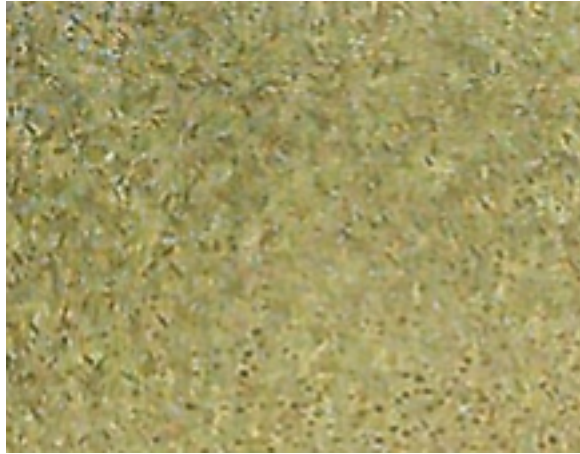


*How often do we find an error and then stop, once the problem is solved?*

If “Poling Prize” is indeed “poling prize” (3), then once the argument is made, move on. [See my original post in The Nabokov Forum under “The Poling Prize in *Lolita*.”] Yet the *haste* of being done leaves other matters still undone. Leaves still remain in the air up above. Just one look, one fix, gives the wrong impression.



Refocus. Step back. More than a step or two. Get the perspective. Take it all in. How does the jig fit into the saw? Can you see the pattern? Look at the Line. The Sentence. The Paragraph. The Page.

The Line in question has the Problem letters bolded in **RED**:

*awarded the **Poling Prize** for a modest work (“Do the Senses*

Now look at the rest of the Sentence where the Line in question is contained:

*awarded the **Poling Prize** for a modest work (“Do the Senses  
make Sense?”) wherein certain morbid states and perversions  
had been discussed.*

Is there another error? Have we stopped too soon? I give credit here to Bruce Stone after reading his paper, “Editorial In(ter)ference: Errata and Aporia in *Lolita*.” That got me thinking not just of Stone’s attention to the next capital error (**underlined**):

*awarded the Poling Prize for a modest work (“Do the Senses make Sense?”) wherein certain morbid states and perversions had been discussed.*



One more step back and a pattern of errors emerge. According to the Rules of Capitalization, “Poling Prize” was “made” Capital (*only* if it is a Proper Noun) and “make” needed to be made Capital as part a Title. *Poling Prize* is Capitalized and *make* is not.

*We see what is not there and don’t see what is there. “Do the Senses Make Sense?”*

Reverse the two actions above and then you have the corrected version:

*awarded the **p**oling **p**rize for a modest work (“Do the Senses **M**ake Sense?”) wherein certain morbid states and perversions had been discussed.*

Nabokov leaves a litter of strewn clues throughout *Lolita* as to his many hidden designs. Some clever, some humorous, some hidden, some obvious and a few too obvious, but not so. Here is a ‘not so’ example — yet in plain view!

Now that we have attended to the Line and the Sentence, what of the Paragraph?

We continue to search the text for a repeat of a pattern. Are there other examples for not following the Rules of Capitalization?

*“Lolita, or the Confession of a White Widowed Male,” such were the two titles under which the writer of the present note received the strange pages it preambulates. “Humbert Humbert,” their author, had died in legal captivity, of coronary thrombosis, on November 16, 1952, a few days before his trial was scheduled to start. His lawyer, my good friend and relation, Clarence Choate Clark, Esq., now of the District of Columbia bar, in asking me to edit the manuscript, based his request on a clause in his client’s will which empowered my eminent cousin to use his discretion in all matters pertaining to the preparation of “Lolita” for print. Mr. Clark’s decision may have been influenced by the fact that the editor of his choice had just been awarded the poling prize for a modest work (“Do the Senses **M**ake Sense?”) wherein certain morbid states and perversions had been discussed. [Corrected by JHB, Editor]*

Having found a Title not properly capitalized and a Proper Noun capitalized wrongly in one sentence, we continue to look for more in the entirety of the paragraph above. The Foreword starts with a Title followed by an *or*. John Ray, Jr. calls this text as having two titles, when it is a Title with a Subtitle. Not only should *Or* be capitalized as the first word of a Subtitle but also the punctuation is wrong after *Lolita*. A Subtitle follows a Title after either a colon or a dash, like this: *“Lolita: Or the Confession of a White Widowed Male”* OR *“Lolita — Or the Confession of a White Widowed Male.”*

Regarding Poling Prize and Titles and Subtitles, John Ray, Jr. is definitely not following the rules of capitalization. You could argue a case for capitalizing Poling Prize in the German

language, where basically all nouns are capitalized. But this is an English text with a French-born antihero, Humbert Humbert. An important note to add of course is that Vladimir Nabokov's principal residence was in Berlin, Germany for fifteen years. VN would be more than cognizant of the German way of capitalizing, and has he here *capitalized* on that?



Another step back and the picture is getting clearer.

Now we have four capitalization errors in the first paragraph. Any more? Oh, wait! One more. A Proper Noun: the District of Columbia **bar**, where bar isn't capitalized as part of the proper noun. OK. Done. Ah, crap! History intrudes.

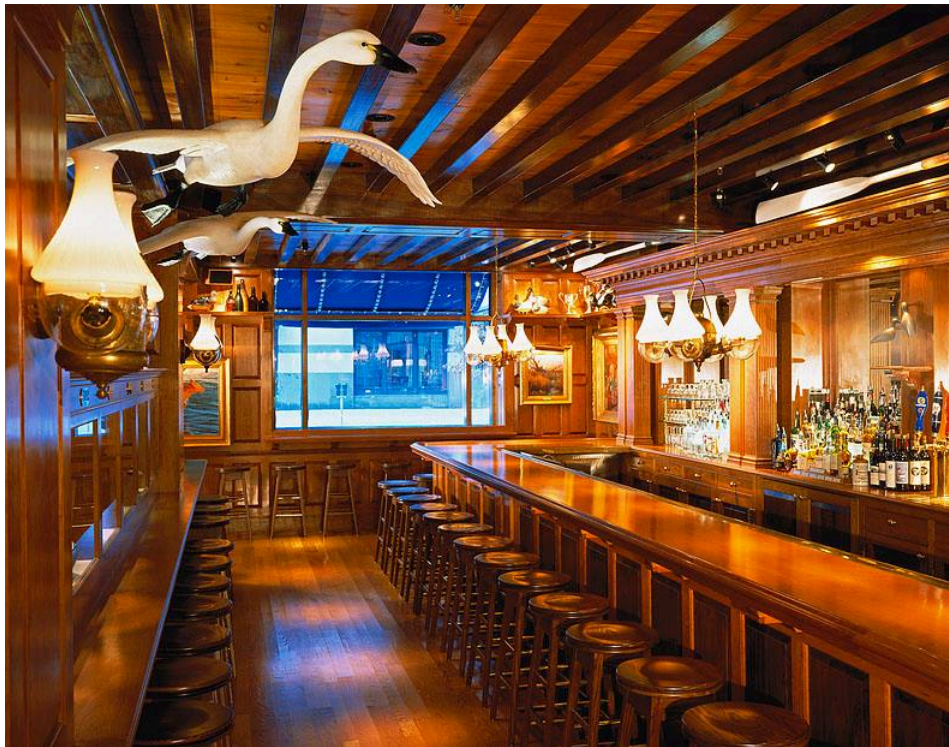
The District of Columbia bar is correct. Why, you ask? B e c a u s e, the DC Bar did not exist until 1970. Prior to 1970, the voluntary bar association for the District of Columbia was the Bar Association of the District of Columbia. Which brings us to a fork in the road, how do we knife through all of this?

What Camp do you belong to? **Camp 1:** Vladimir Nabokov can do no wrong. Saint Nabokov never makes/made a mistake. **Camp 2:** Brian Boyd's paper with its clever title "Even Homais Nods" (a *Madame Bovary* prescriptive reference to the idiom, even Homer nods) makes the case that yes, Nabokov made/makes some mistakes. **Camp 3:** Nabokov is a sloppy writer. The opposite of Camp 1. Every page is full of errors.

So how do you feel about these three choices? Two extremes and one in the middle. Even the middle ground doesn't allow enough latitude. Let's go for one more.

**Camp Q:** Nabokov is no saint and he made/makes mistakes. Yet the overall design and construct of *Lolita* is quite intricate. While some mistakes occur, especially concerning dates or numbers (think synesthesia, another paper for later), one should look for Nabokovian markers that actually highlight purposeful errors/mistakes.

Camp Q lets us pitch our tent with its overwhelming evidence. With all of Nabokov's time, preparation and research, do you honestly think that an easy reference to a DC Bar Association would be so easily botched? In this case, *bar* not being capitalized is correct in one of two ways. The first page of the Foreword then establishes the lack of credibility of John Ray, Junior. Ray has the bar association name wrong. Or does John Ray, Jr. have it right?



A District of Columbia bar, Old Emmitt Grill.

Know of any bars on Q Street in Washington, D.C.?



So either choice of having the wrong name for the legal bar association in D.C. or the darker lit view inside of a bar throws shade, not Ray, on knowing intimately who Clarence Clark really is —*or isn't*—Ray's "*good friend and relation*" (3). Thus in the first paragraph there are five capital errors: *or*, *bar*, *Poling*, *Prize* and *make*.

Rest assured that Mr. Clark's choice, John Ray, Jr., Ph.D., found the "*task proved simpler than either of us had anticipated. Save for the correction of obvious solecisms and . . .*" (3). Those *obvious solecisms*, those *gross grammatical errors* that have gone uncorrected or were interjected by John Ray, Jr. And now you have the whole picture:



*Such airs, though!*  
*Best on a Sunday. If you can't, George can.*  
*Go to Michigan. Ascend between the Lions. Between the Lines.*