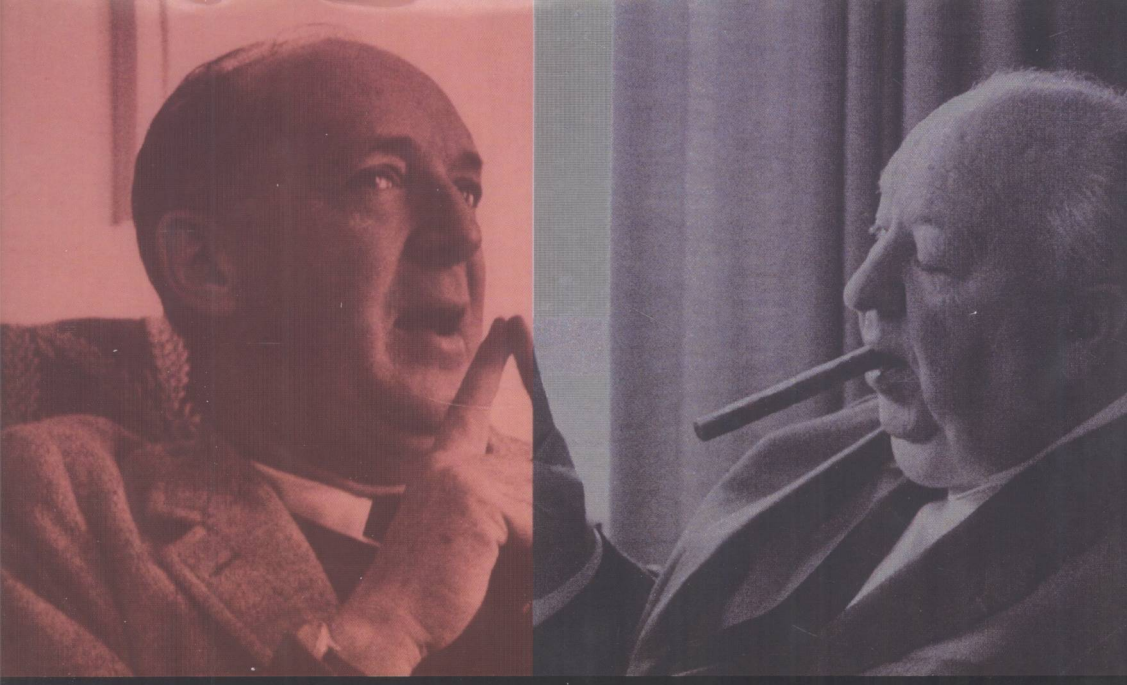

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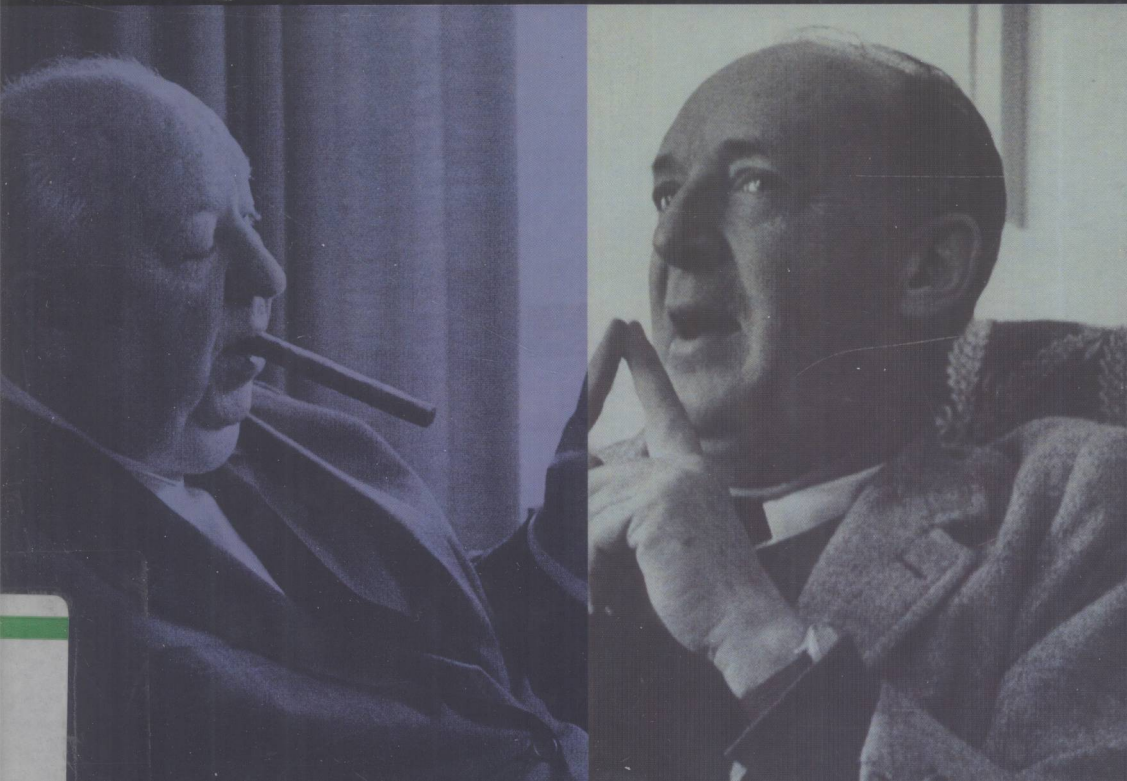
in Hitchcock and Nabokov

BARBARA STRAUMANN



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Preface

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Barbara Straumann

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations all refer to works by Vladimir Nabokov. Full references appear in the Bibliography.

A	*Ada or Ardor*
BS	*Bend Sinister*
D	*Despair*
IB	*Invitation to a Beheading*
KQK	*King, Queen, Knave*
LD	*The Luzhin Defense*
LL	*Lectures on Literature*
LO	*The Annotated Lolita*
LS	*Lolita: A Screenplay*
NWL	*Dear Bunny, Dear Volodya: The Nabokov-Wilson Letters, 1940–1971*
P	*Pnin*
SL	*Selected Letters 1940–77*
SM	*Speak, Memory*
SK	*The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*
TT	*Transparent Things*

Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

Cross-mapping Hitchcock and Nabokov

In late 1964, Alfred Hitchcock and Vladimir Nabokov cross paths for a short period of time. Hitchcock, the filmmaker, approaches Nabokov, the writer, for a joint project. After a telephone conversation, the two exchange several plot ideas revolving around spectacular scenarios of dislocation: the story of a homeless girl whose widowed father manages a large international hotel with the rest of the family members posing as concierge, cashier, chef, housekeeper as well as a bedridden matriarch, while, in fact, they form a shady 'backstage' gang of crooks; a starlet whose astronaut lover appears to be curiously changed after his return from outer space to earth; a senator's daughter engaged to an Americanised secret agent who may potentially defect during his visit to his Russian homeland; and, finally, a defector from behind the Iron Curtain who is betrayed by a seemingly benevolent American couple on their western ranch to Soviet agents intent on either his death or abduction. In their letters both the director and author express interest in some of the material. Hitchcock writes that 'my needs are immediate and urgent' and Nabokov suggests that they meet in Europe the following year.[1]

What a film by Hitchcock and Nabokov might have looked like had they pursued their plans, we can only speculate. At the same time, the anecdote of their near-collaboration intrigues me because it evokes a host of correspondences between their oeuvres. In addition to the iconic status and stature that they had both attained by the early 1960s as at once distinctive and detached *auteur* figures, Nabokov himself may have thought of further affinities when, in his account of the gala premiere of Stanley Kubrick's *Lolita* on 13 June 1962, he described himself as the virtual double of Hitchcock rather than of Kubrick's male lead, James Mason.

> Crowds were awaiting the limousines that drew up one by one, and there I, too, rode, as eager and innocent as the fans who peered into my car hoping to glimpse James Mason but finding only the placid profile of a stand-in for Hitchcock. (LS: xii)

As implied by Nabokov's impersonation of Hitchcock, there was indeed a remarkable resemblance between the two figures and their body gestures once they reached a certain age. Yet doesn't their doubling also extend to aesthetic attitudes and concerns? Isn't there a striking correspondence in their exchange of plot ideas, in which authorship cannot easily be attributed – unless we return to the letters, where we read that the hotel story and the relationship between the senator's daughter and the seemingly Americanised agent were suggested by Hitchcock, the starlet, her astronaut lover and the Russian deserter by Nabokov? Doesn't our speculation about the potential treatment of these scenarios refer us to compelling convergences in Hitchcock's and Nabokov's thematic and aesthetic interests? Are we not inevitably reminded of other plots of cultural and psychic dislocation in their oeuvres as well as their highly self-reflexive *mise-en-scène*?

Thus one can, for example, well imagine how their plans for a joint project could have tied in with their shared fascination for spying. Issues of perception and perspective, of knowledge and power shape their work to a large extent. Inspired as they are by elements of Gothic, detective and espionage fiction, many of Hitchcock's and Nabokov's literary and cinematic texts turn on sight and its refraction as a trope for cultural, political and/or psychic alienation. They frequently feature protagonists who not only observe other figures, but who also spy on themselves or else are spied upon by doubles or secret agents of political systems, thus pointing to subjectivities that are estranged or otherwise precarious. At the same time, questions of sight and control are also self-reflexively played out on the extra-diegetic level of Hitchcock's and Nabokov's texts, where readers and spectators are time and again caught in their potentially deceptive perception.

The focus of my comparison is on mutual concerns and preoccupations rather than on notions of explicit intertextuality and influence. In reading Hitchcock's and Nabokov's texts alongside each other, I take my cue from Elisabeth Bronfen's usage of the concept 'cross-mapping' (2002, 2004b). Referring to Stanley Cavell (1981) and his reading of George Cukor's romantic Hollywood comedy *Philadelphia Story* (1940) together with Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bronfen suggests that certain aesthetic texts can be fruitfully mapped onto one another even if they do not stand in a direct intertextual relation. The critical interest at stake in such a cross-mapping lies in a thinking in

analogies, in exploring the similarities and differences between the tropes brought into circulation by the texts in question. In cross-mapping such diverse cultural texts as film noir and Wagner's operas, Bronfen's core question concerns the cultural survival of texts, images, codes and rhetorical gestures as they migrate through different historio-cultural periods and media. How do they develop their compelling force to move us beyond the aesthetic medium and the historical moment from which they emerge? She suggests – similarly to Stephen Greenblatt (1988) – that it is through the cultural negotiation and exchange accompanying their historical transmission, transcription and transference that objects, practices and modes of expression gain their 'social energy'. Likewise it is their perpetual refiguration in different media which renders certain tropes particularly resilient for their audiences.

Picking up on Bronfen and Greenblatt, I would definitely make a claim for the cultural survival of Hitchcock's and Nabokov's aesthetic energies. The ongoing fascination of their texts may well be nourished by their specific refigurations of already existing cultural tropes as well as their subsequent absorption by our cultural imaginary. The *Phoenix Tapes* (1999) by the video artists Christoph Girardet and Matthias Müller enact a particularly compelling comment on this negotiation and exchange. By splicing together recurrent themes and images from Hitchcock films – incriminating pieces of evidence, railway tracks, over-present mother figures or the violent embrace of couples – they not only invoke specific movie memories, but their use of found footage actually appears to tap a collective cultural unconscious that these cinematic memory traces have helped shape in and through their compelling refigurations.[2]

Rather than focusing on the unorthodox trajectories in cultural history that can be rendered visible by virtue of a cross-mapping of texts from different cultural periods as Bronfen suggests, the dialogue I propose between Hitchcock and Nabokov foregrounds the way in which, while working in the same period but different media, they develop similar thematic and aesthetic concerns. What I am primarily concerned with is how their narratives and their highly aestheticised languages refigure a particular historicity, namely their concrete experience of cultural displacement. More specifically, by taking the seemingly relentless playfulness of Hitchcock and Nabokov as its point of departure, this book sets out to trace the figurations of exile negotiated by their texts as well as the specific ways in which they triangulate an exilic imaginary, aesthetic language and concrete cultural displacement.

As we begin comparing Hitchcock's and Nabokov's cinematic and literary texts, we quickly notice the self-reflexivity with which they

foreground their mediality and their status as aesthetic representations.[3] Our attention is arrested first and foremost by the prolific puns and brilliant wordplay, by the various types of irony the filmmaker and writer invoke as well as the myriad games they play with their readers and spectators.[4] What Alfred Appel writes about Nabokov, namely that 'the process of reading and rereading his novels is a game of perception' in which the 'author and the reader are the "players"' (1991: xx–xxi), can equally be said about Hitchcock.[5] In a way similar to Nabokov, who ironically points to the unreliability of his narrators, even as their language keeps seducing us, Hitchcock's camera often aligns itself with charismatic criminals or deluded characters, thus rendering us partly complicitous in their crime and/or delusion.[6] Time and again, we are also derailed by the patterns and genres of detection invoked by their literary and cinematic texts. Nabokov's playful writing asks us to follow elaborate allusions and references which provide us with clues to complex aesthetic arrangements and/or turn out to be ironically refracted false leads. Even though Hitchcock's thrillers and espionage films may follow structures of detection in a more literal fashion, they often provide the spectator with empty decoys which trigger the movement and action of the figures, but prove to be tangential to the film's concerns or, to use Slavoj Žižek's words, 'purely auto-reflexive' in the overall structure of the film (1992: 6).

At stake, therefore, is not a hermeneutic solution but a deft game of power which the authors play with their audiences – as well as a reassuring sense of control in the way their oeuvres function as strikingly coherent systems. Much attention has been paid in both Hitchcock and Nabokov studies to the signature systems as well as the remarkably consistent and closed textual universes developed by the respective oeuvres.[7] Thematic elements traversing and thus connecting texts include figures and focalisers who impose their often deluded imagination on the surrounding world, masks, self-inventions and fictional biographies in Nabokov's writing; wrongly suspected protagonists, the fallibility of fathers and other representatives of the symbolic law, or the 'blockage' of sexual relationships in Hitchcock's cinema; and one could add the omnipresence, in both oeuvres, of psychic alienation, haunting obsessions as well as numerous double constellations.[8]

The self-referential economy created by these self-citational loops is both enhanced and epitomised by authorial masks and impersonations. Most prominent in this respect are the famous cameo-appearances of the director Hitchcock, who positions and promotes his prominent public persona as a distinct brand and popular trademark, not unlike the way in which Andy Warhol comments on himself and other

celebrities as cultural signs.[9] Whether failing to board a bus in *North by Northwest* or getting on a train while carrying a double-bass which duplicates the rotund shape of his body in *Strangers on a Train*, the director inscribes himself in his films to pose as a riddle and to signal his authorial presence to the spectators who are in on the game he is playing with them. In Nabokov's writing, these authorial inscriptions find a correspondence not only in anagrammatic signatures such as 'Vivian Darkbloom' or 'Vivian Bloodmark' that riddle his texts,[10] but also in a cinematic cameo-performance written into his screenplay of *Lolita*, though omitted in Kubrick's film.[11] As Hitchcock fashions his deadpan persona, Nabokov uses his carefully scripted interviews, collected in *Strong Opinions* (1973), in order to construct an aloof mask of the author. Nabokov's prefaces and his postscript to *Lolita* come from 'an impersonation of Vladimir Nabokov talking about his own book' (LO: 311). Hitchcock, in turn, addresses his audience in directorial lead-ins featured in the trailers for *Psycho* and *Marnie* as well as the TV series *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*.

Is it perhaps indicative of their authorial role that Hitchcock and Nabokov had themselves repeatedly photographed with pointed index fingers or related hand gestures as in the two portraits on the cover of this book? While the indexical function manifested by these hand-signals remains, of course, pure speculation, we can safely say that the signature systems of their texts keep pointing to the author figure as at once the origin and centre of their worlds of artifice. Hitchcock and Nabokov are both inside and outside the games they play in their films and texts. They position themselves as detached observers of the plots and worlds whose rules they simultaneously create and manipulate. The impotence facing many Hitchcock protagonists stands in sharp contrast to the artistic control signalled by the director, while Nabokov often intervenes in his fiction to point to the fallibility of his ambitious narrators and his own superior power as author.

Nabokov, in one of his prefaces, refers to the authorial figure who frequently intrudes in his novels as 'an anthropomorphic deity impersonated by me' (BS: 11). Yet he could equally be describing how Hitchcock foregrounds the presence of his camera and thus wittily highlights the godlike position he occupies as director. In the introduction to his screenplay of *Lolita,* Nabokov evokes the complete control he would have exercised had he worked primarily for the theatrical stage or the cinematic screen. Again, the passage comes close to a characterisation of Hitchcock and his ambition to shape every aspect in the marking of his films and thus to imprint his authorial signature despite the highly collaborative system of cinema. 'If I had given as much of myself to the

stage or the screen as I have to the kind of writing which serves a triumphant life sentence between the covers of a book', Nabokov writes,

> I would have advocated and applied a system of total tyranny, directing the play or the picture myself, choosing settings and costumes, terrorizing the actors, mingling with them in the bit part of guest, or ghost, prompting them, and, in a word, pervading the entire show with the will and art of one individual . . . (LS: ix–x)

In interview statements, Hitchcock and Nabokov both stress their artistic omnipotence and the power they have over actors and figures. Like Hitchcock's well-known description of actors as 'cattle' (in Gottlieb 1997: 301), Nabokov argues 'my characters are galley slaves' (SO: 95). Suggesting another image for the author's mastery, Alfred Appel characterises Nabokov's aesthetics as 'Nabokov's Puppet Show' (1991: xvii), and equivalent to the puppeteer who pulls the strings of his self-reflexive performances, Hitchcock often casts himself as the deft master not only of his cinematic suspense, but also of his spectators' affects and emotions. 'My suspense work', Hitchcock says, while commenting on the power he has over the audience of his thrillers, 'comes out of creating nightmares for the audience. And I *play* with an audience. I make them gasp and surprise them and shock them' (Hitchcock in Gottlieb 1997: 313).[12] Time and again, Hitchcock's and Nabokov's self-reflexive games can also be seen to ironically expose the strings of the puppeteer so as to refer to the mediated status of their texts.

Indeed, another close affinity can be observed in the ways in which the master game-players continually remind us that their films and novels constitute textual worlds and that what we witness is the virtuoso creation and manipulation of self-reflexive artifice. Their authorial interventions undermine rather than anchor any mimetic illusion, whether in the insistent foregrounding of narration, the subversion of narrative conventions, or the prominent practice of self-citation. As a result, the emphasis of their literary and cinematic languages lies on the signifier and non-mimetic representation, on a multiplicity of signs and the always refracted and mediated character of any 'reality'. This aesthetics plays itself out in the medial self-reflexivity already mentioned above and in the *mise-en-abîme* structures shaping many of the texts: the allusions to playacting and the star image of Cary Grant in *North by Northwest*, or to cinematic voyeurism in the protagonist played by James Stewart in *Rear Window*, the many Nabokov figures who constitute themselves as the narrators or even the writers of the texts we actually read. Yet their self-reflexive textuality is also nourished by a plurality of signs and images derived from both 'high' art and popular culture, psychoanalysis and a vast array of literary and cinematic tradi-

tions – as well as by the irony and parody with which these references, and the expectations they raise in spectators and readers, are undermined. In fact, if in their self-referential systems Hitchcock and Nabokov often allude to their own texts or authorial personae in self-ironical ways, they emerge as debunking arch-parodists when it comes to the play of and with cultural references, whether, for instance, in Nabokov's rejection of psychoanalysis or Hitchcock's hyperbolic invocations of its tropes and symbols.

Not surprisingly Nabokov once located his affinity with the filmmaker in their shared humorous stance. 'Actually, I've seen very little Hitchcock', he conceded, 'but I admire his craftsmanship. I fondly recall at least one film of his, about someone called Harry . . . his *humour noir* is akin to *my humour noir*, if that's what it should be called' (Nabokov in Appel 1974: 129). Ultimately it is here that the writer and the director may have left one of their strongest marks and imprints on the cultural imagination: in the penchant that they both reveal, in *The Trouble with Harry* and almost everywhere else, for the dark and the bleak, for abysses that appear to be at once deepened and distanced by their parody and irony.

While these resemblances between Hitchcock and Nabokov could be supplemented with many others, the question is how one can describe the implications and consequences of their convergence and comparison. Thus a structural analysis could explore further similarities between Hitchcock's and Nabokov's thematic and aesthetic overlaps, their manipulation of narrative conventions, or the traces of literary traditions in Hitchcock's filmmaking and the impact of cinematic techniques on Nabokov's writing.[13] A poststructuralist approach, in turn, may show how their privileging of cultural signs and references prefigures a postmodern aesthetics. For me, however, the significance of Hitchcock's and Nabokov's cross-mapping lies somewhere different – in their emphatic embrace of a highly aestheticised language and the question of how this gesture can be brought together with the particular historicity and the concrete experience of cultural displacement from which their texts emerge. In their public statements, the filmmaker and writer celebrate a similar aesthetic investment. 'I put first and foremost cinematic style before content', Hitchcock says. 'Content is quite secondary to me' (Hitchcock in Gottlieb 1997: 292). Similarly, in his postscript to *Lolita*, Nabokov declares that 'for me a work of fiction exists only insofar as it affords me what I shall bluntly call aesthetic bliss' (LO: 314). What, I ask myself, are the functions and gestures underlying Hitchcock's and Nabokov's pronounced embraces of aesthetic language? Rather than following their declarations and focusing on the

self-reflexivity of their languages alone, I propose an analysis of their logic and condition which places them in the context of cultural exile and displacement.

Not only were Hitchcock and Nabokov born in the same year, 1899, but both of them also faced concrete cultural dislocation as a crucial juncture in their biographies.[14] In spring 1939, after Hitchcock had established himself as the leading British director of the time, he chose to emigrate with his wife and assistant Alma Reville and their daughter Patricia to the United States. Hollywood appears to have been the cultural site where he actually wanted to be since in retrospect he emphasises that long before his transatlantic move, he had already been closely associated with American cinema and its aesthetic language.[15] Similar to the American-trained director, Nabokov, too, was fluent in several cultural languages. His aristocratic St Petersburg family cultivated its cosmopolitan cultural orientation not only in regular travels to Western Europe but also in the early multilingual education of its children. In contrast to Hitchcock, who transplanted himself voluntarily and under no duress, Nabokov's politically liberal family was forced into exile by the Russian Revolution. Two decades into his Western European exile, during which he studied at Cambridge and established himself as a Russian émigré writer, he was again violently displaced. Together with his Jewish wife Véra, born Slonim, and their son Dmitri, he managed to escape Nazi totalitarianism in 1940 and to find refuge in the United States, where he began a second career as an author writing in English.

My wager, in invoking these biographic trajectories, is that Hitchcock's and Nabokov's languages stand in a close connection with their exilic dislocation and self-fashioning. Their textuality and self-referentiality, and also their desire for mastery and control, can be read as part of an aesthetics of exile. In order to re-introduce referentiality – and thus the question how aesthetic texts hook into the world – both into their oeuvres and their discussion, I propose that we reread their texts against the backdrop of exile as a momentous experience of twentieth-century history and culture, including the cataclysmic displacements and deaths in the Holocaust as well as a certain cultural dynamics surrounding exile from the 1920s to the 1950s. Whenever we refer to exile, we need to consider an irresolvable tension between two facets, namely an irreversible, potentially traumatic experience of loss, on the one hand, and a condition that may be enabling because it grants access to another cultural language, on the other hand. In the past century, displacement meant violent dispossession and death for many, notably for over six million European Jews who were systematically murdered in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany. For others, who managed to

escape as political refugees or who emigrated for professional and/or economic reasons, exile could mean either cultural estrangement or an enriching exchange with the cultural codes of the respective host country.

Nabokov's autobiographical text *Speak, Memory* hinges on precisely this dynamics of exile and its ambivalence. According to his narrative, it is his Western European exile, described as a liminal existence largely devoid of, and hence alienated from, any cultural contact, which promotes his development as an author. Largely secluded during his years in England, he cultivates his mother tongue to become a Russian writer. Similarly, it is the phantom world of the Russian émigré circles in Berlin that is rewritten in his early fiction before American everyday culture comes to play a very different, more concrete role for his far more grounded 'American' novels *Lolita*, *Pnin* and *Pale Fire*. On the one hand, then, Nabokov fashions himself as an isolated figure who inhabits a purely textual world. On the other hand, he could not write his text unless he had lost an entire cultural world and several family members – unless 'the things and beings that I had most loved in the security of my childhood had been turned to ashes or shot through the heart' (SM: 92). Like so many others, his exilic trajectory is thus embedded in the very real exilic movements and cultural displacements of the time.

France, where Nabokov and his family moved before their emigration to the United States, was a site particularly rich in exilic resonances. The major destination of the mass exodus of Russians from Germany in the early 1920s and then again in the 1930s, Paris had from early on attracted American expatriates, who could have returned home any time but chose to live and work abroad. The rise of Nazism in Germany in the 1930s meant that as for Nabokov and his family, Paris became a temporary refuge for many exiles before they moved to England, as did for instance Sigmund Freud (who stopped over in Paris as he fled to London), or to further destinations especially in the United States.

The transatlantic route had, of course, long been established. Notably Hollywood had, from the very beginning, been influenced by the migration and immigration of European directors, including Josef von Sternberg, Ernst Lubitsch and Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, as well as (a smaller number of) European stars, most famously perhaps Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo. In the 1930s, many European directors, including Fritz Lang, Billy Wilder, Douglas Sirk, Robert Siodmak, Otto Preminger, Max Ophüls, Jean Renoir and others, either chose emigration or were forced into exile (Baxter 1976). The 'hard core of political refugees' (Elsaesser 1999: 105), however, were intellectuals, writers and composers, among them Hannah Arendt, Max Horkheimer, Theodor

W. Adorno, Siegfried Kracauer, Bertolt Brecht and Hanns Eisler, several of whom moved to Los Angeles, the heart of American mass culture. This cultural environment inspired different responses ranging from Horkheimer and Adorno's cultural pessimism in their critique of the culture industry and its supposedly standardised production in *The Dialectics of Enlightenment* (1944) to the participation in and, in some cases, active contribution to its very economies. Especially filmmakers, by working in the American art *par excellence*, helped shape America's culture, which gained such influence in the twentieth century as to develop into a hegemonic paradigm travelling across the Atlantic and almost everywhere else.

In the years following the war, some exiles returned to Europe. Others stayed in postwar America, where the cultural and social climate was far from homogeneous. The investigations of the House Committee on Un-American Activities on Communism in Hollywood in 1947 resulted in the studio blacklist and in increased caution in its cultural production, while McCarthy's accusations, threats and witch-hunts formed a similar attempt, nourished by a paranoia over the ideologically other and alien, to install a Cold War hegemony. Media representations advertised an upbeat optimism together with commodity and consumer culture centred on the affluent middle-class family, its suburban home and domestic values. Yet as David Sterritt (1998) convincingly shows, conformity and conservatism simultaneously produced cultural dissidence and dissatisfaction. Sterrit chooses as his core example the Beat Generation and its interrogation of consensual norms and values in its disruption and transgression of narrative rules. Yet he also refers to mainstream culture, notably to film noir – a genre in which the influence of European directors was especially strong and which articulated a cultural malaise by depicting a particularly bleak vision of an urban America of violence and corruption – and to filmmakers such as Sirk and Hitchcock, who 'treated Hollywood conventions to audacious revisions and ironic interrogations' (Sterrit 1993: 64).[16]

Indeed, Hitchcock's work occupies an alternative position within the cultural hegemony as it points to dislocations by using its very codes. Unlike other European directors, Hitchcock was not forced into exile, but chose to move to Hollywood to gain access to the language of the predominant film system. Hollywood not simply allowed him to work with larger budgets and major stars. It represented an international language that addressed a global audience, while also offering his preoccupation with violence the imaginative potential of another cultural setting, namely 'the freer, larger, more dangerous, more socially mobile American society' (French 1985: 117). Initially, he appropriated Hollywood norms

and conventions as a stranger to the studio system, which was more rigid than British filmmaking, and later in his career cultivated an imperturbable public persona that was stereotypically English. However, his work did enter American mainstream culture, in which he wished to participate. When he pokes fun at cinematic codes and points to contradictions in symbolic systems, he always does so from within the cultural language he incorporated into his own idiom.

Questions of Exile and Dislocation

While exile can produce powerful forms of cultural exchange, it also inevitably refers us to a murky interface. Exile as a trope of aesthetic creativity cannot be neatly separated from geopolitical displacement and its concomitant, potentially traumatic loss of an entire cultural world, nor can it be clearly distinguished from the fundamental dislocation of subjectivity as it is described by psychoanalysis. In *Speak, Memory*, this ambivalence is partly covered up when Nabokov celebrates exile as an invigorating impulse by claiming that 'the break in my destiny affords me in retrospect a syncopal kick that I would not have missed for worlds' (SM: 193). The text's assertion that exile forms a compelling source of inspiration is one of the core trajectories that I shall examine, that is, the question whether and how exile may be appropriated and refigured in an aesthetic framework as a both powerful and empowering trope. As we will see, Hitchcock's and Nabokov's oeuvres rework both cultural and psychic forms of dislocation into pivotal narrative themes and aesthetic textual structures. In *Speak, Memory*, for example, it is the topographical separation from the home and homeland which inspires a resilient nostalgic imagination as well as a seemingly free-floating self-fashioning of the author figure. Following a reversed but no less distinctive gesture, Hitchcock's early Hollywood film *Suspicion* invokes a fantasy scenario which stages the subject's violent separation from home.

Even as it forms an intriguing trope of textual production, exile inevitably refers to a rupture which is traumatic and hence real in a Lacanian sense. As a moment of the literal, its caesura resists symbolisation, which means that it cannot fully be recuperated by aesthetic language. In fact, exile and its aesthetic figurations can be seen in analogy to Fredric Jameson's argument according to which history inflects texts as an 'absent cause'. As a belated effect, Jameson points out, history 'is inaccessible to us except in textual form . . . our approach to it and the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its