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# Lolita: Re-presenting Dolores Haze

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## **Lolita: the ‘haze’**

Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* is a character problematized by the politics of representation. Lolita exists in a world where her existence is questioned. Lolita might be real; she might as well be unreal. There is no saying if Lolita is a flesh and blood character, or a “little ghost,”<sup>1</sup> a figment of Humbert’s fevered imagination. While her presence is detailed on the one hand, on the other hand, the vague narration suggests her absence. Her features are emphasized to the minutest detail, while her emotions do not speak. They are silenced. The girl is also at an age when she is on the threshold of adulthood, pendulously swinging between innocence and experience. She is twelve. She is not a child, and not a grown – up either. While she savours on candies and Hollywood and music, she is also a little dazed by her physical changes and her sexual awakening. She is almost in a stupor, where she does not know who she exactly is. She does not conform to any distinct classification. In every respect, she is neither ‘this nor that’. This girl, who might be real, or unreal, is on the threshold of womanhood, at the moment of transition from innocence to experience. She steals bright lipstick and red nail colour from her mother’s possessions to appear grown – up, to play ‘mother’ for a while. She is in constant transition, as Sarah Herbold says in her essay ‘Fantasies of Lo,’ that “Lolita’s different names allude to many

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1 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)10.

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different versions of her.”<sup>2</sup> She is a crossover of different binaries herself as Nabokov complicates her representation deliberately.

The style of narration is extremely comic at times when tragedy in the plot has reached its height. In most tragic of situations Humbert manages to poke fun at himself or joke about the circumstances. The narrative does not lapse into a dull and gloomy style for once. It is written in a high spirited, jocund style of an adventure story, while the plot itself is capable of gravely dampening one’s spirits. HumbertHumbert, says Michael Holquist, is a “cosmic detective, who wishes to solve the crime of his own existence,”<sup>3</sup> and truly enough, while the plot has nothing to do with detection, the structure would suggest distinct similarities with a detective story. In fact, Humbert’s search for Quilty is almost Holmes’ search for a criminal.

*Lolita* was a popular novel then when it was banned, and is popular till date. It deals with serious psychosocial issues, but, that never affected its best – seller status and has been made into two successful Hollywood productions. In fact the term *Lolita* became almost significant of a coquette, a promiscuous child then on. It is also a blend of misogynist and feminist readings. Sarah Herbold, in her essay ‘*Lolita* and the woman reader,’ explains how while “Nabokov’s intended audience was male,”<sup>4</sup> *Lolita* was supposed to evoke feminist sympathies. The crossover in *Lolita* is there, both directly and indirectly. The girl herself and the modes of narration are all crossovers of sorts. It is not only a crossover of the so – called ‘serious’ and ‘popular’ genres, but also, a tremendously powerful blend of opposite emotions, techniques, and modes of narration.

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2 Sarah Herbold, “Fantasies of Lo,” *Nabokov Studies*10 (2006): 199-201, 13 Sept. 2011. <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/v010.1herbold.html>>.

3 Michael Holquist, “Whodunit and the other questions: Metaphysical Detective Stories in Post-War Fiction,” *New Literary History* 3.1 (1971): 135-156, 13 Sept. 2011. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/468384>.

4 Sarah Herbold, “Fantasies of Lo,” *Nabokov Studies*10 (2006): 199-201, 13 Sept. 2011. <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/v010.1herbold.html>>.

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Therefore, one might say, as Humbert does, “You are a funny creature, Lo.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Who is Dolores?**

“She was Lo, plain Lo, in the morning, standing four feet ten in one sock. She was Lola in slacks. She was Dolly at school. She was Dolores on the dotted line. But in my arms she was always Lolita.”<sup>6</sup> Lolita then she was only in Humbert’s arms. Where then is Dolores Haze? Who then is she? Or the same question might as well be asked of Lolita. Who is Lolita, if the girl peering at Humbert “over dark glasses,”<sup>7</sup> is the daughter of Charlotte Haze, Dolores Haze?

Vladimir Nabokov, very artfully titles his much controversial novel, *Lolita*. He interestingly begins with the three step pilgrimage of HumbertHumbert’s tongue in his attempts to pronounce the word “Lo. Lee. Ta,”<sup>8</sup> the “light of his life,”<sup>9</sup> “the fire of his loins.”<sup>10</sup> The reader keeps looking for a ‘Lolita’ at every turn of a page, while gradually Humbert lodges onto the details of his long stays at asylums, and finally his marriage to Valechka. Lolita still is nowhere in sight. Nabokov however does not divulge who this myth is, but craftily manages to hold on to the reader’s attention through his descriptions of a very pervert paedophile, HumbertHumbert. Lolita however features every now and then in Humbert’s narrative, but does not cease to be a mystery.

The question is, does her mystery ever get solved? Do we really ever see her? When finally the reader knows whom Humbert is referring

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5 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)237.

6 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)7.

7 *Ibid*, 41.

8 *Ibid*, 7.

9 *Ibid*.

10 *Ibid*.

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to by the name of Lolita, does the veil of enigma shrouding her really lift? Or does it become more mysterious by confusing Lolita with the girl Dolores Haze?

Lolita is probably as much a mystery to Humbert, as she is to the readers. Humbert does not like to acknowledge this, but, to a certain extent Lolita is a blend of all the feminine characters that affect Humbert's life and the readers are made to tread on Humbert's life, experience Humbert's experiences to give them an understanding of three different characters and at the same time keep them in the dark regarding who they really are.

One could venture to say, Lolita never existed at all and Dolores, who did exist was almost absent throughout the expanse of the narrative. Humbert's fantasies of Lolita are juxtaposed against the background image of a certain Dolores Haze. What Dolores feels is never said, only glimpses of her flashes into the narrative. The real girl is overshadowed, her voice overpowered, by Lolita. "In point of fact, there might have been no Lolita at all,"<sup>11</sup> as Humbert says. What was, was his childhood love Annabel, where his pervert imaginations held its roots, as he "grew, a happy, healthy child, in a bright world of illustrated books, clean sand, orange trees, friendly dogs, sea vistas and smiling faces,"<sup>12</sup> nevertheless, "with nobody to complain to, nobody to consult."<sup>13</sup> So, "in the sepulchre by the sea, in the tomb by the sounding sea,"<sup>14</sup> of Humbert's "beautiful Annabel"<sup>15</sup> Leigh, began Humbert's quest for "incarnating her in another."<sup>16</sup> There "Lolita began with Annabel."<sup>17</sup>

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11 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)7.

12 *Ibid.*, 8.

13 *Ibid.*, 9.

14 Andrew Barger, *Edgar Allan Poe's annotated Poems* (United States: Bottletree, 2008)97.

15 *Ibid.*

16 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)14.

17 *Ibid.*, 12.

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The moment beside “the piazza,”<sup>18</sup> that moment, when “without the least warning,”<sup>19</sup> Humbert met Dolores Haze peering at him “over dark glasses,”<sup>20</sup> he, at that very moment kills Dolores to reconstruct his “Riviera love”<sup>21</sup> against the frame of Charlotte Haze’s teenage daughter, influenced by Hollywood and too young to figure out their new tenant’s evil designs. The first glimpse of Dolores is definitely not a vision of Charlotte Haze’s girl, but the first glimpse of Lolita, the girl whose “precursor”<sup>22</sup> was Annabel and who later “completely eclipses her prototype.”<sup>23</sup> The reader is never introduced to Dolores Haze, because Humbert’s “passionate recognition”<sup>24</sup> of “the same child – the same frail, honey-hued shoulders....”<sup>25</sup> casts a shadow of Annabel on Dolores and, there at the fusion of the two, is born, Humbert’s Lolita.

Lolita almost haunts Humbert through the “sunny blur”<sup>26</sup> of the “lost loveliness”<sup>27</sup> of Annabel’s memory. All that Humbert retains of Annabel is the photograph where “Annabel did not come out well,”<sup>28</sup> and his own picture next to hers was “dramatic conspicuous,”<sup>29</sup> and “looking away.”<sup>30</sup> Humbert remembers small details of Annabel’s complexion, clothing, perfume that she stole from her mother, and desperately tries to reconstruct her in every small girl of Annabel’s age, which gradually almost convinces the readers of Humbert’s perversion. Lolita is born of Humbert’s fevered imagination and is nurtured by the memories of all the women who influenced him. Lolita is the “little ghost in natural colours”<sup>31</sup> whom

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18 Ibid, 41.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*  
(Australia: Penguin, 2008) 7.

23 Ibid, 42.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid, 41.

26 Ibid, 11.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid, 10.

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Humbert cannot define. He pathetically confesses that, “I would like to describe her face, her ways – and I cannot.”<sup>32</sup> All he can recollect with shut eyes is a “cinematographic still,”<sup>33</sup> and “immobilized fractions”<sup>34</sup> of her, like “the freckles of her bobbed nose, blond down of her brown limbs,”<sup>35</sup> her hair, her skirt when she bends down to buckle her shoe, but not the girl. This probably is his memory of his imagined Lolita that he wants to see in Dolores Haze. His schizophrenic vision conjures up a Lolita for him in Dolores who also steals lipstick from her mother, who resembles Annabel the most. It is in fact, highly probable, that Monique, the French prostitute, who suited Humbert’s definition of a nymphet, had every potential of becoming a Lolita had Humbert continued to see her.

### **Who is Humbert?**

Humbert’s disorder is more psychological than sexual. He lives in his own cocoon that he shares only with his Lolita. Interestingly enough, all the women that came in contact with Humbert have a very disturbed sexual and marital life. His “photogenic mother,”<sup>36</sup> as Humbert imagines her to be, dies only when he was three, leaving nothing, but a “pocket of warmth in the darkest past.”<sup>37</sup> His aunt, Sybil, who brings him up, had been violated by Humbert’s own father, neglected by her own husband, and had stayed as an “unpaid governess”<sup>38</sup> to Humbert. She never got any love out of the relationships she had and she also dies a premature death. Annabel was the first girl Humbert met, who was his age and therefore

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32 Ibid, 47.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008).

36 Ibid, 8.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

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sympathized with him and they shared a relationship of warm companionship. And this Annabel also dies, Annabel, with whom Humbert was “madly, clumsily, shamelessly, agonizingly and hopelessly,”<sup>39</sup> in love, a “love that was more than love,”<sup>40</sup> and the devastation of her death leaves Humbert unfit for having “any further romance throughout the cold years”<sup>41</sup> of his youth. The disturbed adult relationships that he had grown with had forbidden him to love an adult it seems. Young girls resembling Annabel to an extent seemed to arouse his passions, not girls his age. He, himself realizes it quite late. He tries hard to “be good,”<sup>42</sup> and marries Valechka in anticipation that “regular hours, home - cooked meals,”<sup>43</sup> would help him “if not purge”<sup>44</sup> himself, at least to keep his dangerous desires under “pacific control.”<sup>45</sup> But, his marriage turns sour in a few days, as all love grows cold and Valechka leaves with Mr. Maximovich. Monique, the young prostitute had been the only one who somehow seemed to reflect flashes of the girl that Humbert was looking for. Just any girl did not fit in his mind’s image of Lolita. Humbert got his fair share of shocks in the process of his search, in the shape of Marie, a bulky small girl child. And then Humbert comes across Dolores, who almost resembles his ‘brainchild.’ Even Charlotte Haze, whom he marries is a woman whose dead husband was twenty years her senior. HumbertHumbert’s passion can therefore, under the circumstances, probably be explained, as a fright for adult relationships.

Almost like the refrain from Edgar Allan Poe’s ‘Annabel Lee’ Humbert admits his love, to be a demonic or, angelic form of the

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39 Ibid,10.

40 Andrew Barger, Edgar Allan Poe’s annotated Poems (United States: Bottletree, 2008)97.

41 Vladimir Nabokov, Lolita (Australia: Penguin, 2008)12.

42 Vladimir Nabokov, Lolita (Australia: Penguin, 2008)19.

43 Ibid, 25.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

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virtue, at least not human, as he refers to his normal relationships as relations with “human females.”<sup>46</sup> The very term “nymphet”<sup>47</sup> is suggestive of the non – human feature of his love. Also the conclusion that one derives is that Lolita is the “*etre?de fuite*”<sup>48</sup> of Humbert. He escapes from the world of failed adult relationships and retreats into his own cozy world where only he and Lolita exists, very much like, his escapes from adult games of bridge with Annabel, into the open under the Mimosa grove. Dolores was the “small ghost”<sup>49</sup> of somebody Humbert had “just killed.”<sup>50</sup> As Humbert’s “able psychiatrist,” is convinced and anxious, to have him take his Lolita “to the seaside,” and obtain “release from a subconscious obsession of an incomplete childhood romance with the initial little Miss Leigh.”<sup>51</sup> Humbert himself defines Lolita, saying, “Annabel Haze alias Dolores Leigh, alias Lolita appeared to me.”<sup>52</sup>

There in fact is a constant friction between Humbert’s Edenic Lolita and the very clinically described Dolores. As Marie Bouchet mentions in her essay ‘The Details of Desire: From Dolores on the Dotted Line to Dotted Dolores’ that “eroticism is much more suggestive when it withholds information and lets the readers imagination fill in the blanks.”<sup>53</sup> Humbert’s “imagined Lolita,”<sup>54</sup> is also left to the imagination of the readers. While the narrator consistently feeds the reader with intricate details about Dolores, her

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46 Ibid, 17.

47 Ibid.

48 Marie Bouchet, “The Details of Desire: From Dolores on the Dotted Line to Dotted Dolores,” *Nabokov Studies* 9(2005):101-114, 13 September. 2011 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/v009/9.1bouchet.html>.

49 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)158.

50 Ibid.

51 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008) 188.

52 Ibid, 189.

53 Marie Bouchet, “The Details of Desire: From Dolores on the Dotted Line to Dotted Dolores,” *Nabokov Studies* 9(2005):101-114, 13 September. 2011 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/v009/9.1bouchet.html>.

54 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)17.

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white sock on a single foot, her charm bracelet, her tennis uniform, and minute details about her clothing, including her “hip girth, twenty nine inches, thigh girth, seventeen....”<sup>55</sup> and so on, his very own Lolita remains hidden under the piles of Dolores’ costume. Physically, Dolores is more present than Lolita. She is more a physical representative of Lolita. As Bouchet says, “The real nymphet’s body has to be guessed under the profusely detailed description of her clothes.”<sup>56</sup> Lolita, she suggests “is a parodic Eve”<sup>57</sup> and she is not wrong in saying so, as the imagery of apples and cherry red colours keep leaving their trail throughout the plot line, while Humbert would prefer to call himself the “helpless Adam.”<sup>58</sup> Dolores is seen holding a “beautiful, banal, Eden – red apple,”<sup>59</sup> on the day Humbert is first left alone with her. She is described as “apple sweet”<sup>60</sup> and at the end of the day’s adventures she is seen to “chuck the core of her abolished apple into the fender.”<sup>61</sup> Also when Humbert meets Dolores at camp Q after long weeks of separation, she is dressed in her “brightest gingham with a pattern of little red apples.”<sup>62</sup> While Dolores is “dotted with sensual details,”<sup>63</sup> Lolita’s is the “desired body.”<sup>64</sup> Even in a later poem when Humbert is deserted by Dolores, he writes how he is dying without Lolita Haze and how

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55 Ibid, 121.

56 Marie Bouchet, “The Details of Desire: From Dolores on the Dotted Line to Dotted Dolores,” *Nabokov Studies* 9(2005):101-114, 13 September.  
2011 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/v009/9.1bouchet.html>.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)121

60 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)65.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid,125.

63 Marie Bouchet, “The Details of Desire: From Dolores on the Dotted Line to Dotted Dolores,” *Nabokov Studies* 9(2005):101-114, 13 September.  
2011 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/v009/9.1bouchet.html>.

64 Ibid.

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Dolores Haze is “wanted”<sup>65</sup> “ninety pounds is all she weighs, with a height of sixty inches.”<sup>66</sup> In other words, the body of Dolores is invaded by the presence of Lolita. While Dolores on the one hand is violated by Humbert, on the other hand she is violated by Lolita.

**“But what happens to you my orphan?”<sup>67</sup>**

What happens to her who “had nowhere else to go?”<sup>68</sup> Yes, what happens to Dolores? This young orphan, enthusiastically tries to impress Humbert “with the world of tough kids,”<sup>69</sup> Humbert, who looked so like a star from Hollywood who held Lolita in his thrall. In her candid admiration for Hollywood, candy bars, comics, clothes and magazines, she does not realize that she has become the ‘Lolita’ of a “deranged mind.”<sup>70</sup> This girl of twelve, still a “typical kid, picking her nose,”<sup>71</sup> “a disgustingly conventional little girl”<sup>72</sup> still unable to resist the lure of “sweet hot jazz, square dancing, gooey fudge sundaes, musicals, movie magazines and so forth,”<sup>73</sup> little knew that the “blue”<sup>74</sup> “Vitamin X”<sup>75</sup> was the end of her life as Dolores Haze. The clothes that filled her with supreme glee at the ‘Enchanted Hunters’ were not clothes for Charlotte Haze’s girl, but clothes for Humbert’s Lolita, for whom Dolores’ body was to serve as substitute. From then on she was “an orphan, a lone child, an absolute waif, with whom, a heavy – limbed, foul smelling adult, had

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65 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)292.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid, 169.

68 Ibid, 160.

69 Ibid, 151.

70 Ibid, 137.

71 Ibid, 186.

72 Ibid, 166.

73 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)166.

74 Ibid, 138.

75 Ibid.

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intercourse three times a morning.”<sup>76</sup> Her sexual awakening and the daze that left her with wanting to “try what it was like”<sup>77</sup> for “sort of fun,”<sup>78</sup> soon wrung out all fun that she would ever imagine having. She became Humbert’s young prostitute. The ill – mannered, un – ladylike daughter of Charlotte Haze, the brat who ate up guests’ bacon, ceased to exist that day, when at the ‘Enchanted Hunters,’ a young and curious Dolores, enchanted by the mysteries of adolescence is hunted by HumbertHumbert. She travels all over the country then on, but, her situation is worse than a caged bird. She has no choice. More so, the narrator very coldly chokes her voice. She starts living Lolita’s life the way Humbert wants her to, while dying her own death. She dresses the way Humbert wants her to dress. Even her morning coffee is at the mercy of her predator, who finds it “sweet, to bring that coffee to her and then deny it until she had done her morning duty.”<sup>79</sup> She was paid like a “concubine”<sup>80</sup> as Humbert calls her, in the form of lavish clothing, entertainment, music boxes. She was not allowed to ask for anything more, for what more could she want? She was only imitating Lolita, playing for a while, “darling, this is only a game.”<sup>81</sup> When Humbert breaks the news of her mother’s death to her, he just states that “your mother is dead,”<sup>82</sup> and does not really think it necessary to do anything more than buy her “four books of comics, a box of candy, a box of sanitary pads, two cokes, a manicure set, a travel clock with a luminous dial, a ring with a real topaz, a tennis racket, roller skates with white high shoes, field glasses, a portable radio set, chewing gum, a transparent raincoat,

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76 Ibid, 158.

77 Ibid,155.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid,186.

80 Ibid, 153.

81 Ibid, 19.

82 Ibid, 160.

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sunglasses and some more garments.”<sup>83</sup> Ample compensation for her mother’s death. All Humbert needed was to keep his companion in “passable humor from kiss to kiss.”<sup>84</sup>

Humbert is the narrator, and he narrates with not a very guilty conscience, that he was generous to Dolores. He in fact goes to the extent of patting his own back calling himself “Humbert the kind.”<sup>85</sup> Dolores is seen, as Humbert sees her, as Lolita. She has no voice of her own, no narrative where she could safely pen her feelings, her grudges, her claustrophobia. She is almost absent from the text. Humbert’s narrative at times even succeeds to convince the reader that it was “she who seduced”<sup>86</sup> Humbert. She is portrayed as such a child, that the reader does not really ever see through her feelings for Humbert. One could imagine in one’s sympathies for Humbert that she was the spoilt child who encouraged Humbert’s activities and poor Humbert was the “helpless Adam”<sup>87</sup> pitifully at the mercy of his promiscuous Eve. One almost forgets to pay heed to the “simple, happy, neglected child’s”<sup>88</sup> “weeping grimace,”<sup>89</sup> the “expression of pain”<sup>90</sup> that flits every now and then across her twelve year old face at being threatened to be sent either to Miss Phalen’s place or the reformatory. One does not notice how she has lost all pleasure in living when Humbert states that “every morning during our yearlong travels, I had to devise some expectation, some special point in space and time for her to look forward to, for her to survive till bed time.”<sup>91</sup>

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83 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)160

84 *Ibid*, 174.

85 *Ibid*, 180.

86 *Ibid*, 150.

87 Marie Bouchet, “The Details of Desire: From Dolores on the Dotted Line to Dotted Dolores,” *Nabokov Studies* 9(2005):101-114, 13 September, 2011 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/v009/9.1bouchet.html>.

88 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)170.

89 *Ibid*, 157.

90 *Ibid*, 158.

91 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)170.

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In one's enthusiasm to sympathize with Humbert's helplessness, one loses sight of the fact that every night Dolores sleeps on a tear – soaked pillow, how she must pine to see the familial bonds of love that others of her age share with their fathers, and how she too must want to have boys of her age admire her.

Dolores rushes out of her room when her friend Mona Dahl sits on her father's lap, teachers at Beardsley school complain about her performance. Their general impression is "Dolly remains morbidly uninterested in sexual matters"<sup>92</sup> and "refused to discuss the home situation."<sup>93</sup> But, except for these incidents, the author does not give the reader much of a chance to understand Dolores' situation. We see faint glimpses of the real girl within the shell of Humbert's Lolita only when Dolores Haze attempts to rebel. Her actions are not very clear though one is never sure if she really guides the car to follow Humbert's trail, one can never say if she had genuinely confided in Mona Dahl. What looks like an attempt to escape after a heated argument with Humbert, ends in Humbert appeasing her once again by treating her to lemonade. The nurse's behaviour at the hospital is also a mystery. The reader wonders if she is aware of the relationship between Dolores and Humbert. That she was "ready to turn away"<sup>94</sup> in "plain repulsion"<sup>95</sup> does not become very clear until she really escapes from the hospital. Her desperation is so much, her need to escape is so great that she chooses to escape with Quilty of all people, Clare Quilty, who was no better, *indeed*, probably worse than HumbertHumbert.

The reader is kept thoroughly in the dark, as to the workings of Dolores' mind. What she thinks, what she plans and how, nothing is

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92 Ibid, 221.

93 Ibid, 222.

94 Ibid, 187.

95 Ibid.

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told. There is suspense throughout every action of this victim of Humbert's perverse passions. Even her feelings for Humbert are unknown. One does suspect if she really does not love Humbert at all. Humbert, her violator after all, receives quite a sympathetic treatment from Dolores. While on the one hand she decides to jump from the 'frying pan to fire' by choosing to escape with Quilty, on the other hand her disgust for Humbert is never very well expressed. She never exposes him, although threatening him always to gain some pathetic small favour. Dolores Haze remains a mystery throughout, as she is eclipsed under the garb of Lolita.

Although, as Todd Bayma and Gary Fine found that "majority of critics share Humbert's misogynistic interpretation of *Lolita*. By using similar arguments, as used by convicted rapists in order to view themselves as non – rapists, reviewers depicted Dolores Haze as both morally unworthy and at least partly responsible for her own victimization,"<sup>96</sup> but, "Humbert's 'angle of vision' is not the only one we have of Lolita, although it predominates,"<sup>97</sup> as Eric Goldman mentions in his essay 'Knowing Lolita: Sexual Deviance and normality in Nabokov's *Lolita*.' He suggests "an alternative interpretation of *Lolita*, one which views her not as a special, nymph – like girl already perverted before Humbert exploits her, but rather as an ordinary, juvenile girl whose 'normal' sexual development is warped by a maniacal myth – making pedophile."<sup>98</sup> The science of sexology undermines Humbert's Edenic perspective of *Lolita* and establishes her behaviour and development as normal. "She is a normally developing young woman who is exploited by an imaginative man who ironically sees her as the deviant."<sup>99</sup> For

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96 Eric Goldman, "Knowing Lolita: Sexual Deviance and normality in Nabokov's *Lolita*." *Nabokov Studies* 8 (2004):87-104, 13 Sept. 2011  
<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/voo8/8.goldman.html>.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

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Humbert “images of a fallen woman, prostitute and Dolores are identical,”<sup>100</sup> says Goldman, however, “reference to the Miranda twins is an allusion to Shakespearean heroine who connects Lolita to a character who is the quintessence of juvenile discovery. Lolita, like Shakespeare’s Miranda, is discovering a brave new world.”<sup>101</sup> However, this is not to be confused with what Humbert does to her. She just realizes too late what the experimenting had led her to; she does understand the grave intentions of Humbert. Humbert, unlike Charlie is not an experiment in Lolita’s sexual awakening.

Therefore Lolita can have both misogynist and feminist readings. Nabokov relates the story from Humbert’s perspective which obviously lends the serious issue an ironic humour and at the same time avoids becoming a nagging cliché of a ‘fallen woman’ novel. He does injustice to Dolores’ character possibly, but he has his reasons too. This path – breaking, almost scandalous story of a distracted criminal becomes the controversial rage of Nabokov’s time. It is banned in numerous places, but being banned helps in securing publicity and thereby securing the book’s best – seller status for years. Had it been told from Dolores’ perspective, it probably would not have been such a successful book with war – ridden readership. It would have been the sad story of just another ‘fallen woman,’ just another story of betrayal. Nabokov’s narrative style ensures that the readers give Dolores more sympathy than ‘fallen women’ get in Victorian novels, by not so elaborately describing her agony. Dolores’ suppressions win her sympathy from the readership. If her plight would have been discussed at length, it would not leave anything for the readers to imagine. Here the imagined suffering of

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100 Ibid.

101 Eric Goldman, “Knowing Lolita: Sexual Deviance and normality in Nabokov’s Lolita.” *Nabokov Studies* 8 (2004):87-104, 13 Sept. 2011 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/v008/8.goldman.html>.

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Dolores pains the reader. “In this sense,”<sup>102</sup> as Goldman says, “the novel is as much a part of feminism as it is of modernism,”<sup>103</sup> because “Nabokov suggests the inadequacies of conflicting ways of knowing Lolita. Lolita has sometimes been criticized as a misogynist work. But, just as contemporary feminist critics such as Baym, Powers and Heller highlight the ways myths are used to stigmatize and belittle women, so Nabokov reveals the damage that a misogynist myth can inflict on a young woman.”<sup>104</sup>

Lolita is a quest for a nymph – like Annabel in the beginning when Humbert finds her in Dolores. Then when Dolores escapes, it is Humbert’s quest to find her back. There is confusion then as to who he really looks for, Lolita or Dolores, for the poem he writes, remembers Lolita, but, searches for Dolores, as Humbert writes “wanted, wanted, Dolores Haze.”<sup>105</sup> But, the end is surprising and oddly poignant. When Humbert sees the pregnant and grown – up Dolores, he knows that she is not his Lolita, but, he also knows definitely that he loves her still for what she is. Dolores is no more a nymphet, but he loves her. He had, previously not seen Monique, the street – walker, for the fear of losing all love for her once she ceased to be a nymphet, But, Dolores had cured him of that disease it seems. In the end he is almost not a paedophile any longer. In fact, his murder of Quilty suggests the murder of his own darker and “deranged”<sup>106</sup> image. Lolita is a ‘serious’ novel that discusses grave issues under the guise of Humbert’s picaresque travels and good humour. It is almost, as Auden had said like a detective story, with equilibrium at the

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102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

104 Eric Goldman, “Knowing Lolita: Sexual Deviance and normality in Nabokov’s Lolita.” *Nabokov Studies* 8 (2004):87-104, 13 Sept. 2011 [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/voo8/8\\_goldman.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/voo8/8_goldman.html).

105 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)292.

106 Ibid,137.



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beginning, which is disrupted, and then towards the end equilibrium is restored, though, in this case, one does not feel like asking if “there’s honey still for tea.”<sup>107</sup>

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107 Rupert Brooke, *The Old Vicarage, Grantchester*(Charleston: Nabu,2010)