

La Trobe University

Ruth Learner

A Writing Condition: Loss and the Creative Endeavour

Abstract:

In exploring the threshold between memoir and autobiographical fiction, this paper considers the relationship between memory and repetition, and the virtual nature of story and of memory. It explores the nature of fiction as possibility and its correspondence to the nature of memory as flux and difference. It proposes that memory is a function of loss rather than a deliverance from loss; that is, loss lies forgotten beneath the memory. It can never be repeated and so drives the creative endeavour to memorise it and re memorise it.

This paper is presented in three linked sections: "The Shape of Things" foregrounds the problems experienced in writing memoir; "Finding lost worlds through high invention: Nabokov's *Lolita*" explores the way absolute loss is expressed as absolute invention, drawing on Bergson's concept of duration and perceptual time and the idea of an ever future past; and "Dissolving instances of illumination: Evanescent Knowledge" looks at the potential of this durational dialectic for total internal reflection and contends that it is only through meticulous invention and fictive autobiography that we can more fully consider representations of self.

Biographical Note:

Ruth Learner is a PhD student at La Trobe University, where she is writing her second novel. Her research interests include psychoanalysis and creativity in literature and art, and phenomenology of perception and recollection. She writes about contemporary art for journals and magazines and teaches fiction and nonfiction at NMIT. Her novel *Apartment C* was published in 2008.

Keywords: Autobiographical fiction, invention, loss, memory, repetition, virtual, Nabokov, Bergson

The Shape of Things

An accident, an exile and a life of dislocation – I knew well the shape of the story I had to tell. It was a driving need; an act of survival. There were questions about chance and the arbitrary nature of death; about how much control we have over our lives and whether any of us can act outside of our conditioning. What form would this story take? How was I to revisit the rooms of childhood? To cross back over that threshold and recapture the shadows and reflections, the smells and the things which had impressed me so?

I would write a memoir, from the 'Middle French *memoire* (masculine) written account, description (from c1190 in Old French), document containing the facts in a case which is to be judged (1356), document containing instructions on a certain matter (1477)'; defined as 'Records of events or history written from the personal knowledge or experience of the writer, or based on special sources of information' and 'Autobiographical observations; reminiscences. Freq. modified by a possessive.' (OED, 2001). The form was having a renaissance. Ben Yagoda (2009: 7) points out that between 2004 and 2008 Nielsen BookScan recorded an increase of more than 400 per cent in book sales in America of personal memoirs, childhood memoirs, and parental memoirs. In light of the case of James Frey's memoir *A Million Little Pieces*, offered to publishers as fiction then changed to memoir to ensure a contractⁱ, Thomas Couser contends, 'Publishers are much more willing to invest in certain kinds of stories if they are presented as fact rather than as fiction.' (2012: 17) Did I have a better chance of having my book published if I wrote it as memoir rather than a novel?

Driven by my strong sense of the story, I began to range over a family archive – photographs, standard-8 films, slides, letters – and piece together the details, fill in the shape. What struck me most was the sheer volume of images my father had taken over his relatively short life (he died aged 41) and how accomplished and conventional they were. There were family portraits, candid shots of members of the Labor Club at parties and camps, travel pictures and social documentary. As I trawled through the images, I did not feel the prick of Roland Barthes' *punctum* or wound (1981: 27), 'a power of expansion', the 'often metonymic' quality which on rare occasions so moved Barthes (45). Although memorialising a time and place, rather than breathing life in to my vision, as Barthes also observed, the subjects had become objects, embalmed in an *other* of themselves. (14) Of course through investigating further material evidence (written, anecdotal) I could infer the stories behind each image, interpret, say, '1956, Caulfield':

Elsie's expression mirrors the portrait of her by Counihan hanging above the mantelpiece. Her milky green eyes forever follow the viewer, her thin reddened lips smile slightly impressing the irony. Her climb has reached an apex; she is seated in this comfortable house to one side of the portrait painted by a fellow communist from the realist school with whom Bill shares a platform. Her shapely strong-looking legs, silk stocking sheer, are tucked neatly to one side, and she wears a stole, probably mink, over her shiny dress. Her arm is bent upward, a menthol cigarette lodged between her fore and middle fingers, as though in a motion of blessing. Bill watches from the sidelines. He plays a little with their young baby, my aunt, born twenty-two years after their son, my father, but his mind is on the chess game he is playing out on a board nearby.

Here I've sketched a vignette. We can only guess how it *really* was between the shots. What words were spoken before and after the shutter clicked? What happened in the days between the weekends, holidays, weddings, births? Who was the man behind the camera? How could I expose him? Was fidelity even a consideration? Justin Clemens writes, 'To recall is to transform, such that even the most precise details may be invented, and even the most strenuous conviction of fidelity is more suspicious than persuasive.' (2013) In my attempt at memoir, I was already inventing the details to flesh out the story, confabulating behind the dots.

In his broad survey of the memoir and its subgenres, Couser states memoirs are:

...a form of literary art, and their artifactuality—the sometimes uneasy relation between their artfulness and their presumed factuality—sometimes gets their authors into trouble... Nevertheless, an important conceptual distinction obtains: memoir presents itself, and is therefore read, as a nonfictional record or re-presentation of actual humans' experience... The novel is free to invent its own world, while the memoir must refer to an extra-textual reality. (2012: 15)

Couser's notion of an extra-textual reality seems to assume that reality is divided into *the invented real*, which fiction draws upon, and *the real real*, which nonfiction draws upon; once put in writing, isn't it all textual? His claims too that 'Memoirs take on the world more directly than novels' (2012: 13) and that unlike memoir, fiction cannot immortalise actual people (14), seem to assume a greater distinction between the two forms than he himself proposes. I was though most intrigued by his

conclusion that, 'life writing does not register preexisting selfhood, but rather somehow creates it.'
(14)

I realised that my dilemma was not about gaps in evidence and whether memory could fill them, it was about the very nature of objectification; it was about how to tell my story when my being in the world was so much a part of my being in the world. Perhaps there was a way to objectify myself, so to speak, to separate the two selves, the writer self from the *I* of the subject.

When discussing Barthes's autobiographical work (*Roland Barthes* by Roland Barthes, 1977), Seán Burke suggests, 'That the author of the autobiography and the subject of the autobiography should cleave from one another is inevitable. The author of an autobiography cannot plainly *be* the subject of his past.' (1998: 55) I was stuck on the concept of self which, in the interrogation of the concept of representation in language, had been fundamentally questioned by the structuralists who had killed and revived the author. Of course there were non-representational structures I could use to show the fragmentation of memory and the nature of chance: meta linguistic acrobatics, fragmented poetics, polyphonies.ⁱⁱ (Kristeva 1980: 64–89)

My memoir had evolved into third person fictive documentary, an obsessive self chronicling another self, mirroring my father's compulsive recording. Each time I picked up the thread of a narrative I would follow its weave back to the first point, the first impression, and find I had more or less replicated the shape, like the *other* in the photograph; I was re-creating my world over and over but not getting any closer to the sense of loss, what Vladimir Nabokov calls the 'throb in the throat' (Nabokov 1955: para. 7), and to encapsulating the elusiveness of time past, of memory. Burke states, 'The only autobiographies that can elude this division [of subjects] are those that proceed according to the conviction that all time is everpresent.' (1998: 57)

Finding lost worlds through high invention: Nabokov's *Lolita*

Though I was grappling with *me*'s from the past, these versions of me were restless, very much alive and struggling to be re imagined. As I said at the outset, the story came to me as sketches, sensations, feelings and ideas – a complete design perhaps. In his 1966 interview with Alfred Appel, Nabokov says, '...the entire book before it is written, seems to be ready in some other, now transparent, now dimming, dimension... the design of my novel is fixed in my imagination and every character follows the course I imagine for him.' (1974: 69) This hermeneutic process, what Nabokov calls "rapture and

recapture" (Nabokov 1980: 387), referencing, I believe, lines from Robert Browning's poem (1845) 'Home-Thoughts, From Abroad'ⁱⁱⁱ, this movement from the abstract to the concrete^{iv} lies at the heart of Henri Bergson's ontology.

Bergson straddled the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, epitomising a neo Romantic movement that was sweeping through Western art and culture, in reaction to the Classical rationalism of the nineteenth century, and to its intrinsically deterministic cause and effect. In his bid to find a third way beyond the dualism of subjectivism and objectivism, empiricism and rationalism, he shifted the emphasis from spatial to temporal in his first and most influential text, *Time and Free Will* (1889). Here he proposed the theory of duration whereby memory is taken as an understanding of perceptual time; that is, time experienced by the senses, which may not correspond to a chronological or ordered time sequence. In *Creative Evolution*, he named it 'time-invention'. (1911: 130)

For Bergson, time is movement, a unified flux and not a series of still moments, and multiplicity, the interpenetration of a multiplicity of elements, most notably past pure memory, an unconscious memory image^v, and pure perception, the image matter that guides and actualises the memory image into an action. He states 'These two acts, perception and recollection, always interpenetrate each other, are always exchanging something of their substance as by a process of endosmosis.' (1911: 73) Nabokov was a reader and an admirer of Bergson's work; his memoir *Speak Memory* has an 'intricate engagement with what Nabokov calls 'time itself'' (Wood 1995: 84). In the memoir, Nabokov states 'the beginning of reflexive consciousness ... must surely have coincided with the dawning of the sense of time.' (1967: 20) And so begins his 'plunging abruptly into a radiant and mobile medium that was none other than the pure element of time.' (21) His characters echo Bergson's ideas – Adam Krug in *Bend Sinister* who is said (by the Professor of Divinity) to have used 'that simile of the snow ball' (1960: 41) and *Ada's* Van Veen whose essay in Part 4 of the book, 'The Texture of Time', references Bergson directly and indirectly (1969: 542), as well, Nabokov included Bergson in a typically short list of his favourite authors (1974: 43). Reminiscent of Bergson's virtual time, Nabokov declares, 'Pure Time, Perceptual Time, Tangible Time, Time free of content and context, this then is the kind of Time described by my creature under my sympathetic direction.' (186)

Ultimately in Bergson's world there are two-fold ways of knowing: One is the relative way, which is the Kantian idea of subjectivity^{vi}. Here objects conform to human cognition resulting in a primacy of the subjective. The way we grasp these objects or concepts is through their actualisation in space; this is a 'quantitative multiplicity akin to unit and number'. The other way is the absolute way of knowing and is grasped through what Bergson calls intuition. The '...time or psychological duration can only be thought of as a virtual, continuous, or qualitative multiplicity.' (Moulard-Leonard 2008:12) In intuition Bergson says, 'we enter into' the object and 'neither depends on a point of view nor relies on any symbol' (1903: 1). As Anne Gillies states:

The 'method of multiplicity' thus requires that as we track the differences in their unfolding over time, we need to remain flexible and open—allowing the shifts and changes of the unfolding to be reflected in both our approach to each and in our understanding of the object itself. If we combine difference with multiplicity, what we get is Bergson's intuition: a precise and rigorous method. (2013: 13)

Here difference is not of a binary nature but rather 'a generative process in which understanding or experience is created moment by moment as each difference unfolds into yet another difference which necessarily shifts our understanding of the object or experience.' (Gillies 2013: 12). So difference is durational and unstable; a constant state of becoming. Although memory stores up the past, rather than fixed recall, there is always difference. In this sense the past is not so much preserved as changed through the flow of perception, which once experienced becomes memory. And so for Bergson the question is not so much about whether the past ceases to exist but whether it ceases to be useful. (1911:193)

In light of my endeavour and the underlying question about how much control we have over our lives, it is also worth considering the convolution in Bergson's ideas. He states in *Time and Free Will*, 'Although we are free whenever we are willing to get back into ourselves, it seldom happens that we are willing. It is because, finally, even in the cases where the action is freely performed, we cannot reason about it without setting out its conditions externally to one another, therefore in space and no longer in pure duration.' (1889: 240) For Bergson the idea of causality is linked to the actual and not to the virtual or inner life; here we are free to enter into the object, though he suggests we rarely do this. I was interested then in whether I could enact this notion of entering into the object, in my case, my self.

Rather than trying to separate my life from the act of writing, I decided I would enter into my life through writing, to grasp the nature of that life through Bergson's intuition, to move from the abstract to the concrete. Leona Toker in her discussion of the 'aesthetic experiments' of Nabokov in light of Bergson, identifies five related areas: disinterest, creative impulse, states of consciousness, flow, and scheme. (2013: 194–209) Bergson's notion of disinterest and the 'education of the senses' correlates to Nabokov's definition of art, 'beauty plus pity—... Where there is beauty there is pity for the simple reason that beauty must die: beauty always dies, the manner dies with the matter, the world dies with the individual.' (Nabokov 1955: para. 1)

Bergson, like Kant, believed that aesthetic judgment depended upon being free of 'all considerations of private interest'. (Toker 2013: 196) He regarded the brain 'not as a storehouse of memories but as an instrument of recall, selection, and blockage'. (196) This sifting agent enables us to perceive things actually rather than virtually, facilitating purposeful action. Toker states, 'Education of the senses runs counter this tendency of the brain and, by implication, is affordable at those advanced stages of personal and social evolution when a concentrated effort of survival can be diluted.' (2013: 197) Nabokov's comment about beauty and pity refers to this ability to transcend the actual through an aesthetic heightening as well as 'sharpen one's sensitivity to another person's pain' enabling the reader an 'ethical processing of the text's world in which the self returns to the foreplane in a subsidiary oscillation between complacency and mortification.' (Toker 2013: 197). Here too we have the seeds of Bergson's *élan vital* (1907: 98), his vital impetus, the flux of life as two currents, the actual and virtual, flow through each other producing multiple states of consciousness and a kind of overflow, subliminal perception and memory.

On the notion of self, Bergson suggests that the refracted ego self is symbolically represented and experienced in space, and the self-reflected deeper self can only be accessed through a great effort of introspection and analysis, the notion of disinterest as just outlined. Later Bergson develops this further, proposing that as soon as we set out in space to actualise and communicate an idea it undergoes a deep alteration. Toker makes a correspondence between this actualisation *and* the movement from a trance like state, the aesthetic response, to one of doubt and a desire to return to the text 'to watch how our enriched perception alters it'. (2013: 197) This idea of a continuous movement between past and present, whereby each alters the other, and the effect this had on the evolution of his own ideas was acknowledged in Bergson's final work *The Creative Mind* (1920). Part of the introduction is titled, 'Retrograde movement of the true growth of truth', (9) which

stresses the retrospective nature of the creation of possibilities and causes of, say, an event, and in this the importance of viewing his ideas within his larger methodology of continuous forward movement and difference.

My quest to portray the loss which was driving me to write had led me back to the original drive, the early impressions, and to a heightened awareness of time as a fluid motion. I felt I had no choice but to enter into this retrograde dialectic and proceed with the conviction that all time is ever present. Ultimately, memory is dynamic and ever alters the present and the past. It cannot be used to fill in a gap, to finish a story, to release us from a loss. Rather it acts as experience; it is a fluid, forward moving entity that suggests that we cannot truly know ourselves in discrete units but rather as a series of multiplicities, paradoxes and ambivalences. Here, the emphasis has shifted to process, a collapse between the subject and the object, the becoming over the being.

Nabokov asserts in his biography *Nikolai Gogol*, that Gogol's frequent use of shop signs at the beginning of *Dead Souls*, which he uses to distinguish the capital, St Petersburg, from a provincial town, was based on an impression Gogol carried over from his youth. Nabokov states, 'Impressions do not make good writers; good writers make them up themselves in their youth and then use them as if they had been real originally.' (1959: 10) It is just such vivid childhood impressions that drive Nabokov's memoir *Speak Memory*. He makes the observation:

I would moreover submit that, in regard to the power of hoarding up impressions, Russian children of my generation passed through a period of genius, as if destiny were loyally trying what it could for them by giving them more than their share, in view of the cataclysm that was to remove completely the world they had known.
(1967: 25)

Here Nabokov's ironic comment about destiny reflects the fundamental paradox that, like Bergson's retrograde movement, this memory serves as a function of loss rather than a deliverance from loss; the causal relationship implied is that loss causes memory. The loss, which can never be repeated, only generates the drive to memory after the event in a creative endeavour to memorise it and to re-memorise it. Michael Wood says of a passage from Nabokov's *Speak Memory* that 'it constructs memory and understanding as a function of loss rather than as a redemption of it' (1995: 5). The passage to which he refers is:

Have I really salvaged her [Nabokov's French nanny] from fiction? ... I catch myself wondering whether, during all the years I knew her, I had not kept utterly missing something in her... something, in short, I could appreciate only after 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. (Nabokov 1967: 117)

Given Nabokov's play with time and words and to some extent genealogy, it's easy to see this question of whether he can salvage his memories from becoming fiction as ironic, but as Wood recognises so eloquently in his analysis, it lies at the heart of the matter. Loss (in Nabokov's case of his father, country and ultimately a self-imposed loss of language) drives memory and memory is conflated here with the act of creating.

Dissolving instances of illumination: Evanescent Knowledge

Finally I'd like to return to Bergson's refracted concrete self and reflected abstract self and draw on one of the basic principles of light: the greater the angle of incidence (of, say, a ray of light from a denser medium like glass to a rarer medium like air), the weaker the refraction and the brighter the reflection, until at around 90 degrees, or greater than the critical angle, there is total internal reflection (as we find in the cut of a diamond). At the points where the incident ray hits the boundary and reflects back, evanescent waves are formed. These exponentially decaying waves have the capacity to trap small particles and illuminate very small objects and are used in cellular research and in spectroscopy to sample mediums. Here as the beam exits the crystal, information is collected. It is at this juncture that we find Bergson's tension or adjustment in the hermeneutic circle; here the slight difference shifts our understanding.

To explore the potential of self-reflection and the concept of an ever present past I will briefly look at the style and form of Nabokov's meticulous invention *Lolita*. A novel presented as a confessional memoir written by a dead man, and edited by the cousin of the dead man's lawyer, a Dr John Ray Jnr; the epitome of loss. How does Nabokov's character Humbert Humbert (HH) enter into the object? Nabokov's durational dialectic – the patterns of opposing elements as revealed by Bergson's interpenetration – expresses desire for a lost past, 'the time of our childhood, the slower rhythm of our dreams' (Boym 2007: 15) that is only imagined through the art form of self-invention. Nabokov creates memories upon memories. He collapses time and geography. He invents. According to

Bergson, 'it must necessarily be assumed, then, that the whole is presented as a scheme, and that invention consists precisely into converting the scheme into image.' (1920: 211) That is, the abstract into concrete.

Now let's view HH's world *Lolita* as a finely cut diamond shimmering from multiple total internal reflections. It is polished, multifaceted, symmetrical, fiery and brilliant; a world of high invention driven by loss. 'Never grow up.' HH says (Nabokov 1958:15). This fragment speaks to all of us: to children, to readers, and most poignantly to HH himself. The time, pressure and heat needed for diamonds has too created HH. His yearning for childhood and homeland has been monstrously amplified by his dislocation and exile. Loss here is expressed as a sickness, a yearning for young girls, a yearning to remain the child, to never grow up.

HH's diamond like hardness comes from the pressure of being trapped in time, from turning Lolita's body 'into a body of allusions, a fragmented and incoherent assemblage of references, which she herself would not understand... Humbert assimilates her to his own cultural knowledge; he... obliterates *this* Lolita in order to reinstate *his* Lolita in her place.' (Schweighauser 1999: 260) So within his complex web, HH immortalises Lolita as an artist would an art object, and in turn becomes immortalised. He traps us in a prism of time; the loss, pathos and sorrow that come with life; the inevitability of death. His diamond flashes with a depth of detail that is in direct proportion to this loss, but there is what we might call a natural flaw. HH's trap, his sickness, becomes his escape, for in his forced inventiveness he is able to grasp more absolutely the nature of his subject; the obsession, the yearning, the exile. Like a fine jeweller, Nabokov cut his diamond to create multiple Total Internal Reflections, 'trapping' the light before it refracts out in a full colour spectrum, a true multiplicity. And so (back to light) the evanescent waves that form on the membrane of his world become evanescent knowledge, dissolving instances of illumination.

What had begun as memoir had evolved into fictive documentary and finally into autobiographical fiction. Through the process of writing out these forms, I found myself going deeper into my story, throwing an intense light on it. As this light magnified it revealed details that, in the words of Shelley, led me to 'imagine that which we know.'^{vii} The light refracted and reflected, creating a multiplicity and a freedom to invent. This process corresponded with a new sense I had of being both in and of the world. I discovered that the telling is always a past informing a present informing a past.

Works cited:

- Barthes, Roland. 1982. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. R. Howard. New York: Hill and Wang.
- 1986. *The Rustle of Language*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Bergson, Henri. 1913. *Time and Free Will*, trans. NM Paul and W.S. Palmer. London: George Allen & Co.
- 1911. *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell. New York: Henry Holt & Co.
- 1920. *Mind-Energy, Lectures and Essays*, trans. Herbert Wilden Carr. New York: Henry Holt & Co.
- 1911. *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy M. Paul and W. Scott Palmer. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- 1903. *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T.E. Hulme. London: MacMillan (1913).
- 1922. *Creative Mind*, trans. M.L. Andison. New York: Philosophical Library, New York (1946).
- Boym, Svetlana. 2007. 'Nostalgia and its discontents.' *The Hedgehog Review*, Summer edition.
- Brougham, Richard. 1993. 'Ontological Hermeneutics: An Overlooked Bergsonian Perspective.' *Process Studies* 22 (1), 37–41.
- Burke, Seán. 1998. *The Death and Return of the Author*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Clemens, Justin. 2013. Catalogue, Eliza Hutchinson's exhibition, *Hair In the Gate, A Biography*. Melbourne: Murray White Room.

- Couser, Thomas. 2012. *Memoir: An Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gillies, Mary Ann. 2013. '(Re) Reading Time and Free Will : (Re) Discovering Bergson for the Twenty-first Century', in *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism* (eds. P. Ardoin, S.E. Gontarski and L. Mattison.), 11–23.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1927. *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarie and E. Robinson. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1980. *Desire in language: a semiotic approach to literature and art*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Moulard-Leonard, Valentine. 2008. *Bergson-Deleuze Encounters: Transcendental Experience and the Thought of the Virtual*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Nabokov, Vladimir. 'Lecture on Metamorphosis', 1955.
www.kafka.org/index.php?id=191,209,0,0,1,0 (accessed 11 October, 2014).
- 1959. *Nikolai Gogol*. New York: New Directions Paperback.
- 1940–1960, *Lectures on Literature*. ed. Fredson Bowers. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (1980).
- Lectures on Russian Literature*. ed. Fredson Bowers. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (1981).
- 1955. *Lolita*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- 1969. *Ada*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- 1960. *Bend Sinister*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- 1967. *Speak Memory*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

—1974. *Strong Opinions*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Oxford English Dictionary, Third Edition, June 2001. Available at:

www.oed.com.alpha2.latrobe.edu.au/view/Entry/116334?redirectedFrom=Memoir#eid

Schweighauser, Philipp. 1999. 'Discursive Killings: Intertextuality, Aestheticisation, and Death in Nabokov's *Lolita*', *American Studies*, 44(2), 260.

Toker, Leona. 2013. 'Minds meeting: Bergson, Joyce, Nabokov, and the aesthetics of the subliminal', in *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism* (eds. P. Ardoin, S.E. Gontarski and L. Mattison), 178–194.

Wood, Michael. 1995. *The Magician's Doubts: Nabokov and the Risks of Fiction*. London: Pimlico.

Yagoda, Ben. 2009, *Memoir: A History*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Endnotes

ⁱ The story behind the case is reported by Couser (2012: 17) and alluded to in an interview James Frey gave to *Vanity Fair*, June 2008, available at:

<http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2008/06/frey200806>

ⁱⁱ In particular Kristeva's division between the semiotic and the symbolic; whereby word use in the former is characterised not by meaning or representation but by musicality, intonation and rhythm.

ⁱⁱⁱ The lines from Robert Browning's poem are: 'That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over, Lest you should think he never could recapture, The first fine careless rapture!' Here the words serve as a poetic flourish; Nabokov extends this image of doubling or repetition in his essay 'The Art of Literature and Commonsense' (in *Lectures on Russian Literature*, 1981) when he translates from Russian two types of inspiration: '*vostorg* and *vdokhnovenie*, which can be paraphrased as “rapture”

and “recapture.” The difference between them is mainly of a climatic kind, the first being hot and brief the second cool and sustained. The kind alluded to up to now is the pure flame of *vostorg*, initial rapture, which has no conscious purpose in view but which is all-important in linking the breaking up of the old world with the building up of the new one. When the time is ripe and the writer settles down to the actual composing of his book, he will rely on the second serene and steady kind of inspiration, *vdokhnovenie*, the trusted mate who helps to recapture and reconstruct the world.' (Available at <https://www.scribd.com/doc/24008084/The-Art-of-Literature-and-Commonsense>)

^{iv} A dialogical view of knowledge is at the heart of philosophical hermeneutics. See Heidegger's *Time and Being* (1927) – which establishes an elementary ontology through considering what it means to exist and the meaning of Being; phenomenological concerns about perception and objectivity, shifting the philosophical enquiry from ontical (facts about entities) to ontological (meaning of Being and how we perceive entities). Heidegger's critique of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, which focuses on the intentionality of objects in an interpretative framework of a priori structures, as being itself a theoretical construct, leads to a more fundamental ontology looking at pre theoretical conditions about what it is to be. ALSO, see Richard Brougham's article 'Ontological Hermeneutics: An Overlooked Bergsonian Perspective', *Process Studies*, pp. 37–41, Vol. 22 Number 1, Spring 1993, for a direct discussion of Bergson's *durée* as a dialogical hermeneutic flow.

^v In the Introduction to *Matter and Memory* (1911) Bergson states, 'Matter, in our view, is an aggregate of `images.' And by 'image' we mean a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a representation, but less than that which the realist calls a thing; - an existence placed half-way between the `thing' and the 'representation.'" According to Bergson, perception is shaped by individual senses – all the images that have come before it – as well as by the image's inherent qualities, its pull on the privileged image. 'Your perception, however instantaneous, consists then in an incalculable multitude of remembered elements; and in truth every perception is already memory. Practically we perceive only the past, the pure present being the invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future.' (p. 61)

^{vi} Although Kant is identified with a philosophy of subjectivism, he was writing at the end of the Enlightenment, and so his ideas need to be viewed in this context. In his introduction to his lecture on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1959) Theodor Adorno points out that Kant's project was

twofold – one relates to an investigation of objects and the other to 'How much can understanding and reason know when they are cut loose from all experience?' (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A xvii) He argues that the main intention of Kant was to establish 'the *objective nature* of cognition or to *salvage it*' (Polity Press, 2001, p.2)

^{vii} In *A Defence of Poetry*' (1821) Percy Shelley. Available at:

www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/essay/237844?page=9