

“These aren’t the droids you’re looking for.”  
“These aren’t the droids we’re looking for.”  
“He can go about his business.”  
“You can go about your business.”  
“Move along.”  
“Move along . . . move along.” (Stars Wars, 1977)

Oh Obi-Wan, do not authors and critics try the same Jedi mind-trick when they say there is nothing to see? *Move along . . . move along.*

*And the Poling Prize goes to . . .*

Past the Title is the Foreword and one paragraph in is the statement that John Ray, Jr., Ph.D. has been named the editor for *Lolita* because he has just been awarded the *Poling Prize*. And what is the Poling Prize, pray tell? Alfred Appel, Jr. in *The Annotated Lolita* offers no note. A later note on Jerome Dunn for Chapter 2 goes so far as to caution against “search[ing] for allusions under every bush” (334). Like Mr. Dunn, the mentions of Clarence Choate Clark and Widworth, Mass. in the Foreword are also non-allusive, *per Appel. Move along . . . move along.*

To counter this, I put forth the notion that just because one cannot find an allusion or a connection does not mean that one does not exist. For this exercise, let us take the *Poling Prize*. As Poling Prize is capitalized that would make it a proper noun, if it is to be an actual prize. Since nothing readily can be found, one can deduce this is fictional and then has no bearing here. A non-allusive. *Nothing to see . . .*

How easily one can be deceived, when you only see the same words! Notice how quickly we get locked into one meaning. Now change the punctuation. Not the words. Just the punctuation. Go from “the Poling Prize” to “the poling prize.” While prize still has its meaning, poling has now gone from a name to an action, a verb. To pole, to push with a pole. Still makes no sense. Unless, your sense is the sense of experience.

Ever pushed with a pole? I have, aquatically. Well, there’s no canoe in the first paragraph. What else is pushed with a pole? A boat in general. Poling a boat. What kind of boat? Has to be on the small side. You’re not going to pole a tanker. Google: “poling boat.” Wiktionary. “Any small boat, such as a punt, propelled using a small pole.” Punt, sounds British — because it is. Google: “poling a punt.”

Say, have you been to Cambridge, England? Naw? Me neither. But now I have *in a way* and so have you:



Where are we? We're on the Cam, the Cam River, in Cambridge England. Specifically at Trinity College. It's quite the touristy thing to do nowadays. All those tourists sitting in the punts, those small boats. All propelled by poles, called poling.

To read well, you must know well. And *well*, there is no shortcut to knowing everything. A writer brings all his or her knowledge to the fore: their sum of learning, experiences, and the entirety of imagination. Do punting and poling have anything to do with Vladimir Nabokov? What, if any, does this have regarding any applicability to the context of *Lolita*? Can one achieve a deeper level of understanding through constructed meaning? The use of a word brings with it any subset of meaning, and if a subset applies, the constructed meaning of the word meets the test of validity.

So, Vladimir attended Trinity College. Let's hear him speak on the subject:

“I remember the dreamy flow of punts and canoes on the Cam, the Hawaiian whine of phonographs slowly passing through sunshine and shade and a girl’s hand gently twirling this way and that the handle of her peacock-bright parasol on the cushions of the punt which I dreamily navigated.” (*Speak Memory* Ch. 13, Sec. 5, 211)

Trinity College’s tradition has the poler standing on the till (being the deck on the rear) and push the punt forward, while standing still. Such a position is called: **Pricking the Punt**.

**Prick** has been a vulgar term for **Penis** since Shakespeare’s time:

Mercutio: If love be rough with you, be rough with love.  
Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down.  
(*Romeo & Juliet* 1.4.26-27)

In American slang, **Prick** has been an Insult since the late 1920s, meaning **a contemptible man**.

So this editor of the Foreword was awarded the  
**Poling Prize = Prick(ing) Prize (having both sexual and insulting contexts)**

If you need any more of a heads up regarding an unreliable narrator (there is more than one), this should be it.

Who really then should get the Prick Prize? John Ray, Jr.? What about Humbert Humbert? Perhaps Clare Quilty?

Wait! Don’t forget about Clarence Choate Clark (CCC), Esq.! NO, no. Appel says CCC has no allusion. That is an illusion. A magic act. We all like to believe in magic. Sometimes the magic is gone when we know the trick, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t look. I’m sorry if this is upsetting or dismissed. Odysseus wanted Memory to Speak in the opening of the *Odyssey*. To speak though of a hero, not of a villain, or where a hero does not quite fit the role. Nabokov’s Memory too fits this description. Similarly, even the antihero of Humbert Humbert masks the narrative in order to persuade.

In short, if this means a deeper, richer and fuller understanding, I will push through the murky waters anytime and pole through to take that literary prize. Just don’t confuse that prize with Humbert’s *prize, to take by force*, his pricking prize.

*And the Poling Prize goes to . . . You* — if you *choose* to always go past the web of lies.

“These aren’t the droids we’re looking for.”

P.S.

Besides Clarence Choate Clark, Esq., there are more finds in the Foreword. Another hidden reference to a third Trinity College alumni (two I’ve already mentioned). Both Widworth, Mass. AND August 5, 1955 are extremely relevant to the novel. *The Annotated Lolita* is about half-complete. *But that* is for another story . . .