

Many books and essays have been written on the works of Vladimir Nabokov, of which my bibliography contains only a tiny fragment. Yet, most of the studies make comparisons within either Nabokov's Russian works or his American works, while the comparison of the two novels I have chosen, *Lolita* and *Laughter in the Dark*, is very rare.

Most novels by Vladimir Nabokov display the themes of obsession, blindness, manipulation, freedom, and morality. Most of them also are about games, including language games, and the love of language in general. Nabokov switched from writing in Russian to English and experienced a great deal of pain in relinquishing his native tongue, becoming a phantom in his own prose, as if, he said, he had created the person who wrote in English but was not himself doing the writing. ¹ Bearing this in mind, it is also important to state that he had translated two of his Russian novels into English (*Laughter in the Dark* and *Despair*).

This split in Nabokov's life into two periods is also why it was of great relevance to me that I should compare two of his novels that were written at different times, in different languages, and with different backgrounds. It might seem more natural to compare two novels originally written in Russian that have quite similar plots and characters, *Laughter in the Dark* and *King, Queen, Knave*, for example. But, although the latter is more acclaimed by many critics, I chose the former for comparison with the novel with which Nabokov really introduced himself to English readers, *Lolita*.