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### The Metafictional Realm in Vladimir Nabokov's "Look at the Harlequins!"

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**Abstract:**

This study sheds light on the metafictional world as a new genre to be discovered. Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov invented a new way of writing. He documented his life and career through a fictional and real-world “metafictional realm.” In his novel *Look at the Harlequins!*, Nabokov uses the strategy of choosing an artist as a prototypical character, reflecting the duality between what is real and what is fictional. This paper demonstrates how Nabokov successfully unites these two vague worlds. Moreover, the study explores the illusive or hidden world that penetrates reality and fiction. In *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, Patricia Waugh interprets an imaginative picture of the author’s mental world, revealing a mind capable of working in two different modes. According to Waugh, metafiction is the representation of the outside and inside intermingled realms of the novelist’s mind. She states that metafiction reveals the “self-consciousness” and “self-awareness” of the two creative worlds and introduces several strategies and structures in presenting the fictional and real “self-consciousness” of the author. She refers to Nabokov’s work as the “realm of a metafictional world” and asserts that the author evokes the “fictional and real” through *Look at the Harlequins!* This study shows how Nabokov sets his text within an additional context, using both outside and inside protagonists. In *Look at the Harlequins!*, he creates his own novel by creating a fictional novelist’s work, producing two mingled worlds. One of these is the fictional world of Vadim Vadimovich N., the narrator and protagonist. The other world is the real one, represented by Nabokov’s fictional career. This study, which serves as a guide for interpreting Nabokov’s postmodernist text and context, introduces a new genre of the novel—metafiction and its elements—and is intended to aid readers, particularly scholars, instructors, and critics, in their fields. Moreover, this study examines how postmodernists highlight reality through their novels. The scope of the study covers postmodern metafiction, particularly that of Vladimir Nabokov.

**Keywords:** self-consciousness, intermingled realms, metafiction, Vladimir Nabokov, mirrors.

弗拉基米尔\*纳博科夫（弗拉基米尔\*纳博科夫）的“看丑角！”

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**摘要:**

这项研究揭示了元法世界作为一个新的类型被发现。弗拉基米尔\*弗拉基米罗维奇\*纳博科夫发明了一种新的写作方式。他通过一个虚构和现实世界的"元"领域记录了他的生活和职业生涯。"在他的小说看丑角！纳博科夫采用了选择艺术家作为原型人物的策略，反映了真实和虚构之间的二元性。本文演示了纳博科夫如何成功地将这两个模糊的世界联合起来。此外，该研究探索了渗透现实和虚构的虚幻或隐藏的世界。在元小说：自我意识小说的理论与实践，帕特里夏\*沃（帕特里夏\*沃）解释了作者精神世界的想象画面，揭示了一种能够以两种不同模式工作的思维。根据沃的说法，元小说是小说家心灵内外交织领域的表现。她指出，元小说揭示了两个创作世界的"自我意识"和"自我意识"，并在呈现作者虚构和真实的"自我意识"时引入了几种策略和结构。她将纳博科夫的作品称为"元世界的领域"，并断言作者通过观察丑角来唤起"虚构和真实"！这项研究展示了纳博科夫如何在一个额外的上下文中使用外部和内部的主角来设置他的文本。看看丑角！他创作了自己的小说，创作了一个虚构的小说家的作品，产生了两个混合的世界。其中之一是叙述者和主角瓦迪姆\*瓦迪莫维奇N.的虚构世界。另一个世界是真实的，以纳博科夫的虚构事业为代表。这项研究作为解释纳博科夫后现代主义文本和背景的指南，介绍了一种新的小说类型-元小说及其元素-旨在帮助读者，特别是学者，教师和评论家在他们此外，本研究考察了后现代主义者如何通过他们的小说突出现实。该研究的范围包括后现代元小说，特别是弗拉基米尔\*纳博科夫的元小说。

**关键词:** 自我意识，混合领域，元小说，弗拉基米尔纳博科夫，镜子。

**1. Introduction**

Nabokov was a postmodern novelist who introduced a new genre. In *Look at the Harlequins!*, he introduces a metafictional element that has led to the development of the postmodern novel. The semi-autobiographical *Look at the Harlequins!* is about the life and work of Russian American author Vadim Vadimovich N., who is the narrator and protagonist. Nabokov presents the distinct worlds of fiction and reality in the work. The unknown narrator speaks about his four wives on the first page of his novel. This novel takes the form of a diary, and the narrator explains his philosophy in writing fiction when he applies his aunt's advice on "inventing reality." In this novel, there are multiple narrators, protagonists, and authors. The name and identity of the narrator and protagonist are not revealed until nearly the second part of the novel. Vadim narrates how he travels to save his daughter from illness (she has eloped with a young man from America). He has to pass from Paris to Moscow, a dangerous journey because he had absconded from his home years earlier. The daughter eventually dies. Vadim continues to speak about his work as if it is real and confuses it with the real world until the end of the novel, when he suddenly wakes up. He finds himself in the hospital, with no clear identity.

With its use of metafiction, *Look at the Harlequins!* presents the shift from the modernist perspective toward the fiction of the new postmodernist world. This study seeks to analyze how the postmodern novelist presents such a shift. It examines whether the novelist has the capability of evoking double worlds and living inside and outside them.

**2. Literature Review**

Dai and Huang (2017) discuss metafiction and postmodernism in general, but do not provide a detailed analysis of *Look at the Harlequins!* as a metafictional novel. In contrast, they define metafiction, present a

detailed analysis of *Look at the Harlequins!*, and trace the application of metafictional roles in the novel.

**3. Methodology**

The term "metafiction" was first employed in 1960 by American critic William H. Gass (Currie, 1995, p. 1), who defined it as "fiction with self-consciousness, self-awareness, self-knowledge, [and] ironic self-distance". Hawkes (2001, p. 2) described metafiction as "creative imagination" together with "certainty about the validity of its representations". Hawkes (2001, p. 2) also defined the term as "an extreme self-consciousness about language" and interpreted it as a "literary form and the act of writing fiction, a pervasive insecurity about the relationship of fiction to reality, a parodic, playful, excessive or deceptively naïve style of writing". On the other hand, Dai and Huang (2017, p. 62) defined metafiction as "fictional writing, which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality".

There are certain idioms used to formulate fiction, one of which is "metafictionality," which can be identified as the "tendency or function inherent in all novels but consciously employed by self-reflexive types of poetics" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 15). Erika Greber observed a link between "self-preferentiality" (the 'poetic' function), as constitutive of literature in general, and reflexivity (metafictionality) as a combination of the self-referential and metacommunication functions" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 15).

The construction of metafiction relies on the textual and contextual structure of a work, or the "fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 2). In the postmodern novel, most writers participate in tracing the "theoretical" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 2) structure of the text narration. This reflects the

"self-reflexivity and formal uncertainty" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 2) of fiction.

Metafiction combines such a quest with "formal self-exploration, drawing on the traditional metaphor of the world as a book, but often recasting it in terms of contemporary philosophical, linguistic or literary theory" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 3). The representation of the metafiction depends on two worlds: that of the "roles" and that of the "selves" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 3). The world of the role shows the relationship between the characters and the outside world of the novel. The world of the self explores the connection between the characters' inside world or the mental processing of language and reality structure (Hawkes, 2001, p. 3). The idiom metafiction has a divisible form which is "meta+fiction." The perception of meta in relation to the range of "discourse and experience" is the outcome of the "social and cultural self-consciousness" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 3). The idiom meta reflects a significant perception of the "contemporary culture of the function of language" for structuring and comprehending the "sense of everyday reality" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 3). Therefore, language has an "independent and self-contained" organization that creates its "meanings" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 3). Since the connection between meta and the "phenomenal world" is complicated, questioning and following or sticking to "convention" occurs (Hawkes, 2001, p. 3). So, they are important for searching for the link between the random "linguistic" organization and the "world to which it refers" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 3). Moreover, they are important in discovering the connection between "the fiction world and the world outside the fiction" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 3).

Heisenbergian inspires postmodernists in reality with the "uncertainty principle" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 3) of metafiction. The metafiction for Heisenberg is "an awareness that for the smallest building blocks of matter, every process of observation causes a major disturbance" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 3). Moreover, it is difficult to identify "an objective world" as the "observer always changes the observed" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 3). So, metafictional world is complex to analyze. Heisenberg believes that since the individual is not able to identify the "picture of nature" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 4), so he may be had the capability of identifying "a picture of one's relation to nature" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 4). However, what metafiction expresses is the uncertainty of such a procedure. Metafiction is a shift between the world of fiction and reality, but this world is something unknown. It has been related to something mental or the mind of the novelist. Therefore, the metafictionist is aware of such a "dilemma" in representing the in-between world. What is possible for the metafictionist is the representation of the "discourse of the world" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 4). It is hard to escape the language limitation, particularly when someone tries to examine the "linguistic relation" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 4) by applying such relation, so the language shifts to be a "prisonhouse" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 4). The metafictionist intends to observe such a

problem. Hjelmslev (1961, p. 4) evolves the "metalanguage," which means a reference to "another language" that does not refer to "linguistic events, situations or objects". However, it refers to the Saussurean identification of language. De Saussure differentiates between the "signifier" (sound-image) and the "signified" ("concept evoked by the word") forms of a word (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 4). This metalanguage is "a language that functions as a signifier to another language, and this other language becomes its signified" (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 4).

Postmodernist novelists' writing has both conventional language as well as that which "explicitly overtly lays bare link between fiction and reality or life and fiction" (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 4). The metafictional "other language", on the one hand, records the daily "discourse" and, on the other hand, it has a literary technique. This language has either applied a traditional way of writing or it is a specific type of "that genre" (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 4). Metafiction provides a perception of "representational nature of all fiction and the literary history of the novel as genre" (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 5). Since the novel has unstable definition, metafiction reveals stress and clarifies such "instability" (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 5). In fact, the novel is structured on a series of everyday life events and interactions. Therefore, there is no prestige language of speech for fictional events. The language of the novel is in a style of "memories, diaries, journals...etc." (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 5). It is a language of the "self-conscious" (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 5) or of the inner self. Such a language is a relativization of Mikhail Bakhtin's "dialogic" (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 6) reference. Metafiction is dialogic, meaning "semantic direction into the word which is diametrically opposed to its original direction..." (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 6). It means there is a semantic interest of the word that gives a paradoxical tendency. The word has two worlds with twice struggling voices.

Novels of metafiction align to basic and supportive paradox criteria, and the structure "of fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of that illusion" (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 6). The aim of metafiction is to evoke fiction and to produce a "statement" (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 6). There are two cooperative processes that depart from "creation and criticism" but blend with "interpretation and deconstruction" concepts (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 6).

Postmodern novelists write metafictional novels that depend on the "uncertain, insecure, self-questioning and culturally pluralistic" (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 6). Metafictional novelists see "reality or history" as "provisional" (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 7) or changeable. Thus, the world of reality for metafictional work is "no longer a world of eternal verities but a series of constructions, artifices, impermanent structures" (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 7). Therefore, most novelists "question" inquire and refuse "the forms that correspond to this ordered reality" (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 7), preferring the "well-made plot, chronological

sequence, the authoritative omniscient author, the rational connection...." (Hjelmslev, 1961, p. 7).

Postmodernist novelists employ the idiom "metafictionality" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 16) as well as "selfreflexivity" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 16) to test the "linguistic and fictional" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 16) strategies. They look at the way that "these strategies" cause a problem or transform the "classic realist" traditions and capture their "artificiality" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 16). The postmodern strategies of metafiction are used for "the problem of "the author-text-reader" links, "destabilization of narrative hierarchy", inquiring of "spatial and chronological conventions, graphical experiments, etc." (Grishakova, 2012, p. 16). Moreover, they do the discoveries "into the nature of fiction and its relation to reality rather than merely formal exercises" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 16). Mark Currie (1995, p. 16) has a unique perspective of "theoretical fiction". This theory or method finds unity among different phenomena, such as "science popularization and conscious use of fictional form to thematize" (Currie, 1995, p. 16) to discover the theoretical perspectives and notions. It also establishes "fictional and language conventions" (Currie, 1995, p. 16).

The "metafictional deconstruction" establishes the best comprehension for the basic constructions for the "narrative" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 9). Moreover, it projects models to perceive "the contemporary experience of the world as a construction, an artifice, a web of interdependent semiotic systems" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 9). In 1960-1970, the paranoid effect on the metafictional novelists shifted to new exploration for a new formulation of the "fantastic, fabulatory, extravaganzas, magic realism" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 9). Metafiction has no limit as it is characterized as the "uncertain, self-reflexive nature of experimental metafiction" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 9) and open to criticism. The "instability, openness, and flexibility" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 10) of the metafiction assist such kind of genre to survive and faces all the social, "cultural, and technological" transformations.

The individual has a different extension from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to the modern and postmodern periods. Metafictional novelists put a resolution for the link between "fictional form and social reality" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 11). It is evident that "everyday language" colloquial speech creates powerful constructions through a series of natural procedures. It "forms oppression" that builds on "innocent" depictions. Metafiction is in contrast to this procedure as it establishes the language that relies on a "realistic novel" that countersigns the insight into "reality" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 11). The novelists of "self-conscious" metafiction (Hawkes, 2001, p. 11) embody the "individual parole in contrast to the langue (the codes and conventions) of the novel tradition" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 11). The conventional and literary speech set in opposition to the fragments as a result of the formal constructions that rise a quest for "dissociation between isolation and oppression" and the continuation of the

old form of realistic literature limit the viability of experience. Metafictional work holds the "mirror of art up to its own linguistic or representational" constructions, reflecting the "hypothetical 'human nature' that somehow exists as an essence outside historical systems of articulation" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 12).

Metafiction provides a solution to the "problem" of how depicting the feeling of disorder has a significant effect in evolving the novel. Metafictional literature is in opposition to the "aleatory art" that it combines between the "innovative" and "familiar" conventions by "individual reworking and undermining" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 12). There are many different terms for work that portrays "self-consciousness" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 14), such as "introverted novel, antinovel, irrealism, surfiction, the self-begetting novel, fabulation" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 14). Metafiction refers to the act of self-conscious writing based on constructions, such as language, which provide distinctive scopes for similar procedures. The technique behind the self-begetting novel includes the involvement of the narrator, whereas surfiction refers to the entry of the narrator and focuses on the ironist him/herself instead of the text.

William Gass disputes the identification of metafiction:

"In every art two contradictory impulses are in a state of Manichean war: The impulse to communicate and so to treat the medium of communication as a means and the impulse to make an artefact out of the materials and so to treat the medium as an end" (Currie, 1995, p. 15).

Thus, metafiction expresses the stress in the text, as is evident in Vladimir Nabokov's "*Look at the Harlequins*". Nabokov's works have a complicated "implicit interdependence" (p. 15). The fictional element of the novel is revealed via "its formal existence as a text as well as in relation to the "text within a world" that is reflected in the idioms of "textuality" (p. 15). McHale (2004, p. 15) argues that postmodern novelist works build on many "contradictions" which are "ontological" that stresses the inquiry of "nature and existence of reality". In opposition to the modernists whose works are "epistemological contradictions that inquire about the way of acknowledging" "reality whose existence is finally not in doubt" (McHale, 2004, p. 15).

The novelist of metafiction refuses the conventional individual or figure "of the author as a transcendental imagination fabricating through an ultimately monologic discourse, structures of order, which will replace the forgotten material text of the world" (McHale, 2004, p. 16). A metafictionist expresses that the author is not only a notion expressed via "previous and existing literary and social texts" (McHale, 2004, p. 16), but it has also found that reality is to an extent fictional and has found how this world is inverted to be fictional (McHale, 2004, p. 16).

The methods of structuring metafiction texts have been based on the basic constructions "of narrative

fiction" (Dai & Huang, 2017, p. 62). The metafictionist discovers "the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text" (Dai & Huang, 2017, p. 62). As Patricia Waugh admits, in 1970, William Gass invented the idiom of metafiction, which equalizes metapolitics, metarhetoric, and metatheatre (Hawkes, 2001, p. 63).

Waugh states that "metafiction pursues such questions through its formal self-exploration, drawing on the traditional metaphor of the world as a book, but ofterecasting it in the terms of contemporary philosophical, linguistic or literary theory" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 63).

She believes that literary fiction builds on language and is important in perceiving the world of reality itself (Hawkes, 2001, p. 63).

Metafiction has a mental process or recognition (Hawkes, 2001, p. 16), the formulation of which relies on society and cultural aspects that let it get "closer to the philosophical and mythic" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 16). The metafiction of "self-consciousness novels" reflects the way that metafiction discusses the notion of fictionality by contrasting the structure and "the breaking of illusion" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 16). It puts little stress on the traditions of realism, but it is not completely ignorant. Metafiction combines both "the real world" and the "imaginative world" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 17). It retests the traditions of realistic text to explore self-reflection—a fictional form that is culturally relevant and comprehensible to contemporary readers (Hawkes, 2001, p. 18). Metafiction reveals the way that the fiction of literature produces the fantastic world. It aids the readers to perceive the way that reality predicates the reader's life every day and how it is structured and written (Hawkes, 2001, p. 19).

#### 4. Metafiction in Nabokov's Novel

The influence of metafictional writing on Vladimir Nabokov's novel reflects the "self-reflexive image mirror," "acrostic," and "mazes" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 51). In fact, both postmodern and "contemporary experimental" work apply "explicitly metafictional strategies" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 22). This kind of writing destroys the conventional pattern of "meaning and closure [that] problematizes more or less explicitly the ways in which narrative codes, whether 'literary' or 'social,' [artificially] construct ideologies while presenting these as transparently natural and eternal" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 22). Postmodernists overlook modernists' focus on the mind to produce aesthetic aspects, and they question the "profound level...revealed to consciousness at isolated 'epiphanic' moments" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 23).

Nabokov's works are characterized as "bold self-reflective fiction" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 51). His novels belong to metafiction and "fantastic realism" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 51). Anna Ljunggern realizes that Nabokov's works have unique characteristics, which are "playfulness, mystification, richness of illusions, parody irony [that] are, paradoxically, forms of hyperrealism

and commitment to the both the Russian and European classic literature tradition" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 51). Eric Naiman sheds light on the "metanarrative" of Nabokov as well as the symbolic structures of his work like "realistic, biographical, historical, philosophical-scientific detail" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 51).

The work of literature and "entomological" discovery are led by the fundamental "of gradual accumulation of information" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 58). The reality in Nabokov's novel proceeds through different "traditions," transformations, and "displacement between different layers of reality", which eschews the "latter of its commonsense solidity and obviousness" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 58). His novel poetics constitutes the powerful element of "fantastic realism" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 58). The basis for "displacement" and "defamiliarization" produces distinctive meanings according to "various artistic paradigms" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 58). The world in fiction is constructed based on illusion and deceptive reality or "deceitful reality" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 58). It is based on the physical realm in contrast to the "transcendental world of the other 'true reality'" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 58).

The common reality or "terrestrial" one is viewed to be "distorted and displaced" according to the "true reality" as well as "theurgic art as a correcting mirror necessary to restore the originate truth" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 59). Therefore, the fictional reality can be interpreted as "one's mirror, which opposes the mirrors of the disjointed centers of consciousness, re-establishes the original truth of what is reflected, atoning for the guilt of the first mirroring, which distorts reality" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 59). For this, reality in metafictional work is "provisional distortion seen as a means to disclose the "true reality" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 59). The fantastic reality refuses the concept of the "predominant' reality altogether: multiple realities manifest themselves within the single reality" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 59).

Waugh (Hawkes, 2001) presents illusive reality through her account "Metafiction" as being a hidden world. Through his novel, Nabokov creates an illusive world or illusive reality by evoking a complex world about his protagonist, narrator, and author. It is an unknown and mysterious in-between world. It belongs neither to fiction nor reality. It is the author's reality illusion. Moreover, it relates to the author's mind in creating such a world. Nabokov creates the world of the narrator, who narrates his fictional world at an awaking point or moment for the real life of the protagonist and in relation to the world of the author or the novelist.

"Its composition, despite the pleasure... (look at the Harlequins, everybody look-Iris, Annette, Bel, Louise, and you, you, my ultimate and immortal one!), almost led to the dementia paralytica that I feared since youth" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 122).

Nabokov brings his narrator again to the world of fiction with suspicion, uncertainty, and fear of "dementia paralytica." The narrator invites all of his

fictional worlds to be aware of the fictional reality ("Iris, Annette, Bel, Louise, and you, you, my ultimate and immoral one!" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 122). This speech reveals the mixture of "fiction, reality, and illusive reality" that Nabokov creates as he mentions "you, you," which refers to the author Nabokov who has an "immortal" existence though in a hidden way. The narrator identifies reality as a "keyword here, and the gradual perception of that reality was nearly fatal to me" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 226). Then, he expresses his confusion state when he says, "Reality would be only adulterated if I now started to narrate what you know, what I know, what nobody else knows..." (Nabokov, 1990, p. 226).

The narrator speaks about the worlds of fiction and reality as "detached" and "attached" worlds when he says, "Russian and English has existed for years in my mind as two worlds detached from one another." Only today, some interspatial contact has been established (Nabokov, 1990, p. 124).

Nabokov's theory is similar to Serapions' in "poetics of game, experimentation with space and time, multidimensional worlds, doubling, admixture of realistic and surrealist elements, thematization of mathematical problems and scientific theories in fiction" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 61). Nabokov through the lecture entitled as "Creative Writer" (1942) produces a perspective about the work of the writer. He characterizes it as "a fantastic" or imaginative "transfiguration" for the encircled world as an absolute displacement of things as well as their connection it idioms "of a new harmony" (Nabokov, 1942, p. 63): "The art of writing is a very futile business if it does not imply first of all the art of seeing the world as the potentially of fiction" (Nabokov, 1942, p. 63). Nabokov's fiction has "fantastic metamorphosis" which is the outcome of the "distinctive type' of vision" (Nabokov, 1942, p. 63). He is fond of "chess, language, and lepidoptery" to be the source of inspiration to pattern his fiction. Brian Boyd lists many "patterning strategies" for Nabokov as a postmodern writer. He enlists three complexes of "meanings" for Nabokovian pattern (Nabokov, 1942, p. 63).

Firstly, it is a pattern of "meaningful" amalgamation components. This pattern produces specific regular and irregular disorders with "meaningless" procedures (Nabokov, 1942, p. 64).

Secondly, it is a construction of tangible and abstract objects, such as a series of fantasies, corresponding "sensuous" elements (Nabokov, 1942, p. 64). Third, this pattern is established according to gradual steps as if it is a "meaning" that solves a "jigsaw puzzle," a game of chess, combined with a "butterfly scale pattern" (Nabokov, 1942, p. 67). The process of infusion of these elements relies on "observation" and "the observer" (Nabokov, 1942, p. 67). There is a synchronization between lists of "images" or actions "in a moment" and transformation in "another time constituent" (Nabokov, 1942, p. 67).

Andrew Field observes that Nabokov labels or

establishes parts "In place of a forward," "In place of a Bibliography," and "In place of an Index" (Sweeney, 1998, p. 307). Nabokov lists the literary work of Vadim Vadimovich N. "Tamara 1925, Pawn Takes Queen 1927, Plenilune 1929...." (Nabokov, 1990). Moreover, he lists his works such as "Mary, King, Queen, Knave, The Defense, The Eye, Glory...." (Nabokov, 1990). This act directs the attention to "quasireferential linguistic status" for the text and provides the readers with an opportunity to structure a fantastic reality from these titles.

Leona Toker realizes that Nabokov's narrative strategy reduces the "distance" between the narrator or the "authorial teller" and the hero (Nabokov, 1990, p. 95). Toker establishes Nabokov's "metaphysical and metafictional implications of strategy ... For Nabokov, [and] as for his contemporary Jorge Luis Borges, the relationship between the fictional world and the mind of the author is a tentative model for the solution of the mystery of the universe, the mystery of the relationship between humanly cognizable and transcendent worlds ... the erosion of the border between "inside" and "outside," between the diegetic fictional plane and extradiegetic mind of the implied author" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 96).

Metafiction focuses on the language of the text and the context. The "ontological" aspect of the "fictional" objective exists due to the "fictional context" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 88), whose acts are "words" or language. Metafictional novelists such as Nabokov have believed that the "verbal world" and "reality" certainly exist beyond the "text" but may only be revealed through the text (Hawkes, 2001, p. 89). "Metafictional texts explore the notion of alternative worlds by accepting and flaunting the creation-description paradox and thus expose how the construction of contexts is also the construction of different universes of discourse" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 90).

Metafiction works have "alternative worlds" that structure a "verbal reality language" and "imaginative world," but these worlds have a "referential" that can stand as an exchangeable world to the original or real one "in which we live" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 100). The aforementioned metafictional novelists face the problem of paradox concerning the identity of fictional characters, as well as "the status of literary-fictional discourse (the problem of referentiality)" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 91). Fictional characters have "existed and not existed" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 91). Nabokov presents fictional characters who reveal both the life of the protagonist and the life of the author—himself. Moreover, these characters are "being and not being" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 92). Nabokov lets Vadim reveal the paranoia of his life by narrating his fictional work and using a fictional character to reflect on his own life through his novel.

In Nabokov's *Look at the Harlequins!*, there is a contradiction between the text and the context. The text is about Vadim's life and works, whereas the context is about Nabokov. This novel is metafictional, as it has a

gap in events. This is the difference between the textual elements presented as Vadim's life and the contextual ones that represent Nabokov's. *Look at the Harlequins!* blends the "experimental and self-conscious" with "the autobiographical and fictive/fictional" (Phillips, 2012, p. 3). The novel is characterized as a metafictional world, as well as a "self-fictionalization" or "fictionalized self-representation," rather than "autobiographical fiction" (Phillips, 2012, p. 3). Lejeune (1989, p. 6) tries to make a distinction between "autobiography" and "homodiegetic". Self-consciousness is what Nabokov questions in *Look at the Harlequins!* via presenting two worlds—one fictional, the other identical to what is real.

*I met the first wife of my three or four successive wives in somewhat odd circumstances, the development of which resembled a clumsy conspiracy, with nonsensical details and the main plotter who not only knew nothing of its real object but insisted on making inept ... in which a set of reciprocal blunders on my part caused me to get involved and fulfill the destiny that was the only aim of the plot* (Nabokov, 1990, p. 3).

This speech, in which McNab speaks about his life and experiences, reflects the shift between the fictional and real worlds. This process, the mental *tempus reversus*, inverts the "temporal order of telling" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 114). This *tempus* is based on illogic in narration because it is either "prospective-forward" or "retrospective-backward" causality (Grishakova, 2012, p. 114). The *tempus* introduces opposition between "causality" or "indefiniteness" and vagueness for the normal order (Grishakova, 2012, p. 114). Andrew Field, through his account *His Life in Part*, shows Nabokov's style of narration to be unreliable, mysterious, and confused between the real and fictional worlds. However, Nabokov later senses a kind of conspiracy because Field shows his doubt about what Nabokov had said. Moreover, Field manages to produce another doubtful perspective in his account to reveal "Nabokov's own mock biographies" and attack the targeted "unreliable narrator" (Sweeney, 1998, p. 308). Sweeney (1998, p. 308) states that Nabokov has an "intrusive narration, such admissions of narrative unreliability; and more importantly, such struggles with one's double for authorial control are familiar elements in Nabokov's fiction".

Nabokov's novels are constructed on the notions or rules of an actual game—The Defence, 1968 (Hawkes, 2001, p. 43). It is closer to a game of chess. It is both a metaphor and a symbol of "life" and "strategies of art" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 43). *Look at the Harlequins!* is an icon of such duality. The novel is as if Nabokov lives this experience in the real world, but in fact, he lives only in his mind. He tries to evoke memories of the literary works of other novelists to describe his mental misleading. This shift mirrors the distortion between fiction and reality when the narrator says "Look at the Harlequins," an iconic phrase that reveals the shift between the realistic experience and the fictional one.

The protagonist, Vadim, narrates the story of this

metafictional work. An extraordinary grandaunt, Baroness Bredow, tells him,

*Look at the Harlequins! What Harlequins? Where? Oh, everywhere. All around you. Trees are harlequins. Words are harlequins. So are situations and sums. Put two things together—jokes, images—and you get a triple harlequin. Come on! Play! Invent the world! Invent reality!* (Nabokov, 1990, pp. 8–9).

This speech is the method of the metafictional world of how anyone can create the two worlds at once, as the grandaunt describes how the world of reality interferes with the world of fiction (Johnson, 1984, p. 294). The author invents the fictional world by fusing Vadim's life and literary work to mirror the real world. The fictional world begins with the first sentence of this novel when the narrator speaks about his four marriages, particularly his first marriage to Ivor's sister, whose marriage, life, and death are a mystery. The events run as if they are natural, but, in reality, it is part of Vadim's fictional work and novel.

Nabokov's novel "Look at the Harlequins" features an uncanny, grotesque, and mystery "parody" of the parallelism of life and works of Vadim Vadimovich and Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov. Vadim depicts potentially an "inverted, funhouse mirror-image of his creator" (Phillips, 2012, p. 2). This novel is a "self-parody" for Nabokov and Vadim as it shifts from autobiographical to bibliographical. It is "parody, inversion," and "distortion" of Nabokov's literary work that is equilibrium to his character in the novel (Phillips, 2012, p. 2).

Nabokov reveals the "self-conscious" through his works. This pattern or strategy of the novel establishes the procedure of connection "between the protagonist and author-narrator" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 97). The notion of "involution" is seen as "cartoons and comic strips" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 97). Nabokov's works form complex "involution" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 97). His oeuvre has a multilayer correlation between the hero's and "the author-narrator's points of view" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 97). The "auctorial" links the narrator or the protagonist and the author. This connection swings between the "full identification to the full detachment" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 97). Moreover, the distance "between the implied author and the protagonist is minimal: the author uses the protagonist to observe his past" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 97). Nabokov's fictions have triple narrative conditions "the author, the narrator, the metaobserver, the character, the observer, and the observed" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 97) to create the hierarchy for the narrative. There is a split or separation in Nabokov's novels, meaning the borderline between the notion "of the self" fulfilling the role of the potential author and the notion "of the self" fulfilling the act of the character (Grishakova, 2012, p. 97).

Postmodernist metafictionists offer fusion of emotions of "the riddle labyrinth" and "paranoia escalation" for their characters' minds (Carosso & Ferreccio, 2015, p. 89). Moreover, the strategy of

catching and releasing the author's life or autobiography with an ontological or metaphysical world appears in Nabokov's "Look at the Harlequins!" It has the method of displacement as it is used in this novel as "mirrors of Russian émigré" that life is like Nabokov (McHale, 2004, p. 208). The metafictional "Vadim" appears in Vadim's life and relationship with "his daughter Bel" in the same story of Nabokov's *Lolita*.

The scientific advance in the postmodern age rejects the concepts of a relative mirror and two deminational times. These concepts are put in the course of questioning. They present the context for Nabokov's fantastic world. Moreover, how this has a fake repetition, "illusory return and incomplete identity of the enantiomorphic worlds should be considered" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 113). There is symmetry in the human's body movement or directionality and the opposition between "the vertical X (up-down) and the horizontal (front-back)" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 113). So, metafiction novel is in the course of "upwards and forwards are positive, whereas downwards and interactional space are based on the notion of visibility and confrontation" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 113). The vision of the binoculars has a "disagreement" between the "two versions of reality provided by two eyes" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 113). Martin Gardner is a scientist whose work reverberates in Nabokov's fiction "Look at the Harlequins".

It is apparent that even Oksman, "the bookman," confuses the "narrator with another, unnamed novelist" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 301). The confusion stresses VV's fears of being mentally sick or schizophrenic- "he might be permanently impersonating somebody living as real being..." (Nabokov, 1990, p. 97). This appears when Oksman confuses VV's Camera Lucida with Camera Obscura, as well as "VV's Tamara" with Nabokov's Mary, "because you idiot the title of my novel is Camera Lucida" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 92). "All of princess Mary is out, I mean Mary damn it, I mean Tamara. I love Tamara...one gets so confused among so many damned masterpieces" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 94). This confusion reveals the distortion between fiction and reality. He then says, "Think line underneath and a Caravan of question marks" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 97). This act reveals V's unstable state "I should ignore the coincidence and its implications? Should I, on contrary, repattern my entire life? Should I abandon my art..." (Nabokov, 1990, p. 97).

There is an unstable connection between the "inside and the outside", which creates the "self" dilemma and "identity" as clear signs of the "inside and outside world" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 233). The self in postmodernism seems to be "fluid, indeterminate and incomplete" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 233), as in Nabokov's figure. The character in Nabokov has mobile pronouns "(there are two or more I's telling the story) doublings, sudden shifts and slippages of markers of narrative identity and deictics" (Grishakova, 2012, p. 233).

Nabokov shows the shift from the I to we in Chapter

10, part two to present the duality of the two worlds "we think in images, not in words; all right; however, we compose, recall, or refashion at midnight in our brain something..." (Nabokov, 1990, pp. 122-123). Also, there is a shift in addressing or in pronoun usage when Vadim addresses his last wife as "you." Although he uses the "second person," Nabokov creates confusion by shifting from the "I" to "you" and then to the "third person narrator" (Sweeney, 1998, p. 306). These changes or transformations evoke a sense of ambiguity and mystery with "pronouns" and "direct and indirect discourses" via identifying the "addressee with the narrator" (Sweeney, 1998, p. 306). Moreover, there is no end to this novel because Nabokov transforms the time formulation when the last sections re-begin the story more than put an end to "Vadim's story" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 135).

"Look at the Harlequins" is a fiction of "perversions" as well as "subversion" (Phillips, 2012, p. 66) of Nabokov's and Vadimovich n.'s oeuvre and life. Schiff states that Nabokov's fiction "Look at the Harlequins!" is fake or "fictious" as he expresses, "A latticework of truth occasionally flashes provocatively from beneath the luscious overgrowth of thousand fictious fragments" (Phillips, 2012, p. 66). Maurice Couturier takes iconic statements from Nabokov's "Look at the Harlequins!" that reveal his strategy in presenting the duality of things "I, x Does not Equal Nabokov" (Phillips, 2012, p. 66).

In this instance, Nabokov claimed as a protest that the author's life is of no account and that only his writing is important. "Look at the Harlequins!" constitutes an allegory on the theme of "the author's return"; it is as if Nabokov, fearing near the end of his life that his subtle endeavors to absent himself from his texts..." (Phillips, 2012, p. 67).

Nabokov was designed before Vadim because of the great correspondence between the two novelists. It was said that "Look at the Harlequins!" is a novel "about Nabokov" (Phillips, 2012, p. 67). Through his book *The Nature of Fiction*, Gregory Currie shows the turn of the factual signs that reveal the balance "between Vadim and Nabokov" (Phillips, 2012, p. 67). Therefore, it is arguent to perceive "what is fictive of-or true-in-the fiction of Vadim" (Phillips, 2012, p. 67) to mirror Nabokov's world. Moreover, there is a wide range of correspondence between the two's "life and characters" (Phillips, 2012, p. 67). There are aspects in Vadim's life, showing "inversions or reimagining" of these correspondents' "aspects in Nabokov" (Phillips, 2012, p. 67). Nevertheless, the narrator and the author are "simultaneously true in the fiction" regarding "Vadim" and fake in relation to Nabokov. For instance, in *Look at the Harlequins!*, Part 2, Chapter 5, Vadim tells his story about his father, "a gambler and a rake" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 96), and this act shows Vadim and Nabokov "being true in the fiction" (Phillips, 2012, p. 68). It is true for Vadim, but it is fake for Nabokov. However, Nabokov creates "Vadim's dysfunctional family" life "I saw my parents infrequently, they



divorced and remarried, redivorced...." (Nabokov, 1990, p. 8) in opposition to Nabokov's happy family and life.

The hero's real name in this novel appears firstly in Part 2, Chapter 7, Page 105 when Anna Ivanovna writes her letter to Miss Blagovo "I, your friend and employer Vadim Vadimovich..., I imagine diurnal Vadim Vadimovich crossing a street...." (Nabokov, 1990, p. 105). It is the first time Vadim is mentioned in this novel through Anna's speech. Another element of metafiction is the list of notes Nabokov titled the "commentary" as a reaction to the "Rustic Roses\13.IV.46" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 147). It is strange to put such a list in the context of the novel.

Vadim Vadimovich (VV) has a mental distortion, which he has characterized as "a nervous complaint that skirted insanity" (Johnson, 1984, p. 299) and "flayed consciousness" (Johnson, 1984, p. 31). The narrator, VV, has "headaches, dizziness, neuralgia, and confusion about his surrounding" (Johnson, 1984, p. 299). VV has a psychological disorder that causes him to shift to the world. "To make that move would mean rolling the world around on its axis" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 236). There is a "paralysis motif" in VV when he swims as he identifies "the physical counterpart of lightening insanity" (Nabokov, 1990, pp. 36-37). This "mental transposition" causes a traumatic experience for the "narrator" (Johnson, 1984, p. 299). VV cannot "translate mentally left into right and right into left" (Johnson, 1984, p. 299). The "psychological malaise" is what "Vadim Vadimovich" suffers. He has "dual identity," "pale shadow," and "inferior variant" (Johnson, 1984, p. 299). The plot of this novel has more than one shadowy speaker, narrator, author, and observer. There is the "prototype Nabokov himself" (Johnson, 1984, p. 299) and the "author" who is "Nabokov, the author of *Look at the Harlequins!* who is the shadowy original of whom Vadim Vadimovich is the flawed copy" (Johnson, 1984, p. 299). He doubts the "existence" of someone who has the same story "original" (Johnson, 1984, p. 208).

*I was bothered by a dream feeling that night, the next day, and sometime before that my life was the non-identical twin, a parody, an inferior variant of another man's life, somewhere on this or another earth. A demon, I felt, was forcing to impersonate that other man, that other writer who was and would always be incomparably greater, healthier, and crueller than your obedient servant*" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 89).

Nabokov describes VV's treatment "from his psychotic seizure" (Johnson, 1984, p. 302). Moreover, he mentions VV as "when I dwindled below the..., I perceived my entire skin as that of a leopard painted by a meticulous lunatic from a broken home" (Nabokov, 1990, pp. 242-243). This speech reveals VV as the "Harlequin pattern" as represented in this novel as a "dust jacket and signals the final integration of Vadim Vadimovich and "Vladimir Vladimirovich" (Johnson, 1984, p. 302). VV decorates his daughter Bel's room. He adds a shelf of Books for Romantic poets like

"Blake and Coleridge" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 163). She talks about "Blake as Bloke" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 168), and this is a reference to the Russian poet who is Nabokov's favorite also who writes about "harlequin's figure" (Johnson, 1984, p. 302) through his oeuvre. One of Bloke's themes through his play "Balaganchik (the puppet show)" refers to Nabokov's Look at the Harlequins theme of the link between "death and that reality" (Johnson, 1984, p. 302). Nabokov evokes the main plot in his mind of the novel via remembering or thinking of "Bloke's play" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 168, 302).

The issues of "identity and reality" have been connected together. The unreal "reality" is presented by VV's failure to name his "fourth love" in Nabokov's novel (Nabokov, 1990, p. 156). He also fails to "identify her or gives any information because he is afraid to spoil "the reality of your radiance" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 226). He also mentions that "reality" is the core of this novel, "reality" is the keyword here, and the gradual perception of that reality was nearly fatal to me" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 226).

When Vadim awakes from his coma, he mentions his surname, and the door of the room in the hospital opens for the revelation of the reality (Nabokov, 1990, p. 250). The narrator also questions, "why did Ivor call me 'McNab?'" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 249; Johnson, 1984, p. 204). The confusion between "fictional and reality" appears in the last pages of "Look at the Harlequins." The narrator's identity is still vague as he is "nameless," "other author," whose act depicts a "prototype of VV with a narration of his novels or books" (Johnson, 1984, p. 304). The double identity of the narrator is known to the readers, but it is something obscure for the "sane narrator" (Johnson, 1984, p. 304). Though he feels this mystery but never arrives at the truth. Vadim Vadimovich perceives such a dual world because both "Vadim Vadimovich and Vladimir Vladimirovich" are mad and sane, left and right, have been reintegrated" (Johnson, 1984, p. 304). *Look at the Harlequins!* is a copy of "delusional world of the narrator," when the narrator is "Vadim Vadimovich" (Johnson, 1984, p. 304).

So, "Look at the Harlequins!" is the chain for Nabokov's Oeuvre. The narrator is "schizoid" and evokes "his fantasy world and superimposes it upon the "real world" that is resided via many characters. This novel has an "unreliable narrator" as he is unconsciousness "of his split identity" (Johnson, 1984, p. 305).

The metafictional novel has an "uncanny" and "delusion" (Johnson, 1984, p. 208) world and details, as Vadim imagines that he has another name, "Yes, I felt my family name began with an N and bore an odious resemblance to the surname pseudonym; but, whether it was something on the lines of Nebesnyy or Nbedrin, I could not tell" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 249). The narrator proves the identity between the two when he attempts to remember it in the last chapter; he says that his name sounds similar to "Vladimir Vladimirovich" (Nabokov,

1990, p. 249; Sweeney, 1998, p. 305). Despite such similarity, certain details are like "looking-glass distortions" (Sweeney, 1998, p. 305).

## 5. Conclusion

The research provides a new perspective to be discovered by introducing a novel analysis method. It will highlight the postmodernists' scope for writing their novel. The scope of this study conflates only Metafiction and its elements via applying Patricia Waugh's method in analyzing Vladimir Nabokov's "Look at the Harlequins!" Postmodernists attempt to make a shift in presenting their mental tactics. They intend to produce a new world to express metarealities and metafiction. Metafiction introduces the duality of the worlds of the author and narrator. Metafictionists present such a turn skillfully. William Gass identifies the world of metafiction to be part of the conscious and unconscious. Patricia Waugh has a starry role in establishing the link between the two worlds by tracing back the double role of narration by the author in one case and by the protagonist in the other case.

Vladimir Nabokov has a genuine experience in such a field. He creates two intermingling worlds, the world of fiction in relation to the world of reality. Nabokov's novel *Look at the Harlequins* reflects the duality of the two invented worlds. He employs the differences and similarities between his real worlds and fuses them with the world of fiction (Vadim). He portrays his world by mirroring Vadim Vadimovich N.'s world. Nabokov creates the author's world that presents the context, in addition to the protagonist's inner or textual world, which is for Vadim. Vadim's mental confusion is the media for showing such coinciding worlds. The intermingling worlds are produced in one text through *Look at the Harlequins!*

The genre, the novel, and the method of this research will open new phenomena to be searched as a mainline study for introducing the duality of reality. In addition, the research shows novel trends in reading and analyzing postmodernists' texts in a unique way. Nabokov is a pioneer in the metafiction world by writing this innovative text.

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