, and for first-person plural inclusive pronouns, both speakers and addressees are self-ascribers. Other interpreters of a given pronoun, such as addresses hearing a first-person pronoun, speakers uttering a second-person pronoun, or eavesdroppers, interpret these pronouns indirectly by inferring the self-ascribers interpretation. That inferential process involves inputting mental states to other people and making predictions based on those inputted mental states, an exercise of the cognitive ability known as THEORY OF MIND.\footnote{Wechsler, S. (2010): 333.}

When in Humbert’s exposition on his mother’s death he (the speaker) deictically addresses the reader (the addressee), he is required to having previously inferred how the reader will self-ascribe his uttered ‘you’. On the same note, the reader infers how Humbert self-ascribes the ‘I’ in the utterance. The reader thus immersively simulates his fictional mind, in a way that he, as narrator, can manipulate. As Emmott, Sanford and Alexander explain, based on attention control and depth of processing experiments, “second person ‘You’ narratives and first-person ‘I’-narratives, rather than third person narratives” make participants more likely to notice detail.\footnote{Emmott, C., Sanford, A.J., Alexander, M. (2013): 16.}

In other words, by using deictic ‘you’ and indexical ‘I’ in this passage, it is foregrounded and the reader will be more likely to notice that “style” and “memory” are mentioned, strengthening the reader’s engagement with the novels’ themes of Art and Mnemonics-Imagination. Regarding the latter, the reader is invited to follow Humbert’s mental functioning in a way that we see throughout ‘Lolita’: By stating “you all know those redolent remnants of day suspended […]”, and then proceeding in painting a scene of birds in the sun between grass and trees, he actually strongly focalizes on a very specific image metaphorically constituting an image of his childhood, as it appears to himself. However, the “you all know”-phrase prompts the reader to go along with the narrator in his process of imagining, simulating his focalizing stance on his childhood and losing herself in an epistemic modal world together with Humbert. Pronominal foregrounding, the communicative setting, and the content of the passage thus interact in a subtle interplay of back- and foregrounding in order to affect reader-engagement with the narrative. The immersive simulation is highly colored by the reader’s willingness and ability to experience ‘what it’s like’ for Humbert to remember his childhood, rather than being an experience of the childhood itself.

A similar experience of Humbert’s fictional mind is triggered when he describes the two ways in which he visually remembers both Annabel and Lolita:

“I remember her [Annabel] features far less distinctly today than I did a few years ago, before I knew Lolita. There are two kinds of visual memory: one when you skillfully recreate an image in the laboratory of your mind, with your eyes open (and then I see Annabel in such general terms as: "honey-colored skin," "thin arms," "brown bobbed hair," "long lashes," "big bright mouth"); and the other when you instantly evoke, with shut eyes, on the dark inner side of your
eyelids, the objective, absolutely optical replica of a beloved face, a little ghost in natural colors (and this is how I see Lolita).\textsuperscript{316}

Note the substitution of ‘you’ where the narrator could have used the ‘I’-form to explain his ways of imagining his two loves. By using ‘you’ in the main clauses and putting his first person utterances between brackets, the focus appears to lie on the reader’s imagining effort rather than Humbert’s, even though ‘you’ is of a somewhat more generic nature here.\textsuperscript{317} He downplays his own role in this respect, and highlights the reader’s. Like in the previous childhood-example, the immersive simulation here strongly hinges on the reader experiencing ‘what it’s like’ for the narrator to remember something. This is a recurring stylistic device throughout the entire novel (as we will see in the next sections of this chapter), with pronominal back- and foregrounding playing a dynamic role. The narrator uses linguistic foregrounding to trigger and guide the reader’s simulation here, crucial in terms of world building and narrative engagement. Readers are invited to experience Humbert’s mental process of imagining, which colors their view of Lolita, but also of Humbert, as he positions himself towards her. Herman explains the ability of stories to make readers enact another person’s consciousness, rather than merely engaging with their actions and thoughts on a surface level:

“[M]ore than just representing minds, stories emulate through their temporal and perspectival configuration the what-it’s-like dimension of conscious awareness itself. As Searle notes, consciousness cannot be pictured but is rather the process of picturing itself. […] [S]tories point beyond what might be called the closure of consciousness, that is, the impossibility of inspecting the very mechanisms by which inspection, as such, is made possible. Enacting and not just representing ways of experiencing […] stories capture and sustain our interest because of how their structure maps on to the mind’s own engagement with the world.”\textsuperscript{318}

‘Lolita’ is focused on Humbert’s consciousness, as he is our primary doorway into its Storyworld. By firmly holding the reins in his attempt to engage readers, Humbert takes them on a simulative trip through his consciousness and his experience of the Storyworld. Recalling Wechsler’s and Brunyé et al.’s comments on pronominally induced perspective-taking, it is of importance to note that throughout ‘Lolita’, there is an abundance of mental process type verbs\textsuperscript{319} used by the narrator when talking about himself using the first person singular pronoun: On a total of 3028 instances of verbs used in clauses with ‘I’ as subject, a striking number of 1236 instances can be characterized as mental process type verbs. This means that 41% of the clauses where ‘I’ is the subject not only trigger immersive simulation by providing internal perspective cues, but that this simulation is made more persistent by the use of verbs that encode experiences within the world of consciousness of the ‘I’, Humbert the narrator. Looking again at the passage

\textsuperscript{316} Nabokov, V. (2009): 11.

\textsuperscript{317} See de Hoop, H. & Hogeweg, L. (2014) for a comprehensive account of the linguistic and stylistic differences between deictic and generic uses of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} person pronoun in language and literature.


\textsuperscript{319} See Chapter 1, section 2.2.4, pp.23-32, for an overview of the different verb process types as set forth by Halliday and Mathiessen in their grammar of experience.
quoted above, every single verb linked to the ‘I’, but also those that sketch the ‘you’’s imaginative efforts, can be characterized as mental process type verbs, providing the reader with a sense of Humbert’s inner world by strengthening her simulative engagement on the level of phenomenal consciousness.

Of course, the construing of experiences in the Storyworld happens via other kind of verb process type as well. This happens, for example, in the next excerpt, where Humbert reflects on the nature of his past, on the other directions his life could have taken if he had not fallen for the girl child Annabel (process types between brackets in italics):

“I leaf (material) again and again through these miserable memories, and keep asking (verbal) myself, was it then, in the glitter of that remote summer, that the rift in my life began; or was my excessive desire for that child only the first evidence of an inherent singularity? When I try (behavioural) to analyze my own cravings, motives, actions and so forth, I surrender (behavioural) to a sort of retrospective imagination which feeds the analytic faculty with boundless alternatives and which causes each visualized route to fork and re-fork without end in the maddeningly complex prospect of my past. I am convinced (relational), however, that in a certain magic and fateful way Lolita began with Annabel.”

At first glance, there appears to be a paradox here: Why does this passage induce such a strong feeling of experiencing Humbert’s world of consciousness, if it contains no mental process type verbs? This is where the issue of focalization comes into play, because rather than focusing on his past or his earlier self, Humbert here focuses on his current endeavor of imagining and remembering that past. As such, the localized object of the narrator Humbert (nH0) is his own fictional mind (H0). The verbs tagged for process type in this excerpt all fall within the scope of this focalized context of the narrator’s consciousness: ‘leaving’ is metaphorical, ‘asking’ is an unspoken question by a reflecting narrator, ‘trying’ and ‘surrendering’ here are of a mental rather than physical nature, and ‘being convinced’ is a relational quality describing Humbert’s current state of consciousness. The encoding of experience by the narrator is thus submerged within this higher-level mental perspective, prompting readers to simulate his fictional mind by focalizing on the specific workings of his consciousness. In doing so, the mnemonics-imagination theme is heavily foregrounded, and the Annabel motive is put firmly in the spotlight.

In Nabokov criticism, Humbert’s first love Annabel is often seen as an intertextual cue, triggering a reference to Edgar Allen Poe’s poem ‘Annabel Lee’ for readers in the know: Humbert mentions his intoxication with her when they were both children, “in a princedom by the sea”321, presumably echoing Poe’s “kingdom by the sea”322. Like Poe’s Annabel in his poem, Humbert’s Annabel dies; she is metaphorically envied and taken by “noble-winged seraphs”, just like her 19th century counterpart is envied by angels and killed by a chilling wind coming out of the cloud by night. This is the first instance of a motive present in the entire novel, revolving around adult men’s love for younger

women, more specifically highly esteemed authors like Poe, Petrarca and Dante. When talking about foregrounding, the Annabel reference is the most primed love-reference in cognitive stylistic terms, since it functions so strongly as function advancing proposition within the initial Storyworld building effort of the reader at the start of Humbert’s story about Lolita. It also returns at the end of the novel, in a statistically significant text-part, L_31, treated in greater detail near the end of this chapter. The Annabel story can be said to trigger parabolic projection, having the reader not only projecting Poe’s poem intertextually on Humbert’s narrative, but also blending features of the authorship positions of their respective authors, Poe and Humbert. “Blending,” explains Michael Burke,

is a cognitive notion whose operation is central to how parable works. A blend is a kind of meeting-point between two (or more) conceptual structures. These structures, known as input spaces, get mapped into generic spaces, where shared information becomes evident. From here, this information is projected into a blended space, where it starts to combine and interact. When this happens in parable the blend is run though what is known as an ‘emergent structure’ (i.e. new content that comes into existence as a result of the actual blending process itself). This procedure allows the blend to take on a life of its own that does not have to rely on original information in the input spaces.121

The intertextually motivated cognitive feat of parabolic projection, resulting from the recurring mentioning of Annabel in Humbert’s recollections, blends numerous input spaces (both Annabels, their ‘life stories’, their lovers) into a blended space with new content. On a surface level, the ‘Annabel Lee’ input space has to do with how Humbert has come to love Lolita, and nymphets in general; speaking strictly in terms of narrative sequence, following the Annabel story, Humbert embarks on his exposition of ‘nympholepsy’. On a somewhat deeper level, the intertextual reference Humbert’s Annabel triggers blends Poe’s and Humbert’s aesthetic sensibilities, giving Humbert a new Romantic poet’s edge in the blended space, foreshadowing a tragic tale of love and loss, in this way minimizing the reader’s awareness that Humbert here sketches the very first beginning in the making of a pedophile. Parabolic projection of the poem thus emphasizes the artistic side of his story, while backgrounding its immoral qualities.

Rhetorically speaking, the placement of the Annabel story at the beginning of ‘Lolita’, right before Humbert starts his treatment of his theory on ‘nymphets’, is of consequence. The Art-theme has just been foregrounded, the Morality-theme backgrounded, and then Humbert nonchalantly provides just a few lines of information on his early professional career, the nature of which facilitated his fancy of ogling young girls. When Humbert drops the bomb with his theory on the existence of nymphets, young girls that are for specific although vague reasons very attractive to older men, the backgrounding of the Morality-theme lessens the impact of this quite disturbing rationalization of pedophiliac inclinations. Almost paradoxically, it seems, Humbert’s account of nympholepsy is highly reader-oriented, densely packed as it is with utterances implicating the existence of an interested audience. At the start, the reader’s attention is

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explicitly called for by Humbert, when he pre-announces “Now I wish to introduce the following idea.”124 He then explains what ‘nymphets’ are, presumes that the reader notices his spatial metaphors (“It will be marked that I substitute […]”125) and addresses the reader directly in a politeness construction (“I would have the reader see ‘nine’ and ‘fourteen’ as the boundaries - the mirror beaches and rosy rocks - of an enchanted island haunted by those nymphets of mine […]”). He then subtly switches from a firmly centered ‘I’-narration to a form of narration in which this first-person perspective is backgrounded by the absence of any form of ‘I’-use, but where a reader-oriented perspective is prompted. By using the inclusive first-person plural pronoun ‘we’ instead, Humbert triggers the reader to simulate minds like his own: “we who are in the know, we lone voyagers, we nympholepts [...]”127. He also uses an imperative construction to keep the reader in the center of the focalizing set-up: “look at the ugly dumplings in black stockings [...]”128. As he then goes on to describe the nature of the nympholept, he rather describes the experience of having such a disposition rather than truly describing such a person. Furthermore, he uses a generic form of ‘you’ in this experiential description, which the reader is invited to simulate strongly due to its context: It forms the apotheosis of the immersive simulation that has been strengthened more and more through the pronominal, commanding, and focalization and depth-of-processing reader-oriented constructions in this nympholepsy passage. Humbert explains:

“You have to be an artist and a madman, a creature of infinite melancholy, with a bubble of hot poison in your loins and a super-voluptuous flame permanently aglow in your subtle spine (oh, how you have to cringe and hide!), in order to discern at once, by ineffable signs - the slightly feline outline of a cheekbone, the slenderness of a downy limb, and other indices which despair and shame and tears of tenderness forbid me to tabulate - the little deadly demon among the wholesome children; she stands unrecognized by them and unconscious herself of her fantastic power.”129

The use of ‘you’ in this passage, following the build-up of reader-oriented expressions towards this climax, strongly invites readers to experience the nympholept’s unease of being over-sensitive to a nymphet’s nature. The simulation is furthermore shaped by Humbert’s use of almost hidden commands, triggering epistemic modal world building: “You have to be […]” and “oh, how you have to cringe and hide!”. One first person reference is sneaked into this passage (“tears of tenderness forbid me to tabulate”), in a subordinate part of the sentence. As Emmott, Sanford and Alexander note, “complex structures such as subordinate clauses make participants less likely to notice detail.”330

The rhetorical focus is thus still on the experiential flow of the description, as focalized on by the reader. She is deictically shifted back up in the next paragraph, where Humbert

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125 Ibidem.
126 Ibidem.
127 Ibidem.
128 Ibidem.
129 Ibidem.
calls his reader “the student” of nympholepsy, resuming his exposition more rationally and using the ‘I’-perspective once again.

Summarizing the analysis of the opening pages of ‘Lolita’, we can say that Humbert has a firm hand in guiding the reader into ‘Lolita’’s Storyworld. The reader immediately has to take on different roles with regard to this world, where she is both juror, reader and even Humbert’s fellow nympholept. She is invited to simulate Humbert’s mental functioning, especially his experiences of remembering and imagining, within the Narrator’s Storyworld, and is sometimes quite lost in the workings of his consciousness. She is also, seemingly paradoxically, very much positioned towards Humbert and his narrative as an observer ‘out there’, whether that means in the Storyworld as juror or in the Actual World as reader. Interestingly, the only times in the novel that we can say the reader gets a glimpse of the Storyworld of ‘Lolita’ rather than the Narrator’s Storyworld, is when she is addressed as juror. The reader of ‘Lolita’ does not appear to exist within the Storyworld, but she is present as reader of ‘Lolita’ in Lolita in the Actual World. Only in the role of this real reader can she make judgments about Humbert’s (ir)reliability, immersively simulate different consciousnesses, and position herself towards the narrative and its characters. As Alan Palmer notes, just like human beings, characters in novels have quite a capacity for error in the analysis of their mental states, especially when it comes to how we perceive our motives for the actions that we take. “This is why,” he explains, “it is such an important part of the role of the narrator to supplement the self-conscious, and possibly self-serving, flow of inner speech with analyses in thought report that can supply an alternative and more reliable account of the true motivation for characters’ actions.” ‘Lolita’’s narrator is, textually speaking, wholly made up of a self-serving flow of inner speech, so the reader has to discover the true motivation for his, and Lolita’s, actions through other means in the novel. The following analyses of the stylistically significant text-parts L_6, L_16, L_29 and L_31 will shed more light on the reader’s cognitive efforts in dealing with the complex dimension of building ‘Lolita’’s worlds.

5 A (not quite so) lazy Sunday morning

On a Sunday morning in June, when Lolita is but twelve, Humbert has a first sexual tryst with the girl he so vehemently desires. Leading up to this pivotal scene in the novel, readers have been made aware of Humbert’s strong dislike for Lolita’s mother, Charlotte Haze, whom he tolerates for the sake of being near his nymphet. She is a constant obstacle in his endeavors to get Lolita alone - but finally, on a sunny Sunday morning, he smells opportunity and goes downstairs in his pajamas and robe in search for Lo. He finds her in the living room and embarks on a mission of transgression. Humbert would not be Humbert if he did not pour his experience of his first and very satisfying physical encounter with Lolita into remarkable a narrative mould. Nabokov criticism treats this scene as highly important, since it epitomizes some of the moral issues readers of the

novel have to deal with. The passage appears to be ambiguous on multiple levels, and plays with interpretive non-closure regarding the (non)solipsism of Lolita: Is she aware of what is happening? Is she actually a willing participant in the whole affair? As a result of the reader’s engagement with this ambiguity, the question of Humbert’s guilt and moral nature comes into focus. This does not only depend on the passage’s content, but also on its specific linguistic texture.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, L_6, the text-part that contains this entire scene, stands out stylistically. The PCA graph of *Lolita* (see Figure 3.3, p.69) shows its position due south in the visual rendering of the novel’s language. Frequency-wise, the passage is characterized by the occurrence of the possessive pronoun ‘her’. The follow-up Zeta-analysis of this passage indicated that ‘her’ is also a marker-word in terms of consistency, but even stronger marker-words are ‘haze’, ‘my’, ‘she’ and ‘had’ (in descending ranking order). In order to explain the uncomfortable feeling that may result from readers’ narrative experiences of this passage, the cognitive stylistic analysis presented here focuses on its foregrounded reader-oriented nature, the perspective-taking effects of marker-word pronouns and Humbert’s efforts to convince his readers and jurors that Lolita has not been harmed by the experience in any way.

L_6 features 645 words before the Sunday scene proper starts, and 1074 words following its ending. This means that the main bulk of this text-part, its center 1781 words, revolves around the passage at issue here. However, the part of L_6 leading up to the passage prepares the reader for what is to come in a subtle and strategic way, just like the part following the passages contains important commentary on the scene. In the part leading up to the Sunday scene, we find two direct instances of reader address, where the reader is invited to focus on Charlotte Haze in a negative way. Humbert tells us of her constantly thwarting his schemes to get Lolita alone: “The agent of these interruptions was usually the Haze woman (who, as the reader will mark, was more afraid of Lo’s deriving some pleasure from me than of my enjoying Lo).” This is one more instance of a trend throughout the novel where Humbert tries to discredit Lolita’s mother, aiming for readerly sympathy and maybe even masking his desire for Lolita as something benevolent, replacing a maternal love she does not receive. The reader here is explicitly invited to mark Charlotte’s unfair stance towards Lolita, and is addressed again in the sentence after the next: “The reader has also marked the curious Mirage of the Lake.” This ‘Mirage’ refers to an initial trip to a lake the Haze household was scheduled to make on the Sunday in question after they would have gone to church. Humbert had planned to put one of his getting-Lolita-alone schemes in motion there, but the outing was cancelled by Charlotte, who felt Lolita was being obnoxious and consequently punished her by having her stay at home instead of going to church and the lake. And this is where the Sunday morning seduction scene begins, right after the reader has been prompted to take in Charlotte’s wrongful behavior - Humbert just feels her to be jealous of any good time Lolita might possibly have with him - towards her daughter. The two instances of direct reader address mentioned here lead up to the start of the Sunday morning passage.

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334 Ibidem.
priming the reader’s attention by explicitly addressing her and influencing her thoughts on Charlotte’s supposedly bad maternal behavior, while also anchoring her consciousness firmly in the Actual World. This anchoring is at the same time maintained and undermined in Humbert’s description of his and Lolita’s first sexual encounter, engendering ambiguous interpretive possibilities and a layered engaged narrative experience.

At first glance, Humbert starts this scene in a paradoxical way. He emphasizes that his readers should be extremely attentive to what he is about to tell them, the nature of which is obviously going to be quite delicate, as his tale up till now has led the reader to expect: “I want my learned readers to participate in the scene I am about to replay; I want them to examine its every detail and see for themselves how careful, how chaste, the whole wine-sweet event is if viewed with what my lawyer has called, in a private talk we have had, ‘impartial sympathy.’ So let us get started. I have a difficult job before me.”

This pre-announcement has a very interesting linguistic texture: Humbert slyly characterizes his readers as ‘learned’, fishing for some goodwill, and then invites them to ‘participate’ in a scene that he will ‘replay’, including the reader into his experiential field by using the imperative-hortative pronominal ‘let us’-construction. Just like at the start of ‘Lolita’, readers are prompted to simulate Humbert’s experience of a memory, where the narrator-character (nH0) claims to give an objective account of what happened to him as experience-character (H1). The workings of focalization are very complex at this point, where nH0 focalizes on the replaying of an experience he had as H1, but this experience is the focalized object within the focalized object of nH0’s own memory (H0). In addition, within the description of the memory itself he actually reproduces H1’s focalizing stance in the entire matter, Lolita being the focalized object. The reader’s immersive simulation thus has an implicit quality, where boundaries between simulated consciousnesses - ranging from the reader’s own to H1’s and maybe even Lolita’s - are very much blurred.

The focus on the memory as focalized object is quite stable at the start of the passage quoted above, but the reader soon gets sucked into H1’s focal field of vision. nH0 first focalizes on H1, quite literally setting up the stage on which the scene will play out: “Main character: Humbert the Hummer. Time: Sunday morning in June. Place: sunlit living room. Props: old, candy-striped davenport, magazines, […].” But then, H1 becomes focalizer, taking the reader some more steps down into Humbert the narrator’s experiencing mind: “She wore that day a pretty pink dress that I had seen on her once before, ample in the skirt, […].” The focalizing stance pops back up in terms of Deictic Shifting when Humbert describes himself catching the piece of fruit Lolita threw in the air: “Humbert Humbert intercepted the apple.” When Humbert the narrator talks about himself by using his own name (or a comic variation on it) rather than the first person pronominal self-reference that is expected, the reader simulates the narrator

[335] Idem: 57.
focalizing on his earlier self. As such, Humbert can create some distance between the acts he has performed as H1 and his later self, H0, who might be sorry for those actions. However, the sex scene is almost entirely focalized by H1 through the reminiscing of nH0, who has asked the reader up front to participate with him in this scene. This type of double focalization makes it hard to pinpoint the exact source of information, as well as the reliability of the source. In any case, the reader’s consciousness is submerged in Humbert’s on numerous possible levels, H1 being the deepest level, which is helped by the consistent use of the pronoun ‘my’ and the way it interacts with the marker word ‘her’.

The ‘my’-‘her’ interface is interesting, because it gives a very specific feel to the engaged narrative experience of this passage. The reader finds herself experiencing Humbert’s memory via the sensation parts of his body have when he sees, smells and touches parts of Lolita’s being. A telling example is the, literal, climax of the passage, where Humbert reaches his final physical high:

“‘Look, look!’ - I gasped - ‘look what you’ve done to yourself, ah, look’; for there was, I swear, a yellowish-violet bruise on her lovely nymphet thigh which my huge hairy hand massaged and slowly enveloped - and because of her very perfunctory underthings, there seemed to be nothing to prevent my muscular thumb from reaching the hot hollow of her groin - just as you might tickle and caress a giggling child - just that - and: ‘Oh it’s nothing at all,’ she cried with a sudden shrill note in her voice, and she wiggled, and squirmed, and threw her head back, and her teeth rested on her glistening underlip as she half-turned away, and my moaning mouth, gentlemen of the jury, almost reached her bare neck, while I crushed out against her left buttock the last throb of the longest ecstasy man or monster had ever known.”

Throughout the entire passage, Humbert dismantles Lolita into various bits and pieces, but also himself, in terms of their physicality. This lessens the objectifying effect of Lolita, although she is the focalized object - in pieces -, since Humbert himself is bodily dismantled as well. It also gives the reader the opportunity to simulate Humbert’s experience of this scene in an ambiguous way. By constantly anchoring the reader’s experience of H1’s consciousness through the use of ‘my’, where the possessed part of the expression is a part of his body, simulation may become intensified. The effect of describing the sensations of different body parts is a focus on the simulative what-it’s-like qualities of the experience. The concept of ‘qualia’ may offer some clarification in this respect. As Herman explains, within the philosophy of mind the notion of ‘qualia’ has been developed to discuss the “what it’s like dimension of consciousness; qualia are felt, subjective properties of mental states, such as those I experience when I see the white color of my cat’s fur, or feel the bite of cold air on my face when I step outside on a winter evening.”

By zooming in on how parts of himself experience parts of Lolita, Humbert triggers readers to engage in simulating this experience-in-and-of-parts in a very intimate way. At the same time, however, he somewhat discards responsibility for his actions by turning the entire encounter into an interaction between body parts, rather

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339 Idem: 60-61. My italics - PW.
than between a grown man and a young girl. Maybe that is why nH0 can step back in firmly when (see quote) he addresses the gentleman of the jury precisely when he climaxes.

This attitude of innocence Humbert showcases is also foregrounded on content level by his firm insistence on the fact that Lolita has not been harmed by his behavior in any way whatsoever. When she jumps off the couch to pick up the ringing phone afterwards, he silently exclaims: “Blessed be the Lord, she had noticed nothing!” In the final part of L_6, following the Sunday scene, Humbert comes back from lunch and goes out of his way to proclaim how harmless his actions that morning were: “I felt proud of myself. I had stolen the honey of a spasm without impairing the morals of a minor. Absolutely no harm done. […] still Lolita was safe - and I was safe. What I had madly possessed was not she, but my own creation, another, fanciful Lolita - perhaps, more real than Lolita; overlapping, encasing her; floating between me and her, and having no will, no consciousness - indeed, no life of her own.” This is a remarkable interpretation of his acts on his own part, where he appears to willfully ignore the picture he painted of Lolita during the Sunday scene: When Humbert climaxes, Lolita’s reaction and movements are described in no less sexual terms. This, of course, might very well be one of Humbert’s distortions of the truth to make Lolita look complicit to their actions.

When H1 focalizes, he appears to have the tendency to paint a picture of Lolita as readily available for Humbert’s fantasies. When nH0 focalizes, however, he appears to be very aware of the fact that one of the audiences he is writing for consists of a jury that needs to be sympathetic to his cause in order to not send him to the electric chair. Already during the encounter, Humbert remarks that “Lolita had been safely solipsized.” For H1, she is always his Lolita, and his Lolita is complacent and willing, takes her own advantage of the situation, and because she is a true nymphet, she has power over him rather than the other way around; if anyone is getting hurt, it is Humbert, because she uses him to get what she wants (candy, magazines, new clothes), while he professes to truly love her. Note that H1’s Lolita is solipsized, but not unaware of what is going on; the reader thus gets a sense of Lolita as a not so innocent little girl through the field of vision of H1.

However, when nH0 takes over, the narrative takes a more defensive turn. Interestingly, the earlier quoted “Blessed be the Lord, she had noticed nothing!” can be characterized as a form of Free Indirect Discourse, where both nH0 and H1 can be heard. First person Free Indirect Discourse is quite rare and harder to identify than third person Free Indirect Discourse. The sentence cited above can qualify as Free Indirect Discourse considering both its context and linguistic features. This sentence occurs after Lolita has rolled off the couch and answered the telephone, her mother being on the other end. H1 focalizes on Lolita, describing her in the following words:

“There she stood and blinked, cheeks aflame, hair awry, her eyes passing over me as lightly as they did over the furniture [1], and as she listened or spoke (to her mother who was telling her to come

343 Idem: 60.
to lunch with her at the Chatfields - neither Lo nor Hum knew yet what busybody Haze was plotting), she kept tapping the edge of the table with the slipper she held in her hand. **Blessed be the Lord, she had noticed nothing!** With a handkerchief of multicolored silk, on which her listening eyes rested in passing [2], I wiped the sweat of my forehead, […]"345

The sentence can be termed Free Indirect Discourse due to the specific nature of the focalization in its surrounding context. Humbert focalizing on Lolita who is regarding him in [1] is H1 focalizing, and the same goes for the focalization in [2]. As a cry of relief, the underlined sentence stands out in this context of rather straightforward thought report. In addition, nH0 suddenly steps onto the focalizing scene before the sentence, when he refers to H1 as ‘Hum’, while the rest of this text-passage appears to be focalized through H1. When the outcry at issue here comes along, the reader might thus experience a blend of both experiencer-character and narrator-character voice and field of vision. Regarding the nature of Free Indirect Discourse, Alan Palmer remarks that “its most important characteristic is the impression it gives of character and narrator speaking or thinking simultaneously” and he states that “FID is often difficult to identify in a narrative, but this elusiveness is very much part of its stylistic effect.”346 The Free Indirect Discourse in this specific instance is of a backgrounded nature, it is indeed elusive, in that it very subtly blends the focalization of H1 and nH0. This ambiguous focalization, occurring precisely when Humbert’s moral responsibilities are emphasized, is remarkable. Just like the fragmentation of the embodied experience of the sexual encounter in the passage causes both more intense simulation on the reader’s part as well as creating a distancing effect in terms of moral responsibility, the use of Free Indirect Discourse here throws another sliver of doubt into the interpretive mix. While reading this passage, the reader cannot get interpretive closure when considering H1’s or nH0’s sincerity, the (in)existence of H1’s/nH0’s knowledge of Lolita’s experience, or Lolita’s actual experience of the scene.

It is almost impossible for a reader to get a real grip on the Storyworld here, considering the Narrator’s Storyworld - which we thought was at least somewhat knowable up till now - requires a great effort to construct in this passage. Both Humbert the narrator and Humbert the experiencer-character know how to twist and turn language and events in the story in such a way as to leave the reader quite out of simulative breath. The fact that Lolita looks back at Humbert twice only after their tryst is over may be the most salient world building element readers encounter here. Humbert denies that she is actually seeing him, positioning her within his Narrator’s Storyworld, as well as the subworlds where H1 is the focalizing instance, as an object he regards but who does not fully register him. Humbert interprets this stare as a token of Lolita not having been harmed by his acts, rather than viewing it as the vacant eyed stare of a sexual abuse victim - or maybe he does view it that way, but simply does not want his readers and jurors to know so. The reader here has more simulative power in the experience of Lolita’s gaze on Humbert than he himself does; however he may try to dissuade readers

345 Ibidem. My italics and underlining - PW.
from following Lolita’s mental functioning by fragmentizing her, describing only her outward appearance and not her feelings, the reader can nevertheless make the leap to simulation of at least Lolita’s gaze. By looking back at Humbert with Lolita, more from the Storyworld than the Narrator’s Storyworld perhaps, Humbert’s evaluation of the scene can be questioned. Such apparently small narrative events as Lolita’s looking back are of great consequence for the reader’s engaged narrative experience. Herman suggests that narratives and stories have the singular ability to “afford an environment in which versions of what it was like to experience situations and events can be juxtaposed, comparatively evaluated, and then factored into further accounts of the world (or a world).”347 This passage epitomizes narrative’s ability to immerse readers in stories through simulating different consciousnesses at different narrative planes, which are dynamically created through shifts in focalization, the use of Free Indirect Discourse, specific types of description and reader oriented constructions. Humbert dehumanizes Lolita, but also reveres her, through language, and the reader is left with the feeling of having witnessed a scene of both disturbing transgression and beautiful scandal.

6 Portrait of an American girl child

Text-part L_16 proved to be the odd one out following the PCA of Lolita and the follow-up Zeta Analysis (see Figure 3.8, p.77): This particular passage is not one that critics deem pivotal for Lolita, as is the case with the other text-parts that are stylistic outliers. However, L_16 does show a linguistic texture revolving semantically around a motive that Nabokov scholars have commented upon, that is, ‘Lolita’’s portraying of the American landscape as an ode to United States through the eyes of Humbert the émigré. Words having to do with tourism and travel, from ‘book’ to ‘tour’ and ‘town’ to ‘street’, are marker words for L_16, whereas the more typical Lolita-words like ‘I’, ‘me’ and ‘she’ are anti-marker words for this text-part. Interestingly, the two highest ranking marker words in the Zeta Analysis for L_16 are ‘lo’ and ‘we’; the abbreviated form of Lolita’s name and the first person plural pronoun. In the following cognitive stylistics analysis of this text-part, we will look at how Humbert’s descriptions of Lolita interact with his descriptions of the American scenery to paint a very specific and biased picture of Lolita. Related to this is the issue of ‘we’ used consistently throughout this passage to refer to the pair Lolita-Humbert, the strong presence of which sets this specific text-part apart from the rest of the novel.

Looking at L_16 more closely, we can see that it starts relatively soon after the start of Part Two of ‘Lolita’ (2826 words precede it in this part). This is interesting in itself, since it appears that we are dealing with a new beginning, setting the scene for this second novel-part with new world building elements and function advancing propositions being presented. It is worth noting that the 3500 words making up L_16 contain an almost stylistically closed off passage of scenery description: Just before it starts Humbert remarks on Lolita’s having “no eye for scenery”, after which he starts describing at length the beauties of the American landscape. He embeds the specific route he and his girl-love

took through this landscape during their travels within his descriptions, a technique he also uses when, quite literally, mapping their rows. Lolita’s appearance and behavior towards Humbert and other adult males, boys and girls, is also subsumed within those environmental descriptions. The text-part ends just 32 words before the close of the paragraph with the final descriptive scene that follows the established stylistic pattern of description, and is followed by Humbert describing Lolita playing tennis.

This descriptive American scenery passage has an interesting stylistic set-up, in that it starts with Humbert using long sentences and lengthy descriptions of the scenery, with all its natural beauty, tourist attractions and typical American pastimes. Humbert’s descriptions then become more and more measured, shorter, using fragmented sentences and giving many geographical pointers. Towards the end, the description takes on a slower pace once again, where Lolita is the descriptive focal point. The notion of pacing is important here, since the rhythmic cadences that Humbert the narrator, nH0, conjures up here, appear to mimic his and Lolita’s journey throughout the U.S., which Humbert needs to be a fast and exciting one in order for Lolita to be satisfied and stay with Humbert, as well as the law, which he feels is always on his tail. The reader is taken along on this journey via direct reader address and immersive simulation of nH0’s remembering as well as H1’s experience of the trip.

At the start of the passage and mostly throughout it, readers are simulating H1’s field of vision; they are triggered to follow his mental functioning and focalize on the scenery and Lolita through his consciousness. There are some deictic shifts back up to nH0’s focalizing consciousness, that are immediately complicated in terms of perspective taking, since they are either triggered by implicit or explicit reader address and once by the use of Free Indirect Discourse where Lolita is one of the voices heard. Humbert starts off his geographical mapping of their trip by explaining to the implicitly present jury that his lawyer asked him to do so, triggering focalization by nH0, while at the same time positioning the reader in the Storyworld as jury-member: “My lawyer has suggested I give a clear, frank account of the itinerary we followed, and I suppose I have reached here a point where I cannot avoid that chore.”

He also addresses his lawyer specifically in the middle of the vague and short travel itinerary he provides here: “This is not too clear I am afraid, Clarence, but I did not keep any notes.” Interestingly, nH0 now starts a new chapter and begins by addressing his reader rather than his jury, and he does so in terms that are more elaborate and eloquent than when addressing his audience in the Storyworld’s communicative setting of a legal trial. Moreover, he now asks for the reader’s attention in a pre-announcing utterance, making sure that her cognitive focus is on a very specific aspect of his scenery descriptions, namely to keep Lolita somewhat happy:

“Now, in perusing what follows, the reader should bear in mind not only the general circuit as adumbrated above, with its many sidetrips and tourist traps, secondary circles and skittish deviations, but also the fact that far from being an indolent partie de plaisir, our tour was a hard,
twisted, teleological growth, whose sole raison d’être (these French clichés are symptomatic) was to keep my companion in passable humor from kiss to kiss.”

This pre-announcement features a direct reader address, that conjures up a subworld through the deontic modal construction ‘should bear in mind’ in the reader’s mind in the Actual World. She is invited to read the American scenery passage with the constant awareness that Humbert as experience-character was doing his utmost best to make sure that Lolita would be docile during the intervals between their physical contact. At the end of Part One of ‘Lolita’, Humbert has informed Lolita of her mother’s demise, not because he wanted to, but because he had to. Part One ends with an emotionally very laden short chapter, where Humbert finally remarks: “At the hotel we had separate rooms, but in the middle of the night she came sobbing into mine, and we made it up very gently. You see, she had absolutely nowhere else to go.” In the clear guise of nH0, Humbert addresses the reader via ‘you’, personalizing this very sad comment and thereby increasing its impact. The pre-announcement quoted above engages a similar stylistic strategy, creating feelings of unease concerning the whole business in the reader, but this time to a different end. The reader is reminded of Lolita’s victimhood during the trip Humbert is taking her on, but is also made privy to his annoyance with the fact that he is obliged to keep her in good spirits in between moments of abuse, so she will not just run off or be a nuisance to him. The subworld in the Actual World thus created functions in a noteworthy way, cognitively speaking. Its baseline for world-construction lies in the Actual World, but it transcends the boundaries of the Storyworld, the Narrator’s Storyworld and all subworlds in both the Storyworld and Narrator’s Storyworld that are consequently instantiated in the American scenery passage. You could say that it is draped over those worlds as a large blanket, infusing the engaged narrative experience of the entire passage on multiple world levels, no matter whose consciousness is simulated.

Let us look at the descriptions of Lolita that Humbert presents during this scene with this in mind. He paints a picture of Lolita, just like he paints a picture of the American scenery, fragmentizing and solipsizing her once again, like he did during the sex scene in L_6. This time we see Lolita in a different light, mostly referred to as ‘Lo’, characterized by rather negative adjectives, speaking very short utterances that Humbert reports in Direct Speech. Even though Humbert is still very much entranced with his nymphet, he now also notices her childish nature and actions more and more, and does not approve of her stubbornness and reluctance to indulge his fancies. He tells his readers that “Lo would clamor for a drink”, and calls her “little Lo”, “grim Lo”, “little fool”, “blasé Lo”, “little limp Lo”, “little Lo”, “my sweet fool”, and “cruel Lo”.

Ibidem.

Idem: 142.

Idem: on pages 153, 154, 155, 156, 159, 159, 160, 161 respectively.
life.’ ‘Not mine,’ said grim Lo, and settled down on a bench with the fillings of two Sunday papers in her lovely lap.’ The appeal to the reader is painful here, in that the reader’s consciousness is focused on Lolita’s innocence as a child, which is compromised by her unchildlike dismissal of enjoying the garden and the fact that she sits down with two Sunday papers in her lap, a body part of some significance for Humbert that he gives special status here, rather than two teenage magazines. The focalizing stance shifts from nH0 who focuses on the memory to that of H1 who focuses on Lolita; H1 is the one often fragmentizing Lolita, solipsizing her in pieces in order not to have to engage with her as a real person. Similar fragmentization occurs in other possessive constructions where H1 focalizes disapprovingly on Lolita: “an elderly, but still repulsively handsome White Russian, a baron they said (Lo’s palms were damp, the little fool)”354, and “A lanky, six-foot, pale boy with an active Adam’s apple, ogling Lo and her orange-brown bare midriff”.355 As is evident from the first example here, Humbert the experience-character has become rather afraid that Lolita will run off with another male (child or adult) and he tries to get this across to the reader in terms of betrayal and disobedience. She is not interested in a picture Humbert shows her, but rather is “squinting at the bronzed owner of an expensive car who had followed us into the Hobby House.”356 She wants to pick up hitchhikers with a certain physique, which Humbert fears will replace him: “‘Let’s take him,’ Lo would often plead, rubbing her knees together in a way she had, as some particularly disgusting pollex, some man of my age and shoulder breadth, with the face à claques of an unemployed actor, walked backwards, practically in the path of our car. Oh, I had to keep a very sharp eye on Lo, little limp Lo!”357

By now, there can be no doubt for the reader that Lolita is aware of her situation as Humbert’s mistress, something that Humbert still does not want to fully admit, both as H1 and as nH0. Humbert tries to downplay this awareness by telling the reader how cruel and inattentive Lolita is to him, thereby paradoxically focusing on her childishness. For example, experience-character Humbert likes to park near places where lots of children are to be found and having Lolita satisfy his needs: “This sort of thing soon began to bore my so easily bored Lolita, and, having a childish lack of sympathy for other people’s whims, she would insult me and my desire to have her caress me while blue-eyed little brunettes in blue short [...] passed by in the sun.”358 Humbert appears to have issues with the fact that Lolita still is a child, and not only a nymphet, something that is very apparent when they come across some old acquaintances of theirs somewhere during their journey. In the following quote nH0 steps back in as focalizer using direct reader address, while the reader has been simulating H1 for a while, following his mental functioning through almost stream-of-consciousness type narration: “A hazy blue view beyond railings on a mountain pass, and the backs of a family enjoying it (with Lo, in a hot, happy, wild, intense, hopeful, hopeless whisper - ‘Look, the McCrystals, please,”

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353 Idem: 155. My italics - PW.
354 Ibidem. My italics - PW.
356 Idem: 156.
357 Idem: 159.
let’s talk to them, please’ - let’s talk to them, reader! - ‘please! I’ll do anything you want, oh, please…’

Humbert puts the reader on a par with him here, positions her with himself towards Lolita’s unspokenable proposition of going and talk to people they know and thus risking the discovery of their secret liaison. At the same time, Lolita’s excitement and sadness at this moment are very tangible to the reader, and Humbert’s indignation may have a contrary effect. In addition, this is the most Direct Speech that Lolita gets space for in this passage, since all other speech reports Humbert provides the reader with are of the extremely short sort. All of her Direct Speech-occurrences in this passage are the earlier quoted “‘Not mine,’ said grim Lo

Humbert then goes on with his dry listing of places and venues, but here the reader has just been given a rare look into Lolita’s awareness and tiredness of it all. By using Free Indirect Discourse, Humbert distances himself from Lolita’s question, the answer to which he does not communicate to his readers, who get closer to Lolita than they usually are allowed.

Note that she is ‘my Lolita’ and not ‘Lo’ in this example, just like she is ‘Lolita’ when Humbert reflects in L_6 on his not having harmed Lolita during their first sexual encounter. The cognitive processing of Lolita’s different names can be explained in terms of ‘textual cohesion’, which comes to pass due to the workings of ‘cohesive chains’ of reference to the main characters in a narrative.

Each of these chains consist,” argues Catherine Emmott, “of all the references to a key character in a text, including names, lexical expressions (e.g. ‘the woman’) and pronouns.” She furthermore states that such ‘cohesion analysis’, based on Halliday and Hasan (1976), offers an important tool to study the relationship between style and theme, because these devices have the function of binding a text together. Michael Toolan, following a similar theoretical engagement, suggests that cohesion analysis, focusing on pronominal reference and substitution, can provide insight into how textual coherence is maintained and how important descriptive

\[\text{Idem: 157. My italics - PW.}\]

\[\text{Idem: 155.}\]

\[\text{Idem: 159.}\]

\[\text{Idem: 153.}\]

\[\text{Idem: 156.}\]

\[\text{Idem: 158.}\]

\[\text{Idem: 158.}\]


and evaluative effects are achieved. Although Lolita definitely knows what is going on in her life and disapproves of it, as the quoted instance of Free Indirect Discourse shows, Humbert still tries to solipsize his ‘Lolita’, to have her be his “own creation, another, fanciful Lolita - perhaps, more real than Lolita; overlapping, encasing her; floating between me and her, and having no will, no consciousness - indeed, no life of her own.” As ‘Lo’, she appears to be someone who aims at thwarting his plans, as ‘Lolita’, he can safely possess her. The specific nickname Humbert gives Lolita at a certain moment positions them differently towards each other in Humbert’s eyes, and informs the reader about the mental state he is in at that particular time. ‘Lolita’ is his lover, while ‘Lo’ is his disobedient companion who might betray him. As we will see in the cognitive stylistic analyses of the next two text-parts, the constantly changing reference to Lolita by way of different names guides the reader in following Humbert’s fictional mind’s mental functioning, and it contributes to the reader’s engaged narrative experience where the themes of Art, Memory and Narratorial reliability are concerned. In addition to Lolita’s names, another important part of the cohesive chain of reference is the use of ‘we’ in this passage. The fact that ‘we’ is a marker word here, is because Humbert tries to present himself and Lolita as one pair undertaking a journey, but they are further apart from each other than they have ever been. Humbert’s ‘we’ inspect the American scenery, but his ‘we’ is, literally and figuratively, not Lolita’s ‘we’. Only in the Free Indirect Discourse-example does she use this inclusive pronoun, but its context is telling: Lolita’s ‘we’ reside in stuffy cabins, doing filthy things, do not behave like ordinary people.

The reader’s engaged narrative experience is focused on Lolita in L_16, a passage which on the surface appears to offer mainly descriptions of the American scenery by Humbert, but on closer inspection presents a portrait of Lolita. The reader is both given insight into Lolita’s state of mind, precisely via Humbert’s outward descriptions of her, while at the same time Humbert distances himself from her and tries to get the reader to do the same. The fact that the first-person pronouns ‘me’ and ‘I’ rank highest as anti-marker words to this passage is telling in this respect: Although Humbert aims for readerly sympathy, he keeps the reader at a distance by firmly placing her in the Actual World through implicit and explicit reader address. An example like “The reader may well imagine what I answered my pet when - rather uncertainly, I admit - she would ask me if she could go with Carl and Al here to the roller-skating rink” shows this double nature of the engaged narrative experience of this passage, where the reader is both invited to simulate Humbert’s state of mind in anticipating his response, going through the motions of his reasoning, while at the same time she gets a glimpse of Lolita’s very childlike and submissive, one could even say innocent, behavior towards Humbert. Immersive simulation of Humbert’s field of vision, whether nH0 or H1 is focalizing, is often negotiated by direct address to the reader, who is prompted to critically reflect on what is being narrated. The slight insight the reader gets into Lolita’s mental functioning

is thus not only foregrounded because of its scarcity throughout the novel, but also through its content and the Speech and Thought Representation-techniques used. It almost appears as though Humbert the experiencer-character starts losing control of Lolita, and this is reflected in the language Humbert the narrator uses when describing her. He also loses some control of keeping the reader inside his Narrator’s Storyworld; she gets some sneak peeks into the Storyworld where Lolita is not Humbert’s creation, but an American girl child with a definite life of her own.

7 A visit to the Schillers

Commencing their ramblings throughout North America at the start of ‘Lolita’’s Part Two, a trend is set for the remainder of the novel: Humbert becomes ever more anxious to lose his Lolita to someone else, feels he needs to placate her more and more in order to have her caress him, and eventually loses her altogether when she disappears from a hospital where she resides due to illness. After years filled with alcohol and other numbing diversions, he finds Lolita once again, now 17 years old, living together with almost deaf Dick Schiller, the father of her unborn child. She has written to him for money and he pays a visit to her, Dick and their old dog, a visit which critics find to be very interesting within the overall narrative development. During his stay in the Schiller household Humbert and Lolita have a conversation about her escape from Humbert and affair with Quilty, the playwright that had been following them during their trip and whom Lolita fell in love with. This conversation presents readers with different stylistic pointers for an engaged narrative experience, which, combined with the specific content presented in the Speech and Thought Representation, triggers complex Storyworld construction and emotional engagement. Based on the Zeta Analysis of L_29 vs. the rest of ‘Lolita’, this text-part’s linguistic texture appears to be of a more colloquial nature than the rest of the novel. Since it contains much conversation, this is not surprising per sé. However, one needs not be reminded that Humbert, both as nH0 and H1, is not one to use informal language. There is a probability that readers do get to hear Lolita’s voice in this passage, but still, it is always filtered through Humbert’s perception and memory. Due to its conversational nature, the cognitive stylistic analysis of L_29 focuses on the Speech and Thought Representation-set up of Humbert’s and Lolita’s conversation and zooms in on a memory Humbert describes at the end of the text-part, where he confesses to have known about the effects of his deeds on Lolita for a much longer time than has become evident in the narrative up to this point.

In terms of Speech and Thought Representation, there is an interesting division as to whether Direct Speech or Free Indirect Discourse is used. Humbert sits down with Lolita in order to hear her out about what he views as her betrayal of him, her running away with Quilty. Lolita’s Direct Speech occurs in very short sentences, just like in L_16, and they lead up to a long passage of Free Indirect Discourse where Lolita’s tale is mediated through nH0. She tells Humbert: “Sit down”, asks him “Sure you don’t want to smoke?” and remarks “Betrayed you? No”. What follows is a lengthy stretch of Free

570 Idem: 275.
Indirect Discourse, in which both Lolita’s and Humbert’s voices are clearly audible. The way Free Indirect Discourse is used here falls into a larger pattern in the novel, where Humbert strategically uses this distancing type of Speech and Thought Representation in order to protect himself from the effect of what Lolita is saying. In L_16 this concerned her remark on their doing filthy things in stuffy cabins, and in L_29 it concerns her explaining why she left him and describing the acts of transgression Quilty expected her to partake in. Humbert appears to use Free Indirect Discourse mostly as a mechanism of self-protection rather than as a narrative technique that is supposed to inform the reader about what Lolita is actually saying or feeling. He cunningly makes use of the epistemological doubt that Free Indirect Discourse produces, which Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short describe as “its rather odd status in terms of truth claims and faithfulness. It is in a sort of halfway house position, not claiming to be a reproduction of the original speech, but at the same time being more than a mere indirect rendering of the original.”

When it comes to narrative fiction, it is of course difficult to talk about ‘truth claims’ and ‘faithfulness’. In a full first-person narrative perspective novel like ‘Lolita’ reality-truth issues become even more opaque, since the real and the true that the reader has to rely on and invest in are wholly enveloped by the Narrator’s Storyworld. As such, Free Indirect Discourse where nH0 blends his own and Lolita’s voice, plus H1’s embedded focalization, is not so much an attempt to provide a truthful rendering of speech to the reader in the Actual World, but more of an effort to protect his own person from hurtful allegations. The reader is simulating both H1’s experience of the conversation, nH0’s memory of and reflection on it, and so becomes affected by the distancing stylistic effect of the Free Indirect Discourse. However, the Deictic Shifting back up to the highest narrative plane of narrator-reader communication within the Free Indirect Discourse-stretch keeps the reader at a more reflective distance from its content than is possible for Humbert himself. As such, she can build up the Storyworld a bit more, without being under the full spell of Humbert’s narration. The Free Indirect Discourse-passage is too long to quote in full here, so selected parts of it are presented. Preceding (parts of) clauses where shifters occur, the indicator [nH0] denotes Humbert the narrator’s coloring of the discourse, triggering Deictic Shifting from Lolita’s voice [L] (or vice versa [L] from [nH0]), and [H1] refers to Humbert the experiencer focalizing within the Speech and Thought Report-set up.

“[H1] She directed the dart of her cigarette, index rapidly tapping upon it, toward the hearth exactly as her mother used to do, and then, like her mother, oh my God, with her fingernail scratched and removed a fragment of cigarette paper from her underlip. [L] No. She had not betrayed me. I was among friends. Edusa had warned her that Cue liked little girls, had been almost jailed once, in fact [nH0] (nice fact), [L] and he knew she knew. Yes… [H1] Elbow in pal, puff, smile, exhaled smoke, darting gesture. Waxing reminiscent. [L] He saw [H1] - smiling - [L] through everything and everybody, because he was not like me and her but a genius. A great guy. Full of fun. […] Well, Cue - they all called him Cue - […] took her to a dude ranch about a day’s drive from Elephant [nH0] (Elphinstone). [L] Named? Oh, some silly name - Duk Duk Ranch - you know just plain silly - but it did not matter now, anyway, because the place had

vanished and disintegrated. Really, she meant, I could not even imagine how utterly lush that ranch was, she meant it had everything, even an indoor waterfall. Did I remember the red-haired guy we [nH0] (’we’ was good) [L] had once had some tennis with? […] You know.”

When Humbert the experiencer-character then asks Lolita about the things they did at Duk Duk Ranch, she tries to speak about it, but is unable to, and Humbert the narrator pours her next utterance into Free Indirect Discourse again: “Oh, things… Oh, I - really I’ - [H1] she uttered the ’I’ as a subdued cry while she listened to the source of the ache, and for lack of words spread the five fingers of her angularly up-and-down-moving hand. [nH0] No, she gave it up, she refused to go into particulars with that baby inside her.”

The quoted stretch of Free Indirect Discourse contains many words and other pointers that indicate Lolita’s colloquial use of the American language, like ‘well’, the recurring construction ‘you know’ (with graphological emphasis on ‘you’), and the Free Indirect Discourse-representation of the informal ‘I mean’. This idiolect, paired with backshifted verbs, altered pronouns (Humbert is ‘I’, not ‘you’; Lolita is ‘she’, not ‘I’) and unaltered temporal deixis (’now’ remains ‘now’ instead of becoming ‘then’), indicates Lolita’s vocal presence in this passage. Humbert the narrator who is remembering and recounting this conversation to the reader, steps in with corrections and comments: “(nice fact)”, “(Elphinstone)” and “(’we’ was good)”. H1 is most clearly present as focalizer in descriptions of Lolita’s movements, which appear to come to him as direct impressions of experience while focalizing on her. Interestingly, for H1 she still appears as an object to be observed and fragmented: She has her “Elbow in pal” and spreads “the five fingers of her angularly up-and-down-moving hand.” Both H1 and nH0 show a tendency to metaphorically dismantle, distance and solipsize Lolita that is evident in their language. Even as a pregnant, almost grown woman, she is made into an object of love and desire that belongs to Humbert alone, which he tries to bodily and emotionally control, because she once was a nymphet he possessed, and he tries to remake her into this nymphet once again by using his style as a transforming tool. The reader is less explicitly present in this conversation than in, for example, the Sunday scene, where she is directly addressed, but is made part of the conversation nevertheless through the engaging effects of Free Indirect Discourse. The reader takes on Humbert’s perspective as well as her own, since the Free Indirect Discourse constantly shifts perspective back up to the communicative setting of narrator-reader in the Actual World. As such, she can critically reflect on the content of Lolita’s discourse here and acknowledge the horrible history of abuse that has been inflicted on her by multiple adults - something that Humbert the narrator appears to downplay by not presenting Lolita’s words directly, but only letting them reach him through a filter of time and narration.

It is interesting that the set of marker-words for L_29 based on the Zeta Analysis contain the negation-words ‘no’ and ‘not’. These are very much Lolita-words, in that both her Direct Speech and Free Indirect Discourse are characterized by denial, the inability or unwillingness to provide information, and countering Humbert’s views on
her leaving and Quilty. Lolita’s speech appears to take on the form of a defense for her actions and a correction of the truth as Humbert sees it. Every time a form of negation occurs in Lolita’s discourse, an epistemic subworld is created that allows readers to construct subworlds within the Storyworld rather than in the Narrator’s Subworld. Of course, in effect, we can never fully leave Humbert’s main Narrator’s Storyworld, but he slips sometimes, like when he protects himself from Lolita’s harmful speech, while this same mechanism allows readers to step back and reflect on his narrative strategies. The subworld construction triggered by Lolita’s use of negation thus straddles the boundaries between the Storyworld and the Narrator’s Storyworld. We can see this on a content level in Lolita’s Direct Speech as well, for example when Humbert tries to persuade her to come with him one last time, before leaving: “Is there no hope of your coming? Tell me only this.’ ‘No,’ she said. ‘No, honey, no.’ She had never called me honey before. ‘No,’ she said, ‘it is quite out of the question. I would sooner go back to Cue. I mean - ’ She groped for words. I supplied them mentally (’He broke my heart. You merely broke my life’). It appears here that even Humbert is drawn into the epistemic subworld Lolita’s speech triggers, when he mentally finishes her sentence for her. The construction of these and other alternative subworlds to Humbert’s Narrator’s Storyworld by Lolita, using negation, sets Lolita up as a character in her own right, with her own views and feelings. Humbert loses her again here, not only physically, but also within the realm of the mind, where he has been able to store ‘his’ Lolita, his creation that replaced the real Lolita, because she now literally makes her voice heard.

Personalized address towards Humbert’s audience is rather scarce in L_29, but it does occur at striking moments in this text-part. Humbert addresses his jurors in the middle of one of his efforts to repossess his Lolita through the use of his old trick of fragmentation:

“[T]here she was with her ruined looks and her adult, rope-veined narrow hands and her gooseflesh white arms, and her shallow ears, and her unkept armpits, there she was (my Lolita!) […] and I looked and looked at her, and knew as clearly as I know I am to die, that I loved her more than anything […] She was only the faint violet whiff and dead leaf echo of the nymphet I had rolled myself upon with such cries in the past; […] but thank God it was not that echo alone that I worshiped. […] You may jeer at me, and threaten to clear the court, but until I am gagged and half-throttled, I will shout my poor truth. I insist the world know how much I loved my Lolita, this Lolita, pale and polluted […]”

Humbert tries to establish a correspondence between the older Lolita and his nymphet, aiming to place her forever on that island out of time where all the nymphets reside and play with each other. He wants to turn her into that being without true life, without consciousness, that he created during their first sexual encounter on that sunny Sunday morning in June, after which she became his Lolita, replacing the real one. Anticipating his jurors’ reactions of disbelief regarding the sincerity of his love for his stepdaughter, he

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376 Idem: 277-278.
addresses them directly, triggering readers’ simulation of the jurors and priming the themes of Morality and Narratorial Unreliability. It is impossible for any reader to assign a truth value to Humbert’s proclamations here. He might very well have deluded himself into thinking he loves Lolita, no matter her age, so he can sleep well at night. He might also be misleading his jurors and readers on purpose, going for some sympathy in court. However, this does not change the fact that the reader is at this point in the narrative fully aware of Lolita’s awareness of what has been done to her, as well as of Humbert’s own admission of this. It is important in this respect that the second explicit instance of personalization in this text-part contains what at first seems an admission of Humbert’s guilt and shame about his deeds, proving readers that his awareness of his foul behavior is longer standing than he has been willing to admit so far. Leading up to the personalized address, there are other telling stylistic features that prompt the reader to experience this memory together with Humbert, diving back into the past. First, simulation is triggered by the explicit remembering, deictically shifting the setting of the scene to an earlier place and time, about which Humbert says:

“There was the day when having withdrawn the functional promise I had made her on the eve (whatever she had set her funny little heart on - [...]), I happened to glimpse from the bathroom, through a chance combination of mirror aslant and door ajar, a look on her face… that look I cannot exactly describe… an expression of helplessness so perfect that it seemed to grade into one of rather comfortable inanity just because this was the very limit of injustice and frustration - and every limit presupposes something beyond it - hence the neutral illumination. And when you bear in mind that these were the raised eyebrows and parted lips of a child, you may better appreciate what depths of calculated carnality, what reflected despair, restrained me from falling at her dear feet, and sacrificing my jealousy […]”

The simulation of the memory is in this instance not only strengthened by the use of ‘I, but also the generic ‘you’, where Humbert appears to refer to himself as nH0 as well as the reader, and where he appears to reflect on his own devious plans and character at the time of the experience. By positioning nH0 together with the reader vis-à-vis H1, a definite difference is set up between the earlier and later Humbert. Humbert refers to such eventually painful remembrances as “smothered memories”, indicating H1 was not immune to what he perceived, but chose - quite consciously - to ignore its consequences. By creating a subworld of that which might have been (‘And when you bear in mind…’), the reader gets a glimpse into nH0’s realization, if not remorse, for his actions.

Humbert the rhetorician appears to have been beaten by his own language during his encounter with the older Lolita. She has reached beyond the confines of his mind, has infiltrated the image he has created of her, and now there is room for painful memories in Humbert’s consciousness. The reader experiences Humbert’s remembering effort and is now, almost at the end of ‘Lolita’, provided with proof that he has known what he had been doing all along. The fact that he has persisted on his own ignorance all along will be of great consequence for the reader’s engaged narrative experience of the soon to come ending of the novel. One might ask, like Naomi Tamir-Ghez does, why Humbert only

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proclaims his remorse at the end of his tale, since this is quite damaging in the eyes of his jurors. Maybe the answer lies in the fact that, in the end, Humbert is, or aspires to be, an aestheta
cian rather than a moralist. He does not need his audience to believe he is innocent, since that is not the important issue for him. Lolita, his greatest work of art, has now been completed, at the very moment that he has solipsized her once again, fragmentizing her body, creating 'his' Lolita once again, placing her outside of time within the realm of art. He can now confess that he is guilty of child abuse, because this does not matter anymore to him; yes, he has harmed the person Lolita, but he has immortalized his creation Lolita in his own, very peculiar, artistic way.

8 Lolita - Endings

The ending of ‘Lolita’, which is at the center of the final analysis presented in this chapter, puts the final pieces of Humbert’s narrative puzzle into place, without providing readers an opportunity for interpretive closure. L_31 consists of two stylistically quite different parts: its first part is focused on Humbert killing Quilty, its second on Humbert’s final confession of guilt and love for Lolita. The outcome of the Zeta Analysis shows that ‘he’, ‘him’, ‘his’ and ‘quilty’ are marker words, which is unsurprising if we look at the content of the first part. In terms of narrative engagem
ent, the second part of L_31 can be said to be of more importance for readers, since it is there that Humbert presents his final thoughts on his actions and Lolita’s meaning to him. In terms of foregrounding, there are two aspects in this text-part that stand out: 1) The names Humbert and Quilty use to refer to Lolita, and 2) What critics call Humbert’s epiphany regarding Lolita’s predicament. The first stands out stylistically, functioning within the larger cohesive chain of reference to Lolita. The second stands out mainly on content level, but its foregrounding is given even more force by the direct reader address that occurs in the epiphany scene.

Before their meeting each other again after a period of separation, Lolita contacts Humbert by writing a letter, which she signs “Dolly (Mrs. Richard F. Schiller).” ‘Dolly’ is a name Humbert only uses for her when he describes her enacting childlike behavior, like in L_29, where she is ‘Dolly’ just once, when Humbert reluctantly lets her go to a roller-skating rink, where she almost appears to be a regular girl, wearing “blue jeans and white high shoes, as most of the other girls did.” In L_31 Lolita is always ‘Dolly’ or ‘Dolores’ in Humbert’s and Quilty’s agitated conversation during their fight. Humbert asks Quilty: “[D]o you recall a little girl called Dolores Haze, Dolly Haze? Dolly called Dolores, Colo.?” , pushes him to “‘Concentrate’, I said, ‘on the thought of Dolly Haze whom you kidnapped.’” Quilty remarks to him: “I had no fun with your

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582 Idem: 297.
Dolly. In ‘Lolita’, reference to the character Lolita is made using five different names. In quantitative terms her cohesive chain of reference looks like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of times occurring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lo</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lolita</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolly</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolores</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lola</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.1** The cohesive chain of reference (names) for the character ‘Lolita’ in numerical terms in *Lolita*

The distribution of those names within the entire chain is quite balanced, so only very dense or consistent use stands out statistically (like ‘Lo’ in L_16 following Zeta analysis). ‘Lolita’ and ‘Lo’ are the names Humbert uses for Lolita when he views her as a lover, where ‘Lolita’ is the more complacent version of ‘Lo’. It is noteworthy that Lolita’s more rebellious persona ‘Lo’ is the most occurring reference by far. ‘Dolly’, Lolita’s name in school and other house- and home environments, is in third place, quite far behind, followed by ‘Dolores’, her official first name Humbert uses when he is annoyed with her. ‘Lola’ appears to have no specific properties, and its five occurrences do not offer any hints at characterizing this specific incarnation of Lolita. At this point in the narrative, the reader is used to Humbert talking about his ‘Lolita’ and ‘Lo’ in contexts of love, lust and obsession. It might strike her as odd that, at the very moment that he is about to commit a crime of passion on her behalf, he switches to mainly using the name her teachers and family call her, the girly short form ‘Dolly’. Throwing ‘Dolores’ into the mix here is also interesting, since this is Lolita’s official full first name, which Humbert coins here in accordance with his and, it has turned out, Quilty’s semantic game of leaving enigmatic personal details in hotel’s registers for each other to discover. Humbert has now found Quilty in the flesh and while he takes revenge conjures up an innocent Lolita, a ‘Dolly’, that has not betrayed Humbert, as ‘Lo’ would have certainly done, but that has been kidnapped by Quilty - who, irritated by the dramatic lyric poem on Lolita Humbert has him read, reproaches him: “My dear Mr. Humbert, you were not an ideal stepfather, and I did not force your little protégé to join me. It was she made me remove her to a happier home.” Here Quilty breaches Humbert’s cocoon of protective language he has just set up for himself by ‘Dolly-izing’ the sexualized ‘Lolita’. Humbert refers to Lolita once more during the killing scene, again as Dolly, when he hits Quilty’s rocking chair firing his gun, but this time she is “Dolly Schiller”, Richard Schiller’s wife. Maybe Humbert has been, finally, forced to let go of his Lolita, to acknowledge her existence as a human being and not a lifeless creation.

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383 Idem: 298.
384 Idem: 301.
The epiphany scene following Quilty’s murder and Humbert’s flight from the murder scene is also concerned with this. In a typically Humbertian way, he draws the reader into his field of vision very strongly near the end of not only his novel ‘Lolita’, but also of his confession. He engages in a final complex feat of world building within his own story, daring the reader to accompany him in remembering a very poignant image that came to him just after Lolita disappeared from the hospital. The entire world building scene is full of mental type process verbs, triggering the reader’s simulation of Humbert’s mind within the memory, from an H1-focalizing standpoint, but also from a point of view outside of the memory, within the memorizing efforts of nH0. To make matters even more complicated, the reader is explicitly addressed, just when the epiphany within the memory reaches its apotheosis, and is thus hurled back into her own perspective on the narrative from the Actual World. Part of the epiphany scene is quoted here; its world building properties are visually represented in Figure 4.6.

“[NSSW1] And while I was waiting for them to run up to me on the high slope, I evoked [mental] a last mirage of wonder and hopelessness. [NSSW2] One day, soon after her disappearance, an attack of abominable nausea forced me to pull up on the ghost of a mountain road […] As I approached the friendly abyss [a lone stone parapet on the precipice side of the highway], I grew aware of a melodious unity of sounds rising like vapor from a small mining town that lay at my feet, in a fold of the valley. […] [NSSW3] And soon I realized [mental] that all these sounds were of one nature, that no other sounds but these came from the streets of the transparent town, with the women at home and the men away. [AW] Reader! [NSSW2 double focalization H1/nH0] What I heard [mental] was but the melody of children at play, nothing but that, […]. I stood listening [mental] to that musical vibration from my lofty slope, to those flashes of separate cries with a kind of demure murmur for background, and then I knew [mental] that the hopelessly poignant thing was not Lolita’s absence from my side, but the absence of her voice from that concord.”

After the simulation of memorizing and the experience of the memory have been triggered through the construction of Narrator’s Storyworld Subworld 1 and its embedded subworlds Narrator’s Storyworld Subworld 2 and 3, nH0 leaps over different world boundaries by suddenly addressing the reader very expressively. Her focus is then redirected to the memorized content once again, where the limits of the Storyworld, Narrator’s Storyworld and the Narrator’s Storyworld Subworlds are transgressed, descending into Humbert the experiencer’s mind once again, but this time from the higher narrative viewpoint of Humbert the narrator. One cannot decide for sure which field of vision is the primed focalizing instance here, H1’s or nH0’s, and during an engaged narrative experience the reader’s world building effort will be of a fluid nature, with this double focalization being precisely the sort of narrative technique at the centre of the complex dimension of world building. The reader simulates multiple fictional minds here, plus puts her own mind to critical reflection. Humbert confesses, as H1, that he feels sorry for denying Lolita her childhood. However, he still calls her ‘Lolita’, using her true nymphet-name. We cannot be sure whether H1 is sincere, or whether nH0’s

138 Idem: 308.
memory is correct, for that matter; we can only hypothesize that either he truly feels remorse for his actions, as both H1 and nH0 or one of those two Humberts, or that he is trying to deceive his readers and his jurors, but that he slips in his use of ‘Lolita’ to refer to his object of desire. There is no correct interpretive answer here, and is hard for a reader to find interpretive closure at this point, but what is probably more important for the engaged narrative experience of this ending, as well as Lolita as a whole, is what Emmott calls the ‘affective response’ in readers. She states that foregrounding can “stimulate emotional involvement in interpreting a theme rather than simply [add] to our understanding of the propositional content of a text.”

This is precisely what happens via Humbert’s elaborate world building in this scene, through which all of the novels’ main themes are called to the surface. The reader is triggered to both critically and emotionally engage herself with the themes of Mnemonics-Imagination, Narratorial Unreliability, Art and Morality, as they are present in the scene’s stylistic character as well as its semantic content. The epiphany scene is Humbert the clever stylistician’s last bout of rhetorics, before concluding his story in a more sober stylistic register, where both “Lolita” and “Dolly Schiller” are mentioned once more. His final words, however, are directed explicitly to his Lolita, echoing the Annabel Lee reference found at the start of ‘Lolita’: “I am thinking of aurochs and angels, the secret of durable pigments, prophetic sonnets, the refuge of art. And this is the only immortality you and I may share, my Lolita.”

Figure 4.6 The world building process. Lolita example 2

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Idem: 309.
9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have characterized an engaged narrative experience of Lolita. Different readers will always read differently, but based on Nabokov criticism and stylometric analysis, I have built cognitive stylistic bridges between language, mind and experience on a fictional and real level, that can be traversed in different order, different directions and at different times - however, the bridges are there, and they cannot be moved without altering the nature of Lolita. To say the least, Lolita is a novel with many faces, widely appreciated as both a work of great artistic value and a novel of scandal, that will probably remain exuding its attractions on readers to come in many years. That other stylistic tour-de-force, often coined the first hypertextual novel, Nabokov’s Pale Fire, will likely retain its place in the annals of literary history, but for quite different reasons - I will try to shed some light on those in the next chapter.
Chapter 5. *Pale Fire* - The Dying of the Light

1 Introduction: *Pale Fire*

The cognitive stylistic analyses presented in this chapter follow the same route and procedure as those concerning *Lolita* in the previous chapter. They focus on the beginning (PF_1), as well as those text-parts that stand out stylistically according to the outcomes of the descriptive statistical analyses shown in Chapter 3: PF_6-8, PF_13, PF_18 and the ending PF_19. For *Pale Fire*, no immediate link can be discerned between the stylistically foregrounded passages and criticism on the novel. Based on the Principal Component Analyses and Zeta Analyses of the different text-parts, however, we can hypothesize that the stylistic variation in this novel is heavily influenced by the specific nature of pronominal reference used by narrator Kinbote, and its relation to the construction of different narrative plains. *Pale Fire*’s foregrounded text-part’s relative proximity and their occurrence toward the end of the novel point to a gradual but definitive process of stylistic variation increasing as the narrative progresses.

PF_19 includes the ending of *Pale Fire*, which is interesting in different ways: Its foregrounding emphasizes, again, the importance of novels’ endings for readers’ engaged narrative experiences; it could be seen as the climax of the process of stylistic variation that becomes more and more forceful while the novel runs its course; and it merits more investigation because of its literary-linguistic likeness to the ending of *Lolita*, L_31, another foregrounded ending. Interestingly, *Pale Fire*’s beginning is not foregrounded stylistically, like *Lolita*’s, which makes sense from a cognitive-stylistic standpoint: The start of a novel sets the base-line scene from which deviation can occur in the rest of the narrative, in terms of world building elements, function advancing propositions and other textual elements triggering Deictic Shifting.\(^{390}\) The characterization of the construction of *Pale Fire*’s Storyworld takes into account matters of form and content on both macro- and micro-level, builds upon the output of the statistical methods employed in Chapter 3 and contextualizes this quantitative data within a cognitive stylistic framework in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the reader’s engaged narrative experience of the novel.

2 *Pale Fire* - Novelistic beginnings

In *Pale Fire*, the narrative scene is immediately set by the main narrator of the novel, Charles Kinbote, in a Foreword.\(^{391}\) I say ‘novel’, since the reader is dealing with Nabokov’s *Pale Fire* here, but the ‘Foreword’ she is about to start reading constitutes the preliminaries to the poem ‘Pale Fire’ that follows it, as well as the ensuing ‘Commentary’ to that poem. If we are to believe our narrator, ‘Pale Fire’ is written by the poet John

\(^{391}\) The ‘Foreword’ covers the entire text-part PF_1 plus the first 1632 words of PF_2. The stylistic coherence of those two text-parts is evident in the graphical output of the Cluster Analysis of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* presented in Chapter 3 (see Figure 3.2).
Shade, whom he greatly admires, and he feels obliged to write an extensive interpretive and explanatory commentary to this poet’s *magnum opus*. Kinbote’s foreword is a patchwork of small stories on different narrative levels. He informs us about his admiration for Shade, the start of their seemingly coincidental friendship, and how he came to be the poem’s editor. Kinbote also lets slip some hints that he might be something more than a literary scholar, namely a person of royal blood from a country called Zembla. He also pens down some of his interactions with colleagues and students, which are often of an unfriendly or sexually suspect nature. Returning to David Herman’s account of Positioning Theory, it is highly unlikely to assume Kinbote is neutrally relating information to his readers. He does so with a certain goal in mind, a goal that becomes quite clear in this foreword: He aims at positioning the reader on his side, rather than the side of other academic experts on Shade’s work (“professed Shadeans”\(^ {\text{392}}\), as he calls them), who appear to perceive Kinbote in a very negative way, both personally and professionally. Related to this, he gives firm instructions on how the reader should read ‘Pale Fire’, emphasizing the importance of his own ‘Commentary’, which, he explicitly states, might just be more important than the actual poem itself. Like *Lolita’s* ‘Foreword’, *Pale Fire’s* can be viewed as a longer stretch of narrative constituting a pre-announcement on a metafictional level, positioning the narrator and reader toward each other, other characters, and vis-à-vis a dominant storyline and master narrative. Moreover, it creates the default world-setting for what Herman describes as “the level of the reader’s engagement with the text, given the specific narrative techniques deployed.”\(^ {\text{393}}\) Unlike *Lolita’s* foreword, *Pale Fire’s* is narrated by the novel’s single narrator: This time, there is no John Ray, Jr. to contextualize the story we are going to read. This time, commentator Kinbote holds rhetorical sway. As a consequence, the construction of *Pale Fire’s* Storyworld can be said to be of an even more complex nature than *Lolita’s*: Whereas for this earlier novel readers could at least fall back on the existence of such a Storyworld as presented via the second narrator’s foreword, for *Pale Fire* this is not an option, leaving readers to engage with a narrative told by someone who - as becomes evident even by just reading the foreword - has some very disturbing characteristics and inclinations. So although the initial set-up of the two novels might be the same, and while they both incite readers to engage strongly with the fictional minds of unreliable narrators, the world building efforts of Nabokov’s later novel’s narrator create a rather different context for the reader’s engaged narrative experience to unfold in.

The primary narrative world is the Narrator’s Storyworld, since the first person narrator is, in strict terms, the reader’s only access point into the novel’s world. From this narrative center, other (sub)worlds are then fleshed out. Figure 5.1 provides a schematic representation of the cognitive Storyworld building exercise the reader is prompted to undertake when reading the first eight paragraphs of the Foreword. This text-selection is based on the observation that throughout the foreword as a whole, but during these very first beginnings in particular, the default nature of the reader’s

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engagement with the text is established. Following these paragraphs, the readers’ narrative experience is focused on, but not so much centered in the Narrator’s Storyworld, due to the specific positioning of narrator and reader in the first eight paragraphs. At the end of the foreword, where very clear reading instructions for the poem and the commentary are directed towards the reader, her vantage point onto the Storyworld remains exactly that when she starts reading the poem and commentary: that of an outsider reading in the Actual World. Due to reasons of space, I do not quote the entire passage on which Figure 5.1 is based, but focus on the textual instances where Deictic Shifting and synchronous world building efforts are triggered.

(NS) *Pale Fire*, a poem in heroic couplets, of nine hundred ninety-nine lines […]. The short (166 lines) Canto One, with all those amusing birds and parhelia, occupies thirteen cards.

(NS/AWSW1, with backgrounded Deictic Shifting to NS) Canto Two, your favorite, and that shocking tour de force, Canto Three, are identical in length (334 line) and cover twenty-seven cards each. A methodical man, John Shade usually copied out his daily quota of completed lines at midnight but (NSSW1) even if he recopied them again later, (NSSW1) as I suspect he sometimes did, […].

(NSSW1) I mean, he preserved the date of actual creation […].

(SW) There is a very loud amusement park right in front of my present lodgings.

(NS) We possess in result a complete calendar of his work.

(NSSW3/AWSW2) Actually, it [Canto Four] turns out to be beautifully accurate when you once make the plunge and compel yourself to open your eyes in the limpid depths under its confused surface. It contains not one gappy line, not one doubtful reading.

(NS) This fact would be sufficient to show that the imputations made (on July 24, 1959) […].

(SW) […] and damn that music.

(NS) Knowing Shade’s combinational turn of mind […]

(NSSW4) I cannot imagine that he intended to deform the faces of his crystal […].

(NS) I have had the dramatic occasion of hearing my poor frind’s own voice proclaim […] the end, of his labors.

(AW) (See my note to line 991).

(SW) This last batch of eighty cards was held by a rubber band which I now religiously put back after examining for the last time their precious contents.

(AWSW3) In my notes to the poem the reader will find these cancelled readings. 394

Figure 5.1 shows some interesting trends in the narrative set-up where the positioning of narrator vis-à-vis reader is concerned, and those trends influence the reader’s level of engagement with the text. The Narrator’s Storyworld is characterized by very concrete world building elements, with the first two paragraphs of the foreword providing biographical information on the poet John Francis Shade and a straightforward description of “Pale Fire”’s features in terms of numbers and actual production. Each occurrence of such ‘factual’ statements or descriptions trigger Narrator’s Storyworld construction. There are just three instances of unambiguous subworld construction in these eight paragraphs, all occurring within the Narrator’s Storyworld: Narrator’s Storyworld Subworld 1 is first triggered by a hypothetical construction (“even if”395), and is then

strengthened by a first person singular construction with a mental process type verb “I suspect”\textsuperscript{396}. This sentence is immediately followed by another instance of clear subworld building in the foreword, prompted by “I

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure5.1.png}
\caption{The world building process. \textit{Pale Fire} example 1}
\end{figure}

mean”\textsuperscript{397}, offering subworld construction on a parallel world level with Narrator’s Storyworld Subworld 1.\textsuperscript{398} The third instance of subworld building is of a different kind, due to its context, which I will turn to later in this section. If we compare the subworld building within the Narrator’s Storyworld in the opening pages of \textit{Pale Fire} with the first chapter of ‘Lolita’, we see a very different picture in terms of the intensity of immersive simulation that is needed to understand and engage with the worlds conjured up by the narratives. As can be seen in Figure 4.5 (p.99), the simulative and word building pressure

\textsuperscript{396} Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{397} Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{398} Based on the proximity and content of these sentences, one could even argue that NSSW2 is another strengthening instance of NSSW1.
exerted on the reader by Humbert’s first utterances is much greater in the small first chapter of ‘Lolita’ (169 words) than in the eight paragraphs narrated by Kinbote at Pale Fire’s beginning (1110 words). In ‘Lolita’, the reader has to deal with embedded subworlds within the Narrator’s Storyworld as well (Narrator’s Storyworld Subworld 6 in Narrator’s Storyworld Subworld 5), a cognitive effort that is lacking in Pale Fire’s opening pages.

The foreword, like the rest of the novel, is written from a first person perspective, inducing readers’ perspective-taking from this first person narrator’s field of vision as default mode of reading. However, this deictic shift is not maintained forcefully by the stylistic texture of the opening paragraphs, which is the case for ‘Lolita’. Kinbote’s readers are firmly positioned as his audience, as readers who need to heed his reading instructions for ‘Pale Fire’, but they are not strongly invited to follow his mind’s mental functioning.

One way in which this distance between reader and narrator is created, is the constant interspersing of a somewhat disjointed, but nevertheless running, narrative with world building triggers that prompt a popping back up from the Narrator’s Subworld to the Storyworld. Kinbote’s description of ‘Pale Fire’’s production circumstances and his critique on others whom he perceives as hindering his editorial practices, are interrupted by time- and space-shifting utterances. It appears that the reader’s focus is deictically shifted from a look into the Narrator’s Storyworld, where Kinbote’s narrator-character is an academic persona, to the Storyworld, where the narrator-character seems to be an unbalanced persona who comments on the NOW of writing. For example, the Narrator’s Storyworld-Storyworld boundaries are crossed in such a fashion when Kinbote is in the middle of arguing why ‘Pale Fire’ should have had a 1000th line, which “would have completed the symmetry of the structure, […] forming together with the shorter flanks twin wings of five hundred verses each, and damn that music. Knowing Shade’s combinational turn of mind and subtle sense of harmonic balance […]”. Such a short triggering of the Storyworld level is unexpected and can be said to be foregrounded, as are the other two instances of Storyworld triggering represented in Figure 5.1. The narrative content of these triggering instances is not explicitly connected to the foreword, which is almost exclusively focused on the poem, and therefore stands out. In addition, these instances raise questions about the mental state of the narrator, combined with what he tells us about himself by portraying others’ reactions to him: We may ask ourselves whether Kinbote is mentally unstable, whether he became in possession of the poem’s manuscript in an unsavory way, whether he might actually be on the run from something or someone. Why else would he be examining the index cards containing the Fair Copy of ‘Pale Fire’ for the last time? Related to this mental health issue is Kinbote’s mentioning of the enigmatic nation of Zembla in the foreword. The semantic field that ‘Zembla’ opens up is foregrounded, since it is a non-existent country in the Actual World. We are confronted with Zembla four times in the foreword: “One of our siller

Zemblan proverbs [...]. Nabokov, V. (1992): 12. Following the first mention, about the proverbs, Kinbote hints at himself being of Zembla’s ruling class, urging the reader, via a modalizing imperative construction, to engage in Storyworld construction: “Imagine a soft, clumsy giant; imagine a historical personage whose knowledge of money is limited to the abstract billions of a national debt; imagine an exiled prince who is unaware of the Golconda in his cuff links! This is to say - oh, hyperbolically - that I am the most impractical fellow in the world.”

Every reader in the Actual World will know of Zembla’s unreality in that realm, but within the Storyworld it might be an existing nation. As such, the foreword prompts the reader to make predictions about Kinbote, fulfilling a person-advancing or character-advancing role. Following Joanna Gavins, such predictions are a subtype of function advancing propositions, “constituting the actions, events, states and processes whose presence can be seen to propel the discourse forwards.”

Thematic engagement with the themes of Identity and Narratorial reliability is thus triggered in a plot-advancing way. If we take this foreword as a pre-announcement in the form of a longer stretch of narrative, the question of Kinbote’s reliability within the context of Pale Fire’s Storyworld is now placed firmly within the reader’s mind and will influence her interpretation of and engagement with the remainder of the novel.

The Storyworld thus appears to present the NOW of Kinbote’s writing to the reader who, from the start of the novel, is presented with Kinbote’s different identities: His academic and rational persona and his presumably unbalanced persona at the time of writing. The frequent shifts between Narrator’s Storyworld and Storyworld focus the reader’s attention on the writing process, and in a similar manner, her focus is put on the act of reading. The quote in the previous paragraph, illustrating a typical Narrator’s Storyworld- Storyworld shift, continues as follows, triggering the third instance of subworld construction within the Narrator’s Storyworld through a negated modal construction: “[...] I cannot image that he intended to deform the faces of his crystals by meddling with its predictable growth. And if all this were not enough - and it is, it is enough - I have had the dramatic occasion of hearing my poor friend’s own voice proclaim on the evening of July 21 the end, or almost the end, of his labors.”

After the rapid chain of shifts between the Narrator’s Storyworld and Storyworld (NS-SW-NS), a new subworld (Narrator’s Storyworld Subworld 4) is created. This epistemic subworld is strengthened by the hypothetical question and affirmative answer following the modalized construction - which overlays Narrator’s Storyworld Subworld 4 rather than creates an embedded subworld -, then a shift to the Narrator’s Storyworld occurs (which

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403 Ibidem.
404 Idem: 19.
is the world in which events are scrupulously time-stamped), after which the reader’s cognitive efforts can rest in the Actual World, where she gets a reading instruction. Although subworld building occurs in this short passage, its context prevents readers from fully engaging with Kinbote’s fictional mind: Her Deictic Center is not firmly centered in the Narrator’s Storyworld, as is so often the case when reading Humbert’s memory exercises, but she is constantly crossing world boundaries, while focused not only on Kinbote’s writing act, but also on her own reading act, since she is constantly prompted to view the characters and events described from the higher viewpoint of the Actual World. As is the case for any narrative, when reading Pale Fire the reader needs to engage with the Storyworld in order to make sense of this world; but rather than stepping wholly into the shoes of narrator-experiencer Kinbote in his Narrator’s Storyworld, she is not persuaded to follow the workings of his fictional mind from the inside out. Rather, she is focused on the Narrator’s Storyworld and the Storyworld from her fixed and real place in the Actual World.

The specific nature of personalization in the foreword plays into this ontological gap between narrator and reader. In the first eight paragraphs, there are four instances where a variation of the second person pronoun is used in an ambiguous generic/deictic way, and these are the only instances in the entire foreword where the reader might be expected to ascribe this ‘you’ to herself. All remaining second person address is deictically directed either to Kinbote by other characters, when he quotes pieces of conversation, or to other characters by Kinbote. The second person pronominal use in the first eight paragraphs contains the first four uses of ‘you’-related pronouns in the novel. They are ambiguous in the sense that they allow for both a deictic and generic reading, depending on the reader’s depth of simulation at the time of reading. One cannot decide with certainty whether Kinbote muses in and to himself about “Canto Two, your favorite” within the Narrator’s Storyworld or that he addresses the reader in a personalized way, in which case this stylistic device triggers a subworld to come into being on the Actual World plane (Actual World Subworld 1). Similarly, when he comments on Canto Three in Shade’s Corrected Draft, the reader is left a lot of room for either simulating the ‘you’ immersively within the Narrator’s Storyworld or to take it as a cue for subworld construction in the Actual World, where she could possibly read Canto Three like this: “Actually, it [Canto Four] turns out to be beautifully accurate when you once make the plunge and compel yourself to open your eyes in the limpid depths under its confused surface. It contains not one gappy line, not one doubtful reading.”

While the first ‘you’-instance remains mostly on Narrator’s Storyworld level, these combined next three instances create an ambiguous new subworld within both the Narrator’s Storyworld and Actual World (Narrator’s Storyworld Subworld 3/Actual World Subworld 2). This subworld might just be the only one in the foreword where the reader is immersively simulating Kinbote’s fictional mind in depth, like she does for Humbert so many times; via a metaphorical description of Kinbote’s own experience of Canto Three, the reader experiences this with him - and if she does not at this point, the

\[\text{Idem: 9.}\]
\[\text{Idem: 10.}\]
sentence might function as a pre-announcement for the reading experience of ‘Pale Fire’ that is to come (and so creates Actual World Subworld 2).

If the reader simulates the experience here, it is still a very different, and more shallow, simulation than is often triggered in ‘Lolita’. From ‘Lolita’’s first chapter on, reader entrapment is in play. Humbert’s rhetorical strength is his ability to submerge readers in his field of vision, by conjuring up many embedded subworlds within his own Narrator’s Storyworld, and by exploiting the possibilities of the interplay of the first and second person singular pronoun. Add the calculated use of different verb process types, with mental verbs outnumbering the other verb types by far, and the reader is caught in Humbert’s experiential web. Kinbote appears not to aim at the reader enacting his experiences, or trapping her within the machinations of his fictional mind; he is a narrator who argues, who explains, who tries to convince his readers of how badly his fellow scholars have treated him, of the mutual sincerity of his friendship with Shade, of his earned right to edit and publish ‘Pale Fire’ as he sees fit. Above all, he wants his readers to read the poem according to his wishes. The reader is mentioned in a personalized way four times in the foreword, only in relation to Kinbote’s commentary as being the prime object of literature that the reader needs to consult, rather than ‘Pale Fire’. Kinbote writes: “In my notes to the poem the reader will find these cancelled readings.”410, and “Never shall I forget how elated I was upon learning, as mentioned in a note my reader shall find, […].”411 Then, in the final paragraph to his foreword, the reader gets some highly detailed reading instructions for the poem and commentary: “Other notes, arranged in a running commentary, will certainly satisfy the most voracious reader. Although those notes, in conformity with custom, come after the poem, the reader is advised to consult them first and then study the poem with their help, rereading them of course as he goes through its text, and perhaps, after having done with the poem, consulting them a third time so as to complete the picture.”412 Most critics tend to take the ‘novelistic’ route through Pale Fire, first reading the poem and then leafing back and forth between the commentary and the poem while reading the commentary. This means that from the very start of the novel, Kinbote’s will is ignored by the real reader of flesh and blood, who starts out reading (most likely) the poem and then the commentary, and is thus positioned firmly within the context of her own Actual World.

In the ‘Foreword’, Kinbote lays the groundwork for readers’ Storyworld construction in the rest of the novel to come. Points of interest that will return in the analyses of significant stylistic text-parts in this chapter are the perceived ‘gap’ between narrator and reader that Pale Fire’s style, or rather Kinbote’s rhetoric, brings about. When reading Lolita, the reader needs to take notice of the double communicative setting of trial/novel and the subsequent positions she is allowed to take as juror/reader. This setting, plus Humbert’s highly immersive rhetorical strategies, allows for Storyworld construction where world boundaries are easily transgressed by the reader’s phenomenal consciousness and often of a vague nature. When reading Pale Fire, the communicative

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410 Idem: 11.
setting appears much clearer: Kinbote is a literary commentator and the reader is nothing more than the reader of ‘Pale Fire’. However, the foreword also plays into readers’ feelings that this is not all there is to *Pale Fire*: By providing seemingly random comments on Zembla and his own relation to this nation, the narrator prompts the reader into contemplating on this nation’s truth-value within the Storyworld, as well as Kinbote’s own true identity within the bounds of this particular Storyworld. There is no second narrator in the novel; John Shade’s poem is the only thing that can be said to truly exist on the level of the Storyworld proper. This means that the reader is very dependent on Kinbote for Storyworld building, who has the opportunity to manipulate this process to great lengths. However, looking at the foreword, we see that Kinbote does not strongly appeal to the reader’s imaginative or emotional capacities in order to take on his field of vision within and on the Storyworld. On the contrary, the reader remains quite firmly situated within the Actual World of reading, is focused on the act of writing on Kinbote’s part and the act of reading on her own part, and is not invited to engage in intense subworld construction within the Narrator’s Storyworld. The foreword is of an argumentative rather than an experiential nature, which has consequences for the reader’s narrative experience: The level of engagement with the text is of a distanced nature here, and this sets the scene for the narrative experience to come.

### 3 Escape from Zembla

The cluster of text-parts PF_6-8 is the most divergently stylistic passage in *Pale Fire*, based on both the comparative Principal Component Analysis of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* (see Figure 3.1, p.62) and the intratextual PCA of *Pale Fire*’s linguistic texture (see Figure 3.4, p.71). Interestingly, this passage neatly encapsulates Kinbote’s account of King Charles Xavier of Zembla’s escape from his native country. The history of the King’s escape can be summarized as follows: He has been imprisoned in his own castle by a group of revolutionaries responsible for a coup, and has been moved to the former dressing room of his grandfather, Thurgus the Third. It then occurs to him that, as a boy, he and his friend Oleg (with whom he enjoyed not so childish moments in bathrooms and tight trousers) once discovered a secret subterranean passage way leading from Thurgus’s room to that of the actress Ingrid Acht in a theatre about a mile away. With the help of his actor-friend and master in disguise Odon, the King prepares his flight from the castle, which he performs during the following night, escaping to the mountains of Zembla, staying the night with some peasants, and then disappearing abroad by airplane.

This entire story is narrated in detail by Kinbote, who has been providing information on Zembla from the start of his commentary, continuously noting how Shade alludes to it in his poem. Compared to the previous sections of commentary, PF_6-8 features a very large amount of narration concerning the King and Zembla. It is thus not surprising that words like ‘king’, ‘odon’ and ‘he’ are marker-words for this passage. What is remarkable, however, is the character of the narrative perspective during the telling of the King’s escape, where Kinbote appears to place himself in the background. Returning to the novel’s PCA, we see that PF_6-8 and, on the left side of the graph, is
almost diametrically opposed to PF_19 on its right side. In addition, while ‘the’ is plotted in the vicinity of PF_6-8, ‘I’ is plotted neat to PF_19, indicating the large difference in frequency of those words in both text-parts. The graph also show that PF_1 lies in the same area as PF_19, suggesting a similarity between the very start and end of the novel. As we have seen, Kinbote positions himself as a definite ‘I’ in the ‘Foreword’, as narrator opposed to the reader, through a strict adherence to the limits of the different Storyworld levels. The Zeta-analysis contrasting PF_6-8 with the rest of Pale Fire (see Figure 3.12, p.84) also points at the weak presence of the first person singular pronoun in the Escape-passage: The three top anti-marker words for this passage are ‘I’, ‘my’ and ‘me’. We also find ‘you’ in the anti-marker word list, although a bit lower in rank. Taken together with the prominence of the definite article ‘the’ in terms of frequency, which points at a mostly descriptive style of narration, the stylistic texture suggests that this particular passage offers rather little simulative appeal for the reader.

If we take a closer look at the content of the Escape-scene, however, a more complex picture emerges. Kinbote relates his account of the King’s escape in this commentary, because he told it to Shade as well, during some of their evening talks. Kinbote writes: “In simple words I described the curious situation in which the King found himself during the first months of the rebellion. He had the amusing feeling of his being the only black piece in what a composer of chess problems might term a king-in-the-corner waiter of the solus rex type.” This point in the narrative of this specific note marks a shift in narrative perspective, where Kinbote transforms from a typical first person narrator into one showing properties of third person or omniscient type narration. The constant use of ‘I’ vanishes, and Kinbote appears to have unlimited insight into the workings of the King’s mind. There is a notable difference in Kinbote’s attributing certain states of minds or feelings to other characters than the King. When, for example, talking about opinions or feelings Shade might have had, he is always very careful in assigning truth-value to his assertions. Consider the next comment on certain lines Shade wrote in his draft version of ‘Pale Fire’: “The comparison has remained suspended. Presumably our poet intended to attach it to the account of his stumbling upon some mysterious truth in the fainting fits of his boyhood. I cannot say how sorry I am that he rejected these lines.” Kinbote here places himself on the outside of Shade’s fictional mind, and can only guess at what is going on within. However, where the King is concerned, Kinbote fully inserts himself into the monarch’s consciousness, without any disclaimer whatsoever. As the quoted start of his Zemblan escape tale shows, he offers readers direct access to a fictional mind that is not his own - or is it? The base-line Storyworld of Pale Fire can be characterized as containing and maintaining strict boundaries between worlds, as they are determined by Kinbote. Where the King’s escape tale is concerned, however, world construction suddenly takes on a more opaque quality, and this is the case for all passages where the narrative revolving around the King interlaces itself with the commentary. Based on the first person narrative setting that is the novel’s default perspective mode, we would expect Kinbote to be the focalizer and

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413 Idem: 92.
414 Ibidem.
the King the focalized object in these passages. In reality, Kinbote’s consciousness intersperses itself with the King’s, who becomes the main focalizer through Kinbote. And while Kinbote fails to use rhetorical means to have readers immersively simulate his own fictional mind, in its proper sense, on Storyworld and Narrator’s Storyworld level, he does use those means when he describes the King’s plight.

The word ‘line’ functions as anti-marker word for PF_6-8 and as marker word for the rest of the novel. Throughout Kinbote’s commentary, the reader is constantly reminded of her own reading act and pulled out of a current narrative frame415 by the referral to lines in the poem and often to other notes within the notes to the lines as well. A reader could easily get lost in the narrative maze that is constructed in this (almost hypertextual) way. The incessant focus on the reading act hinders the reader’s access into the Storyworld and prevents her from immersive simulation on deeper world levels, such as subworlds and embedded subworlds within the Narrator’s Storyworld, and even the Narrator’s Storyworld itself. The non-consistent use of ‘line’ in the Escape passage points in the direction of a possibly more engaged narrative experience with the King’s plight, since the intensity of world shifting up to higher narrative levels through this specific reading-instruction device is relatively lower than in the rest of the novel. A content issue comes into view here as well: From the foreword on, Kinbote hints at his being the exiled King Charles Xavier. When the Escape passage presents the reader with a thorough account of the King’s experience of a series of strenuous events, this idea can be expected to surface within the reader’s mind. This means that, precisely while reading a passage that allows for a less distanced form of reading, the reader might not only simulate the King’s mind and, accordingly, his experiences, but also Kinbote’s. Just as Nabokov critics do, she has to take into account that either Kinbote has experienced these events himself, since otherwise he could not describe the prince’s memories in such an experiential way, or that he has convinced himself of the fact that he has experienced them - the latter implicating that he has a split personality or other type of delusional mental condition. So either Zembla is real in the novel’s Storyworld and Kinbote is not crazy, or it is not and he is. This is hard to decide, because Kinbote makes it seem that within his academic working sphere, Zembla is taken to be existent, but how can we know if this is not one of his many delusions or manipulated representations of facts? The thing is that we cannot know this, so the reader is left with the ambiguous simulation of the King/Kinbote during the Escape passage and other similar accounts of the King’s life.

A narrative technique playing into a more engaged form of reading here is the use of Free Indirect Discourse when describing the King’s feelings or sensations. Moments such as the following allow for intermingling of the King’s and Kinbote’s focalizing perspectives (Free Indirect Discourse in italics), starting from the King’s focalization: “A haughty and morose captive, he was caged in his rose-stone palace from a corner turret of which one could make out with the help of field glasses […]. How serene were the mountains, how tenderly painted on the western vault of the sky!”416; “A handshake, a flash of lightning. As the King waded into the damp, dark bracken, its odor, its lacy resilience, reminded him

of the times he had picknicked hereabouts [...]. Rather dull memories, on the whole. *Wasn’t there a hunting box nearby - just beyond Silfhar Falls?* Kinbote even merges with the fictional mind of the King as a boy, strengthening the links between their fictional minds through a feat of mirroring the King’s remembering experience itself: “On that particular afternoon a copious shower lacquered the spring foliage of the palace garden, and oh, how the Persian lilacs in riotous bloom tumbled and tossed behind the green-streaming, amethyst-blotted windowpanes! One would have to play indoors. Oleg was late. Would he come at all?”

In this particular Free Indirect Discourse-instance, simulation of multiple fictional minds is triggered by blending different subworlds within the Narrator’s Subworld in such a way that they overlay each other to the point where their boundaries are almost erased: We cannot say where Kinbote’s voice and focalization end or begin, or where the King’s are sidelined by the prince’s. Within the context of the entire novel, such Free Indirect Discourse-use can be expected to have strong stylistic effects: The reader is becoming submerged in the King’s fictional mind, is following the workings of his mnemonic efforts, and is allowed to remain deictically centered within the bounds of the Storyworld and Narrator’s Subworld rather than the Actual World, where the notes so often lead her back to.

In light of the reader’s world construction on deeper levels, there is one foregrounded instance where personalized address can be expected to lead to a relatively strong form of immersive simulation within the context of the Escape passage. As the Zeta Analysis shows, ‘you’ is a marker word for the rest of the novel and not PF_6-8.

Following the second example of Free Indirect Discourse provided above, there is a tripartite occurrence of the second person pronoun within one sentence: “Now as then, the rain seethed in the black trees, and if you paused you heard your heart thumping, and the distant roar of the torrent. What is the time, kot or? He pressed his repeater and, undismayed, it hissed and tinkled out ten twenty-two.” This generic use of ‘you’ is foregrounded, since there is a sudden density of unexpected anti-marker words in this passage, and when the reader comes across it, she is already engaged in a simulation of the King’s fictional mind. She is co-experiencing his current experience of rain, as well as his memory and memorizing effort of the earlier rain during the picknick. The fact that the sentence following the foregrounded ‘you’’s suddenly shift the verb from a simple past narration to simple present plays into this experiential feeling on the reader’s part.

The nature of the (sub)world construction through Free Indirect Discourse-use and foregrounded literary-linguistic elements triggering immersive simulation allow for prompting of the Memory-theme, as well as the Identity- and Narratorial reliability themes. However, this cognitive emphasis is not caused by narrative techniques allowing for engaged reading alone. Content-wise, it is put into focus on the higher narrative level where Kinbote is writing his commentary for an audience of interested readers as well. Following the detailed account of the King’s memory of discovering the secret passageway, Kinbote suddenly intersperses himself into the narrative: “This detailed
recollection, whose structure and maculation have taken some time to describe in this note, skinned through the King’s memory in one instant.\footnote{Idem: 99.} Interestingly, although we are not simulating the King’s fictional mind experientially anymore, we cannot say that his focalizing power is gone and Kinbote’s has regained eminence; rather, their fields of vision remain muddled. On the one hand, the mention of “structure and maculation” trigger the reader to shift back up to the Actual World of reading, from where Kinbote can be seen as the narrator within a particular Storyworld. On the other, there is no evidence suggesting that Kinbote is not also the King writing down these reminiscences in a detailed manner, trying to recapture his earlier experiences and memories. Rather than an overlapping of narrative planes, as Nabokov critic George Steiner\footnote{Steiner, G. (1982 [1962]): 140.} calls them, what we see here is a subtle merging of fictional minds brought about by the complexities of Storyworld construction, triggered by this novel’s stylistic texture and narrative content.

In the light of the reader’s more engaged narrative experience of the Escape passage, it is interesting that within those pages we find an often quoted statement on the nature of art and reality in Pale Fire-criticism, strengthening its stylistic bearing on readers’ theme construction where issues of Truth and Reality are concerned: “[T]he basic fact that ‘reality’ is neither the subject nor the object of true art which creates its own special reality having nothing to do with the average reality perceived by the communal eye.”\footnote{Nabokov, V. (1992): 101.}

Summarizing, the shifting and merging of worlds triggered by the Escape passage’s style, the relatively high level of immersive simulation it prompts, plus its thematic content close the gap between narrator and reader existing in Pale Fire’s default narrative set-up. This passage thus allows readers to experience the narrative in a more engaged and involved way.

4 Dreaming of Disa

Text-part PF_13 is the most obvious outlier in the graphical output of the intratextual PCA of Pale Fire (see Figure 3.4, p.71). Its stylistic difference in terms of consistency of word use lies in the occurrence of third person pronouns of both the male and female variety (‘her’, ‘she’, ‘he’) as opposed to the first person pronominal emphasis in PF_rest (‘my’, ‘I’, ‘me’); in the focus on Queen Disa, King Charles’s wife (‘disa’); and, interestingly, on the consistent use of the modals ‘could’ and ‘would’, and the negative ‘not’. Like PF_6-8, anti-marker word of this Disa passage is ‘line’, and in this case, also the related ‘note’, which Kinbote often uses in order to refer readers to other notes or to have them focus on the present one. Even more than is the case for the Escape passage, the Disa scene\footnote{The Disa scene makes up almost the entire text of PF_13, except for its final 636 words. It starts almost at the end of PF_12, covering its last 454 words.} takes away the reader’s immediate focus on the reading act. This scene, where a disguised King visits Disa during his exile, is not interrupted once by a referral to new lines or other notes, and Kinbote, who is still our narrator here, also makes use of a

powerful subworld building and immersion triggering device: Disa is described through the King dreaming her, or rather a very specific image or version of her.

The King visits Disa in one of their European houses, Villa Disa, in order to have her sign some papers. He is heavily disguised, but of course, she recognizes him. Kinbote relates the King’s dreams of Disa to his readers, in which King Charles appears to undergo feelings of remorse regarding his treatment of her: He has never loved her, since he is attracted to persons of the same sex, and in his dreams he acknowledges his unfairness towards her and the hurt he has caused. This entire dream sequence is a subworld within Kinbote’s Narrator’s Storyworld. The nature of this subworld is ambiguous, in that, in strict terms, it is a character-accessible subworld to which only the King should have access. A character-accessible subworld is created by a character and exists on a different level than that of the discourse participants, which in this case is that of Kinbote presenting a narrative to the reader. However, in this particular case the narrator - who is a character, but on a higher world level than the King - creates this dreamworld, appropriating another character’s epistemic subworld into his own Narrator’s Storyworld. The Narrator’s Storyworld Subworld thus becomes of a participant-accessible nature, which is paradoxical in terms of world construction and strengthens the reader’s engagement with the themes of Identity and Narratorial reliability. This is also made evident on content level, where Kinbote tells the story of the King’s visit to Disa to Shade, who then replies: “‘That’s all very well, Charles [Kinbote]. But there are just two questions. How can you know that all this intimate stuff about your rather appalling King is true? And if true, how can one hope to print such personal things about people who, presumably, are still alive?” The poet here addresses Kinbote with the same first name as the King and his words point to the actual existence of Zembla within the Storyworld. At the same time, he also voices his doubts about how Kinbote is able to know what he is telling him. In other words, he notices the incongruousness of the dream being both a character- and participant-accessible subworld.

The reader is thus immersed within a subworld within the Narrator’s Subworld, where the workings of the fictional mind of the King are simulated. Within this subworld, even more embedded subworlds are created, for example in the following quote. The reader has followed Kinbote into the King’s dream, in which he remembers the moment he told her about his non-existing love for her. The King appears to be aware of Disa’s uncomfortableness:

“[T]hrough the play of the charming gestures with which she always accompanied certain readymade phrases, he, the groaning dreamer, perceived the disarray of her soul and was aware that […] only obligations of etiquette and her staunch kindness to a guiltless third party gave her the force to smile. As one watched the light on her face, one foresaw it would fade in a moment, to be replaced - as soon as the visitor left - by that impossible little frown the dreamer could never forget.”

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424 This difference between character-accessible and participant-accessible worlds follows the revised notions of those terms in light of fixed first person narratives, as proposed in Chapter 1, section 2.2.4, pp.23-32.

Interestingly, there is a distancing effect going out from this quote, where the King is not only a “he”, but also “the groaning dreamer” and “the dreamer”, construing an image of him in an anonymous way. The use of the generic pronoun “one” plays into this as well, giving the focalization on Queen Disa a more detached quality. At the same time, the reader can be prompted into a more simulative mood here, through generic ‘one’’s possible ascription to herself. This self-ascription is given contextual force by the modal ‘would’, relying on the reader’s imaginative capacities in terms of word building. Something very remarkable is happening here, in that the reader is drawn deeper and deeper into the narrative world by embedded subworld construction and specific pronoun use, while at the same time the character of the King might be said to get disengaged from what he is dreaming. Following this quote, the King becomes a ‘he’ again, and the reader’s focus shifts back up to the level of the dream world after having experienced a high level of narrative engagement.

Typically, the pronoun ‘one’ is used in Pale Fire on occasions where Kinbote describes scenes or events that are of a dubious nature and in which he himself is involved. In the foreword, for example, he starts describing the view on his neighbors’ house and their activities in his regular first person stance, but what he is telling the reader here gives an impression of him not just observing but actually spying on or stalking Shade and his wife:

“The view from one of my windows kept providing me with first-rate entertainment […]. From the second story of my house the Shade’s living-room window remained clearly visible […], and almost every evening I could see the poet’s slippered foot gently rocking. One inferred from it that he was sitting with a book in a low chair but one never managed to glimpse more than that foot and its shadow moving up and down […]. Always at the same time the brown morocco slipper would drop from the wool-socked foot which continued to oscillate, with, however, a slight slackening of pace. One knew that bedtime was closing in with all its terrors; […].”

Whereas in this example from the foreword the pronominal shift is from ‘I’ referring to Kinbote to the generic use of ‘one’, in the example from the Disa passage the shift is from ‘he’ referring to the King to the generic ‘one’. The similarity between the instances in the novel where ‘one’ is used in such a generic way, either during a Kinbote-centred narrative or a King-centred one, are striking. At such moments, we encounter pronominal shifting to ‘one’ when disturbing events or feelings on the narrator’s or character’s part are presented, and when they are no longer the narrative centre, pronoun use shifts back again. This typical use of generic ‘one’ is a linguistic pointer to the King and Kinbote being the same person, either within the Storyworld proper or Kinbote’s head in case he is actually delusional.

It is noteworthy that the stylistic textures of both the Escape passage and the Disa scene diverge from the rest of the novels’ stylistic character in terms of their capacity to

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427 Other such instances can be found when, for example, the King’s sexual preference for much younger boys is expressed (see Nabokov, V. (1992): 92).
trigger immersive simulation and an engaged narrative experience. In addition, both centre around the King’s life and experiences rather than Kinbote’s. The distance that is initially created between the narrator and the reader in the foreword is thus undermined in passages where the narrator is not explicitly the focus of attention. The language and thematic content of these passages work together in this respect, allowing the reader to renege her focus on the reading act for a small while. As we will see, something similar is the case for the narrative experience triggered by PF_18; the novel’s ending, PF_19, however, is an altogether different ball game, showing a radical change in stylistic texture and effect.

5 Gradus on the move

The Escape and Disa passages can be seen as text-parts where similar stylistic devices trigger comparable stylistic effects of immersive simulation, engaged reading and theme construction. Both stand out due to their focus on a specific character, which is reflected in their linguistic textures with consistent occurrence of masculine and feminine third person pronouns. Subworld building in these passages is triggered on deeper world levels when compared with the novel’s remaining text-parts, where the emphasis lies on the acts of reading and narration, inviting the reader to simulate fictional consciousnesses in a more immersed fashion. Both passages also provide detailed renderings of the workings of the characters’ fictional minds through the use of Free Indirect Discourse and generic pronominal ‘one’. All of these stylistic features combined lead to a higher level of narrative engagement on the reader’s part. The final two text-parts of Pale Fire both focus, again, on specific characters: PF_18 is concerned with Gradus’s final stages in his hunt for King Charles, while PF_19 focuses on Kinbote’s experience of Shade’s death. In terms of stylistic texture, those last two passages are not only very different from Pale Fire’s overall literary-linguistic character, but they also diverge from the Escape and Disa passages in meaningful ways. When compared with each other, the Gradus and King passages not only show great differences, but give the impression of offering a subtle stylistic transition which has its climax at the very end of the novel, ultimately merging the identities of Kinbote and King Charles.

The cognitive stylistic analyses of the earlier passages showed that Kinbote takes the liberty of presenting the workings of the King’s fictional mind without any scruple. In contrast, when he relates Gradus’s pursuit to the reader, he takes care to inform his audience that he has no objective knowledge of Gradus’s experience. Kinbote’s narration foregrounds his subjectivity here, both on a content- and linguistic level. When presenting an imitation of Gradus’s focalization on a newspaper, he concludes with: “I confess this has been a wonderful game - this looking up in the WUL of various ephemerides over the shadow of a padded shoulder.” He emphasizes that he is focalizing on Gradus and cannot see through his outward appearance into his inner self: “From my rented cloudlet I contemplate him with quiet surprise […]”. There is also a

429 Ibidem.
feeling of uncertainty in much of his expressions, where he conjures up epistemic subworlds within his Narrator’s Storyworld, inviting the reader to imagine those worlds with him: “With the illusion of practical foresight he transferred his fiber suitcase and […] his raincoat to the anonymous security of a station locker - where, I suppose, they are still lying […].” Kinbote appears to want to make up for this narratorial uncertainty regarding Gradus’s mental functioning by condensing a great heap of information on the assassin’s outward appearance. The specific use of the first person plural pronoun ‘we’ in this passage comes into play here. PF_18 is the only text part in the novel where ‘we’ occurs in the word list-output of the Zeta Analysis. It is one of the highest ranking marker words for the Gradus passage, following ‘he’ and ‘gradus’. At the start of the Gradus passage, Kinbote involves the reader in his own uncertainty towards the goings on within the hit man’s mind by including her in epistemic subworld construction through the use of ‘we’ in combination with a first person statement containing a mental process type verb: “We must assume, I think, that the forward projection of what imagination he [Gradus] had, stopped at the act, […]”. When Kinbote then proceeds to the lavish description of Gradus’s not so pleasant looks, the reader is put firmly in a focalizing position, following Kinbote’s gaze and co-constructing an image of the killer in tandem:

“We can fill in the bleak oblong of his face with most of its elements such as thick eyebrows and a wart on the chin. […] We see, fairly in focus, the structure of his somewhat mesmeric organs of vision. We see his melancholy nose […] We see the mineral blue of his jaw […] We know already some of his gestures, […]. We have heard enough about his creased suit. We can at last describe his tie, […] We see, rather suddenly, his humid flesh. We can even make out (as, head-on nut quite safely, phantom-like, we pass through him, through the shimmering propeller of his flying machine, through the delegates waving and grinning at us) his magenta and mulberry insides, […]. We can now go further and describe, to a doctor or to anybody else willing to listen to us, the condition of this primate’s soul.”

The ‘we’-clauses here all contain verbs of the mental process type, aligning the reader’s consciousness with Kinbote’s. The part of the quote which induces such paired consciousness projection in a very thorough way, is where Kinbote invites his readers to become ephemeral creatures and pass through Gradus. The consistent occurrence of ‘we’ in this passage thus foregrounds Kinbote’s inability to take on the guise of omniscient narrator, as he does when narrating about the King; the only way he can get into Gradus’s mind is to - literally - get into him. Even in his imagination he cannot give concrete form to Gradus’s thoughts and feelings, but only plastically describes his innards.

Related to the ‘we’-issue, is the fact that ‘one’ pops up as the highest ranking anti-marker word for the Gradus passage. Like ‘we’, it does not occur in any other word list produced by the Zeta Analyses of Pale Fire-parts. Its rank as the highest marker word for the rest of the novel is telling, since ‘we’ appeared to have replaced ‘one’ as marker for the reader’s pronominal self-ascription. The inclusive ‘we’ holds greater self-ascribing
power than the generic ‘one’, where the referenced entities constitute an always somewhat opaque group. It is interesting that the reader is so strongly included by Kinbote into the narration only when he focuses on Shade’s killer. Quite possibly, he wants to convince the reader that his version of events is correct, since there appear to be persons around who see things rather differently, which only becomes obvious at the very end of the Gradus passage. Suddenly, Kinbote returns to using pronominal ‘one’ here, which is highly foregrounded as most prominent anti-marker word in this passage, and he personalizes his reader address:

“One finds it hard to decide what Gradus alias Grey wanted more at that minute: discharge his gun or rid himself of the inexhaustible lava in his bowels. […] My reader will, I hope, appreciate all the minute particulars I have taken such trouble to present to him after a long talk I had with the killer; he will appreciate them even more if I tell him that, according to the legend spread later by the police, Jack Grey had been given a lift, all the way from Roanoke, or somewhere, by a lonesome trucker! One can only hope that an impartial search will turn up the trilby forgotten in the Library - or in Mr Emerald’s car.”

This passage is foregrounded by the sudden and unexpected use of ‘one’ and the instance of personalization; both shift the focus of the reader out of the Storyworld through which Kinbote has just, unexpectedly, taken them for a ride, and put the act of reading back into focus. The narrator’s reliability is questioned again by the content, now the focus of attention due to the linguistic foregrounding.

At this point in the narrativ, the reader still has no conclusive evidence as to whether Kinbote is actually Charles Xavier, the exiled King of the existing (within the Storyworld) country of Zembla, who postures as a literary scholar; or if he is a deranged literary scholar unable to cope with the death of a poet he is obsessed with, which has led him to invent a fantastic tale about a non-existing nation and its deposed King. With this uncertainty she now proceeds towards the novels final pages, which show a stylistic texture that is radically different from what we have seen so far. The aberrant word list of PF_18, compared with those of the earlier passages, already give something away of the stylistic surprises to come: Note that, in comparison with the word lists of PF_rest contrasted with both L_6-8 and L_13, ‘I’ and ‘my’ have slid to the bottom of PF_rest’s marker words when contrasted with L_18, with ‘me’ also losing much of its discriminative force (Figure 3.10, p. 81). Apparently, the first person pronoun is not as antithetical to the Gradus passage’s style as in the earlier passages analyzed. This appears to be a foreshadowing of the stylistic character of PF_19, where Kinbote offers his final words to his doubting readers.

6 Pale Fire - Poetic endings

Kinbote’s commentary on ‘Pale Fire’ ends with a note to “Line 1000: [=Line 1: I was the shadow of the waxwing slain].” This line is not present as such in the poem, but, as we

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433 Idem: 216.
434 Idem: 223. Italics in original - PW.
have read in the foreword, it is the line Kinbote’s feels should be the 1000th line due to compositional requirements. As such, this last note falls a bit outside of the rest of the commentary, since there is no actual line it refers to, not even in Shade’s back up Drafts; the line is there as line1, of course, but Kinbote’s commentary to this first line is nothing like this final note. It is very telling that PF_19 is the sole stylistically different passage that focuses on the narrator Kinbote, and not on any of the other characters. Add its occurrence at the end of the novel and the picture gets even more interesting. The reader has been reading a commentary on a poem that appears to be about everything but the poem (an exiled King, the Shades losing their daughter, Kinbote’s working environment, a murder plot) and where the narrator is constantly very present: He prompts the reader’s focus onto the reading act as well as the writing act and often hinders her opportunity for an engaged reading experience by denying the possibility for world building on deeper levels. Kinbote is thus very present in the communicative set up of the narrative throughout the entire novel. The stylistic texture of PF_19 lends a particular flavor to the focus on Kinbote at Pale Fire’s end, setting it apart in terms of both language and content in a striking manner.

The most radical way in which the novel’s ending differs from all three earlier stylistically different text-parts is in the reversal of the pronoun distribution in the world lists produced by the Zeta Analysis. As can be seen in Figure 3.11 (p.82), the first person pronouns ‘me’, ‘I’, and ‘my’ are the highest ranking words for PF_19. Where the passages on the King’s escape and Queen Disa are concerned, those pronouns all load on the opposite side of the word list graphs. They are, in fact, the highest ranking anti-marker words for those text-parts. The Gradus passage is of a quite different nature, and first person pronouns do have some marking power for the rest of the novel in that particular comparison, but they rank much lower than in the other two analyses. PF_18 thus appears to function as a transition passage, where the reversal and scrambling of the novel’s standard linguistic pattern in PF_19 is foreshadowed.

Content-wise, the novel’s ending is focused on the murder of Shade, as perceived by Kinbote, but even more on Kinbote’s reflection on Shade’s death, his subsequent struggles in keeping ‘Pale Fire’ safe, and above all on Kinbote’s clear admission of being King Charles of Zembla. As such, the passage is not only focused on Kinbote, but on the King (either as a figment of his imagination in the Narrator’s Storyworld or an existent being in the Storyworld proper) as well, since their stories now coalesce. The prominence of the first person pronouns as marker words for this passage cannot only be explained in this light (the fact that Kinbote is telling a lot about himself and his plight as exiled king), but it also feeds into the thematic construction of the Identity-theme on a linguistic level. During his commentary, Kinbote has been hinting continuously at the existence of a secret concerning himself, and the language he uses as the novel progresses appears to mirror his willingness to consciously let it out in the open. The stylistic evidence is there when we look at the Escape passage, where the reader is immersed into the novel’s worlds by consciousness-projection onto the King’s fictional mind in a stronger way than Kinbote ever allows her experience when it comes to his own mind; it is there in the Disa passage, where the reader is drawn into the King’s dream and engages
in subworld construction in a way that Kinbote does not offer within the communicative setting he offers the reader as base-line world; it is there when Kinbote fails to infiltrate Gradus’s mind and can only get the reader to look at his outside; and finally, it is there in the presence of the first person pronouns as marker words, and in the absence of male third person pronouns as anti-marker words for PF_19.

The third person pronoun ‘he’ and related male pronouns are standard marker words for the three earlier passages. The mostly refer to the King, with the exception in the Gradus passage. The King is always a ‘he’; in PF_19, however, no male third person pronoun is included in the word list. Based on the Zeta Analyses, the top ranking of the first person pronouns as marker words for this passage leads to the expectation that if ‘I’ and consorts are marker words for PF_19, they should be anti-marker words for PF_rest - but in reality, they are not. This means that there is no simple reversal of narrative plains where Kinbote is still the first person narrator and the King has disappeared together with the male third person pronouns. It also implies that PF_19 is not different from the other divergent passages in that it mirrors the novel’s main stylistic character in an extreme way, so that the Zeta Analysis simply had to be inverted and provide the marker words for the other passages as anti-marker words for PF_19. Rather, we might conjecture that at the end of the novel it is not only the content of the narration that is focused on Kinbote as King, but that its language is as well: Kinbote is there as ‘I’ and the King is merged into this ‘I’, no longer being a ‘he’ that needs to be perceived as a separate entity. Content and language thus have their own respective power in the reader’s theme-construction and narrative engagement. The consistent use of the first person pronoun set is evident in the following quotes, for example: “I would certainly have him attired according to the old romanticist notion of a Moorish prince, had I been a northern king - or rather had I still been a king (exile becomes a bad habit).”435 and “I hurried into the house and concealed the invaluable envelope […] at the bottom of a closet, from which I exited as if it had been the end of the secret passage that had taken me all the way out of my enchanted castle and right from Zembla to this Arcady.”436

In the same vein, readers now finally meet the ‘real’ Kinbote on the communicative level where he has been narrating to them all along. The gap between narrator and reader is getting smaller and smaller, up to the point where Kinbote puts words into the reader’s mouth: “‘And you, what will you be doing with yourself, poor King, poor Kinbote?’ a gentle young voice may inquire.”437 Such personalized address by the narrator to the reader, combined with the use of first person pronouns when describing his own experiences, is reminiscent of Humbert’s rhetorics in Lolita. This helps to explain PF_19’s clustering together with L_31, Lolita’s ending, in the graphical output of the Cluster Analysis of both novels (see Figure 3.2, page 66). Like Humbert, Kinbote creates many epistemic subworlds within the final paragraphs of his commentary, even if he does not show Humbert Humbert’s penchant for embedded subworld construction within the Narrator’s Storyworld. The reader’s attention is

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435 Idem: 222.
436 Idem: 225. Italics in original - PW.
437 Idem: 229.
nevertheless focused on the content of what Kinbote is about to divulge next, due to the implicitly pre-announcing question quoted above. Following this question, he reflects on how he might possibly continue the rest of his life: “I may assume other disguises, [...]. I may turn up yet, on another campus, [...]. I may join forces with Odon in a new motion picture: Escape from Zembla [...]. I may pander to the simple tastes of theatrical critics and cook up a stage play, [...]. Oh, I may do many things! History permitting, I may sail back to my recovered kingdom, [...]. I may huddle and groan in a madhouse."

7 Conclusion

We, readers, will probably never be able to establish The Truth behind Pale Fire. The novel’s stylistic texture not only baffles critics, with its word-play and language games, it also provides readers with a narrative experience that is not so much colored by engagement as it is by distance. The novel’s hypertextual nature is partly responsible for this, but the cognitive stylistic analyses presented in this chapter have shown that its narrator has more than one tool at his disposal in order to keep the reader at bay. Pale Fire may have even more faces than Lolita, all of which appear to have undergone some cosmetic surgery and become quite unsettling - why exactly, will remain hidden in that elusive Truth behind Pale Fire. Nevertheless, it is clear that both the novel’s content and structure, from micro- to macro-level, offers a certain appeal to the reader - whether they like it or not, they will remember and, - who knows? - even revisit Kinbote’s world. Maybe readers should imitate Kinbote and ask if they may become his next pursuer, since he might just be asking them to with his final words: “But whatever happens, wherever the scene is laid, somebody, somewhere, will quietly set out - somebody has already set out, [...] and presently he will ring at my door - a bigger, more respectable, more competent Gradus.”

438 Idem: 229-230. Italics in original - PW.
Chapter 6. Conclusion: Final Remarks on the Engaged Narrative Experience of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*

1 An ode to reading

In a very fundamental sense, the present study addresses a matter at the core of literary studies, that is *reading*. It concerns the theorization of the phenomenology of reading and methodological reflection on how to characterize reading as an essentially human - embodied and cognitive - act. It emphasizes the role of style, of literary-linguistic language, as a main contributor to the narrative experience, possessing the power to engage readers with fictional worlds and beings. It situates itself within a conglomerate of academic disciplines, starting from questions of style, literary reading, comprehension, interpretation and experience, progressing through the (sometimes muddy) waters of the cognitive sciences, communication studies, philosophy, computational literary studies, functional linguistics, and many streams in between. And just like water, after having swirled in whirlpools and cascaded down mountains, returns to its source, the investigation into the phenomenology of reading Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* returns to the start. The previous two chapters offer in-depth analysis of the reader’s engaged narrative experiences of those novels, providing us with food for thought on the final issue at stake: Why are the engaged narrative experiences of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*, as evinced by readers in the interpretive community of Nabokov-critics and -scholars, both characterized by unease, but to different degrees and with different evaluative effects?

2 Humbert vs. Kinbote

As we have seen, the answer to this question has everything to do with the novel’s narrators. They are both masters of stylistic manipulation, but *Pale Fire*’s Kinbote appears to have one drawback when compared to *Lolita*’s Humbert: Whereas Humbert’s language may contain vile content at numerous times in his narrative, his style of narration not merely covers this up, but actually prompts the reader to engage with Humbert’s impure thoughts and unspeakable acts. She is triggered to simulate the workings of his fictional mind, his remembering of Lolita, of what he did with/to her, of epiphanies and insights he had regarding their situation. Through ingenious world building, he immerses the reader ever deeper into his fictional mind, sometimes allowing her to escape from it, but always at his terms and almost never in an unambiguous fashion. The reader’s engaged narrative experience is a rollercoaster of perspective-taking, shifting between world levels, reflecting on themes of Art, Morality, Narratorial reliability and Mnemonics-Imagination. This experience is characterized by feelings of unease, caused by Humbert’s language’s ability to have the reader experience his field of vision, giving her insight into his thoughts, opinions and motives of action, prompting both empathy for and disgust with his plight in the reader’s mind. “No woman,” states Lionel Trilling shortly after *Lolita*’s publication, “has been so charmingly evoked, in such grace and delicacy, as Lolita.
No narrator, we might add, has been able to rhetorically persuade readers to experience his story in such a charming, graceful and delicate way as Humber Humbert, convicted murderer and pedophile.

Which brings us to that other typically Nabokovian narrator Kinbote, not exactly a murderer, but definitely guilty of the poet John Shade’s death in the first degree. Like Humbert, Kinbote is no amateur when it comes to constructing worlds within his narrative: The reader is confronted with different ones, where Kinbote is either an exiled King (Charles II of Zembla), American émigré scholar of Russian descent (V Botkin) or Dr. Charles Kinbote, friend of Shade’s and literary editor of his poem ‘Pale Fire’. There are, however, great differences in how Kinbote creates his worlds when compared to Humbert’s literary-linguistic strategies. Although both are first person narrators, having almost exclusive power over the slant of their narratives toward the reader, Kinbote’s narrative is much less internally conveyed than Humbert’s. Whereas Humbert subsumes the reader into his own field of vision while describing inward states as well as outward events and objects, Kinbote firmly positions the reader in the Actual World during his paradoxical looks into other character’s minds, as well as his own. The reader is invited to engage with the themes of Identity, Narratorial reliability, Truth and Reality; she is never sure who Kinbote actually is, whether he is telling the truth in relation to the Storyworld, what properties this holistic mental model of the novel’s world is characterized by, whether Kinbote’s windows onto other people’s minds are flaunting the restraints of world-accessibility or if he is just making it all up… Humbert is an unreliable narrator in the sense that he has the definite goal to convince his jurors and readers of his honest love for Lolita, positioning the reader in a relation of skepticism toward what he tells her about himself. Kinbote is an unreliable narrator of a much more extreme type: By confounding his own personas, not providing the reader with definite Storyworld building propositions, but at the same time trying to convince her that Shade’s poem is about Zembla and its exiled King, he takes away any steady ground below his own feet to give the reader any purchase on.

The key to the diverging nature of the reader’s engaged narrative experience of *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* lies in the measure of immersive simulation that the novels’ narrators trigger through their rhetorical stylistics. Access to and insight into the Storyworld of *Lolita* is not always unambiguous in nature, but the reader is granted access and insight nevertheless. Much like he takes Lolita on a road trip through the United States, Humbert gives the reader the grand tour of his mind’s fictional workings. With her as companion, the Storyworld and its embedded subworlds unfold to ensure a highly engaged narrative experience. Kinbote positions the reader toward him and the world he conjures up, rather than having her step into his narrative. He constantly has her focusing her consciousness on the act of reading, jumping back and forth between the poem and the commentary, and even between notes to the poem, ensuring her access and phenomenal consciousness to be firmly attuned to the goings-on in the Actual World and not in the Storyworld. When he does offer insights into worlds in the narrative, these are almost exclusively character-accessible subworlds that should not be accessible to a

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discourse participant like Kinbote. The only explanation for this transgression of accessibility-rules would be that Kinbote is the most unreliable narrator of them all, who has made up the entire novel *Pale Fire*, including the poem, its foreword, the commentary and the index.

Maybe we can conjecture that the kind of engaged narrative experience coming forth from Humbert’s word-play is praised so strongly, because it both causes aesthetic pleasure and a strong level of narrative engagement. In other words, form and content are intertwined in such a subtle way, that they both harbor the possibility of a narrative experience that will stay with readers. By contrast, Kinbote’s word-play leads the reader back to the text itself in an almost vicious circle: He has the reader focus on the act of writing and the act of reading, again and again. The reader’s level of engagement with the text is constantly kept at surface level, and when it does go below the surface, into worlds embedded in the Storyworld, it does so in an often ambiguous fashion. It appears that, based on the connection between *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*-criticism and findings from cognitive stylistic analyses of the narrative experience of those novels, immersion and consequent engagement with a text, into a Storyworld, following the functioning of characters’ and narrators’ fictional minds, is an aspect evaluated positively by critics. The fact that Humbert’s “horrid scrapes become our scrapes”, as F.W. Dupee puts it, or that, in Wayne Booth’s words, the reader is unable “to dissociate himself from a vicious center of consciousness”, is precisely what accounts for an interesting read. The reader of *Lolita* almost has no choice, it seems, but to become immersed in its world and experience the narrative in highly engaged fashion. The novel’s “ambiguity of tone” and “ambiguity of intention”, as Lionel Trilling notes, is precisely what accounts for the novel’s greatness; both its form and its content ensure reader engagement of a highly immersive kind. It is possible that the less strongly engaged narrative experience *Pale Fire* offers is, conversely, a reason for its less positive evaluation on critics’ part. Kinbote’s box of language-tricks is often said to be complex and admirable for its immensity, but it is not deemed to be beautiful or to convey a story to the reader that will affect her in a worthwhile manner. Its narrative content does not speak easily to readers, where *Lolita*’s does. For Dwight Macdonald not only calls it “as boring as any exhibition of virtuosity disconnected from feeling and thought”, commenting on its content, but he also states that “the technical exertions he [the author, speaking always through Kinbote] expends on the project are so obtrusive as to destroy any esthetic pleasure on the reader’s part”. Macdonald here points to the idea that the style and content of *Pale Fire* are in one another’s way; where for *Lolita*, as we have seen, they appear to strengthen each other’s workings. Not all critics are of such a pessimistic cast as Macdonald and do appreciate Kinbote’s stylistic gymnastics: George Steiner admits there are “bits of dazzling

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cleverness\textsuperscript{446} to be found in it, but he also goes on to judge it harshly, referring to \textit{Lolita} while doing so:

[N]either the acrobatics of a passionate connoisseur of dictionaries nor the occasional stroke of deep, private candor can make \textit{Pale Fire} glow. The fable of vice in \textit{Lolita} was made endurable, and even moving, by ironic verve. The pederasty of Dr. Kinbote is rendered with heavy, vulgar jocosity. His idylls (actual or fancied) with right-trousered little boys and green undergraduates sound like senile parodies of the sinister wit of the late Humbert Humbert. At times the crudity and lack of imaginative resource are appalling.\textsuperscript{447}

I have no intention to decide within these pages whether or not \textit{Pale Fire} and \textit{Lolita} are ‘good’ or ‘bad’ books, or whether one is a ‘better’ novel than the other. I certainly do not believe in the existence of inherently ‘good’ and ‘bad’ books. Nevertheless, literary reviewers are judges of what they feel to be literary works that readers should or should not read; and regarding our two case studies, the verdict is definitely more sunny for \textit{Lolita} than its chronological successor.

3 Life after \textit{Lolita} and \textit{Pale Fire} - Some reflections on theory, method and avenues for further research

The present study shows that an integration of theory and method from different, and sometimes unexpected, areas within academic research, can give new impetus to established questions within the discipline of literary studies. In the spirit of a postclassical research project it asks for a reevaluation of text-oriented research within this field, that has been dominated by the research paradigm of institutional critique for the last few decades, and that has so much potential for a fruitful (re-)engagement with disciplines old and new, such as linguistics, cognitive sciences, computer science and philosophy. Every type of research has its drawbacks and benefits, and by combining insights from different disciplines we can overcome limitations and develop new ways of looking at our research objects. To this effect, I believe that scholars from empirical and conceptual research traditions should engage in intense conversation; that the word ‘quantitative’ should not scare humanities scholars when they appropriate new methods of analysis; that no one form of theorization, methodological reflection, data gathering or analytical method is inherently more scientific than another.

One of the limitations the present study has been confronted with during the research process is the almost impossible task of setting up an experiment to measure certain aspects of the phenomenology of reading when entire novels are the objects of research. The sheer amount of time a test-subject would have to stay within a controlled environment plus the effort she would have to put into the experiment make it into an untenable project. Since such basic requirements as ecological validity, reliability and repeatability cannot be upheld, experimental testing was a no-go. On a more positive note, many conceptual notions that have been around in literary studies for (often many)

\textsuperscript{446} Steiner, G. (1982 [1962]): 140.
\textsuperscript{447} Idem: 141.
years have been given empirical support in the recent past. The perspective-taking effect of personal pronouns, processes of immersion and transportation, and the interpretive force of foregrounded and backgrounded narrative elements have all been subject to empirical testing. Conceptual-minded researchers, among which I count myself, can take up the results from those studies and engage with them when theorizing about concepts of narrative, reading and literary-linguistic language processing. They can integrate insights from empirically based studies into their conceptual frameworks and methods of analysis. To this effect, I believe researchers should broaden their scope of abilities in such a way that they are familiar with the good practices of disciplines other than those in which they have been schooled. It is one thing to use the outcomes of empirical linguistic research as a conceptual-minded literary scholar, but is another to be familiar with the actual research process that constitutes this specific kind of research. The same goes for the use of methods of computational analysis in literary studies. In order to understand the numerical and graphical output, the data, of computational tests, one should understand the workings responsible for this output. In my research I have tried to grasp the philosophies and practices of different disciplines to the best of my abilities. Sometimes this meant having to ask for help (a literary scholar who can do some computer programming is no professional computer programmer) and sometimes it meant a reevaluation of practices taken for granted within the research tradition I have been schooled in. At other times, it made me see the beauty of hermeneutics and admire its inherent openness to new theory and method, as long as it leads to the most important goal of humanities research: Understanding the human mind and all the cultural artifacts that spring forth from it. As long as this goal is kept in focus, literary scholars will undoubtedly find new areas of research to strengthen their own research tradition, and in doing so, they will help other traditions to advance as well.
Bibliography


https://sites.google.com/site/computationalstylistics/home


List of Figures and Tables

Figures

Figure 1.1 The grammar of experience: types of process in English (adapted from Halliday, M.A.K. & Matthiessen, C.M.M. (2004):172) p.26

Figure 3.1 Principal Components Analysis of all text-blocks of Lolita and Pale Fire based on the 100 MFW (covariance matrix) p.62

Figure 3.2 Cluster Analysis of all text-blocks of Lolita and Pale Fire based on the 700 MFW p.66

Figure 3.3 Principal Components Analysis of all text-blocks of Lolita based on the 200 MFW (covariance matrix) p.69

Figure 3.4 Principal Components Analysis of all text-blocks of Pale Fire based on the 50 MFW (covariance matrix) p.71

Figure 3.5 Zeta analysis of Lolita, L_6 contrasted with remainder of novel p.73

Figure 3.6 Zeta analysis of Lolita, L_29 contrasted with remainder of novel p.75

Figure 3.7 Zeta analysis of Lolita, L_31 contrasted with remainder of novel p.76

Figure 3.8 Zeta analysis of Lolita, L_16 contrasted with remainder of novel p.77

Figure 3.9 Zeta analysis of Pale Fire, PF_13 contrasted with remainder of novel p.80

Figure 3.10 Zeta analysis of Pale Fire, PF_18 contrasted with remainder of novel p.81

Figure 3.11 Zeta analysis of Pale Fire, PF_19 contrasted with remainder of novel p.82

Figure 3.12 Zeta analysis of Pale Fire, PF_6,7,8 contrasted with remainder of novel p.84

Figure 4.1 The Narrative Experience p.86

Figure 4.2 The world building process. Example 1 p.87

Figure 4.3 The world building process. Example 2 p.87

Figure 4.4 The world building process. Example 3 p.87
Figure 4.5 The world building process. *Lolita* example 1  
Figure 4.6 The world building process. *Lolita* example 2  
Figure 5.1 The world building process. *Pale Fire* example 1

Tables

Table 4.1 The cohesive chain of reference (names) for the character ‘Lolita’ in numerical terms in *Lolita*
Curriculum Vitae

Puck Wildschut studied Cultural Studies (BA) and Literary Studies (ResMA) at Radboud University Nijmegen. She completed both programmes cum laude and subsequently assumed positions as lecturer and PhD Researcher at the same University. From February to August 2016 she held the position of Researcher-in-residence at the National Library of the Netherlands (Koninklijke Bibliotheek), where she worked on the project 'Roles, relations and references: Towards a computation-based distant reading of narrative-semantic roles in large datasets in Dutch'. Together with an interdisciplinary research team, she developed a computational tool for text analysis at the KB, 'Narralyzer'. Her research interests include cognitive poetics, literary-linguistic research, and computational literary studies, and she is an avid proponent of interdisciplinary research within academia. Above all, she believes that without cats, books and music all would be lost.
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