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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. Light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo... Lee... Tu. – Lolita. V. Nabokov

Lolita Special Issue

Table of Contents

1. <u>A WORD FROM OUR EDITOR-IN-CHIEF</u>	2
o Sing, O Nymphet... by Mihaela Precup	
2. <u>OPINION</u>	3
o Gives You the Jumps, the Cold Creeps by Ema Dumitriu	
3. <u>HISTORY AND POLITICS</u>	4
o Theme Introduction by Marius-Bogdan Tudor	
o Sexually Oriented Speech – Constitutionally (Un)protected Speech by Mihaela Precup	
4. <u>FILM</u>	9
o Filming and Entexting Lolita: A Step-by-Step Account of How to Render a Twelve-Year-Old Girl in Written Form by Ileana Grama	
o Not your average love triangle – Humbert – Lolita – Quilty – by Loredana Vlaicu	
5. <u>LITERATURE</u>	15
o Dark Alice or Light Lolita: The Palimpsestic Nature of <i>Lolita</i> by Maria Zirra	
o Humbert Befallen: Seeing Through the Affable Monster by Alexandru Florin Popa	
o Implications of the Confessional Mode in <i>Lolita</i> by Roxana Mustața	
6. <u>MUSIC</u>	24
o Ennio Morricone’s Glimpse at Humbert Humbert by Diana Mihai	
7. <u>POPULAR CULTURE</u>	25
o Lolita Reloaded in L.A. - Mid-life Crisis and the Teenager Temptress in <i>Californication</i> by Mihaela Mircia	
8. <u>VISUAL CULTURE</u>	28
o The Innocent and the Erotic in Audrey Kawasaki’s Paintings by Adelina Vartolomei	
9. <u>CREATIVE WRITING</u>	31
o Invocation by Alexandru Macarescu	
o White-Skinned Girl by Adriana Boagiu	
10. <u>AMERICAN STUDIES IN ROMANIA</u>	32
o The American Studies MA at the University of Bucharest - An Interview with Marius-Bogdan Tudor by Silvia Filip	

A Word from our Editor-in-Chief

Sing, O Nymphet...

by Mihaela Precup

Sing, O Nymphet, of the Rage of Humbert, of his vengeance, deep and deadly...Or better yet, sing thyself. Your voice is missing. Your voice is one of the great pale ghosts roaming the murky streets of Western literature.

Speak, Lo. Tell us if you are sick of enumerations and the sweet sickly music of your names. Lo, Lee, Lolita, Dolores, Dolly...would you cast them all aside like old rotting skins?

You are always there and not there. Talking to you means learning to live on scraps and traces. Seeing you means accepting to be possessed. Remembering you is false. Reconstructing you, an academic exercise in futility. And yet we try.

We try to imagine what the world looks like from the nymphet's end of the lollipop. And so this double *[Inter]sections* issue is not only an exercise in empathy to be performed in the fickle months of May and June, but also good practice in ventriloquism and spiritism. Put on your night-vision goggles and paint them phosphorescent pink. The unremembered is coming, and she's got a story to tell.

Opinion

Gives You the Jumps, the Cold Creeps

by Ema Dumitriu

This is **the confession of a criminal mind**. And this is a statement directed at our beloved forumist who cannot make the liaison - dangerous, all right - between Opinion pieces and academic topics.

Once upon a time-consuming age, I was a *Lo-lee-ta* myself. "Poor people, young people, anything can be written on them." I was both penurious and callow. I was a reader.

Certainly, I could carry on with my parallel between Humbert-Humbert's abuse of a child, and a writer's Sodom and Gomorrah towards a reader, but I guess I'll simply skip it because: *primo*, I don't have enough Neorealism in me so as to chronicle the story without risking a ticky-tacky outcome (I hope that you'll be sufficiently tickled pink by Jonathan Safran Foer's ***Everything Is Illuminated***), and *secundo*, because this is an academic journal, for crying out loud; I can't just come and tarnish books' influence upon green readers. And who would actually reckon that books can sometimes be so inhuman?

Furthermore, there's a fair chance that, by looking backwards, I would all of a sudden turn stony, flinty, cold, obdurate, callous, barbarous, and start seeking catharsis through making insidious comments about fuddy-duddy forumists.

I want to talk to you about something more important. I want to talk to you about the weather. Dear reader, you're licensed to summon me for my effortless abdication, for my turning this into nerve-racking chit-chat. But bear with me for I do have a point, I promise!

So spring, right? Spring fever (sometimes, swine flu), right? Springy grass and spunky children, right? No, it's in fact that month of May - procrastination, take me away! - though lo!, an army of luscious, skin-headed, extremely right-winged exams are marching

and throbbing towards me - *Every woman adores a Fascist!* – only that *ceci n'est pas une femme*, but a student - there, I give you another social construct!

So, as I was saying, Humbert's pedophilia was somehow associated with Nabokov's uncanny wedlock, due to homosexual inclinations. Wait! You're right! I was not saying that.

It was something like this: the month of May brought me to May-December romances, which first brought me to Blanche's affinity for young boys, then to Humbert-Humbert's cajolery of Lilliputian-in-age damsels in distress (when you sleep with dogs...), which consequently brought me to the corrupting force of America - the naughty, as well as consumerist nation (Bad, bad, America! Where were you in the prurient Siècle des Lumières?), which ultimately brought me to cheese. That's right: from weather to cheddar! *Cheddar cheese is a relatively Soft And Wet pale-yellow to off-white, and sometimes sharp-tasting **cheese** originating in the English village of **Cheddar**, in **Somerset**...*Now really, do you actually want fries with that?

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury (oh yeah, and also **beloved bewildered and befuddled** forumist - the holy trinity of **BE**, I'd rather you did not choose to be), I can assure you that there's no point whatsoever to this article, just another *cartoonist sketch of nothing*, and I am not even endowed with Nabokov's aptitude for toying around. And to engrave a vernacular which the beloved forumist will be able to grasp: it's all just a dummy account of how much of a criminal mind a writer (any writer) can be.

Now, I wish to drink from my cup of hemlock!

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History and Politics

Theme Introduction

by Marius-Bogdan Tudor

Being an umpire or a player are no longer positions restricted to the “American pastime.” The implications of being either of the two have transcended the world of sports and have found an echo in the judiciary. Nowadays the debate is being heated up by the conservatives’ anxieties regarding President Obama’s pick to replace David Souter on the bench of the Supreme Court. Will he/she be an impartial umpire or an empathizing activist? And more importantly, which of the two is the best attitude to have as a Supreme Court Justice?

In a social space that was founded on and grew up with the need to question authority, it seemed that the sacrosanct concept of freedom of speech (even of what one may define as being “vulgar” speech) could never be regulated by any provisions of the law. However, this “anomaly” in the social fabric of America would find a way of “regulating” itself in the society spawned by the effects (at an existential level) of World War II. “The Boring 50s” marginalized and condemned any deviation from the mainstream, thus fueling the need for vitriolic outbursts, and it is at this moment in time that the judiciary formally acknowledges the role of the collective state of mind as being more than just a cameo in its decisions. In 1954, the Warren Court used psychological studies on the effects of segregation as part of the justification for its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. In doing so, it admitted the fact that public opinion played an important part in the ruling. The psychology behind this action can be explained by turning to a seminal work on the history of the Supreme Court; in *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*, Michael Karlman clarifies this idea that the values of the judges tend to reflect “broader social mores.” Even though they live in a particular historical and cultural

context, judges are not simple mirrors of public opinion. The greater education and relative affluence that they have makes them members of an elite subculture. On certain constitutional issues, people’s opinions are highly correlated with such factors. The example that Karlman gives is the fact that although most Americans at the beginning of the twenty-first century support voluntary nondenominational prayer in public schools, most highly educated, reasonably affluent Americans do not. As a reflection of such elite views, most judges continue to regard such prayer as unconstitutional, even though roughly 60-70% of Americans support it. This, however, does not contradict the main point: judges are part of contemporary culture and they seldom hold views that lean far from the dominant public opinion. Following this line of thought, we notice that judges did not protect women under the Equal Protection Clause until after the women’s movement and they did not invalidate racial segregation until after public opinion on race had changed dramatically (mainly as a result of “various forces that originated in or were accelerated by, World War II”). For the justices to have voided racial segregation in 1896 in *Plessy v. Ferguson* would have been heroic, yet most of them were not even tempted to do so. When they finally did void segregation in 1954, their decision reflected views that were held by roughly half the country. So with respect to the questions posed above, I believe the underlying principle of the arguments brought forth in our column on this special occasion is that a judge’s mission cannot be as straight-forward as that of an umpire’s. Judges don’t simply apply. They interpret. John Marshall made sure they would back in 1803.

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Sexually Oriented Speech – Constitutionally (Un)protected Speech

*This essay was initially written for a Law and Society Class taught within the University of Bucharest American Studies MA Program

by Mihaela Precup

One cannot hope to talk about Lolita-related phenomena and simply breeze past the connection between censorship and sexually oriented speech, especially since some of the publication history of Nabokov's nymphetopia also contains some famous mishaps. And in the spirit of playfully random connections this issue suggests, we shall get our feet wet in what we also named here 'obscene speech' in three Supreme Court cases which span more than fifteen years of American history between 1957 and 1973. The cases which form the basis of this discussion are *Roth v. United States*, 354 U.S. 476 (1957), *Memoirs v. Massachussetts*, 383 U.S. 413 (1966), and *Paris Adult Theatre I v. Slaton*, 413 U.S. (1973), in which the first case serves as a precedent for the subsequent two. The first part of this analysis will deal with an analysis of the problems one is confronted with when defining 'obscenity,' and the second part of the essay addresses the pros and cons of this kind of speech being protected by the First Amendment. Although I am not dealing here with the latest cases in point, it is perhaps useful to look at these cases as lying somehow at the root of such more recent legal battles around the same issue, such as the 1997 *Reno v. American Civil Liberties Union*. The latter decision in this case is perhaps symptomatic of how this issue is to be dealt with from now on but – on the other hand, as this essay will show – there are no easy or definitive answers to the problem of sexually oriented speech and no matter how much one decision may prove to steer the course of events a certain way (such as the 1966 *Memoirs v. Massachussetts* had

seemed to), the question remains open and different answers are given from decade to decade (see *Paris Adult Theater I*, making a U-turn only seven years after the *Memoirs* decision).

There has always been a certain level of vagueness concerning the definition of what may/may not be obscene. In this case, this problem is evident, in part, in the effort of the Supreme Court to define the term at different times and coinciding only when giving the dictionary definition. I shall deal first with the definition of obscenity present in the Roth case, since it was the one invariably applied later on. Mr. Justice Brennan, delivering the opinion of the Court, outlines the following features of the term: (a) the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole appeals to a prurient interest in sex, (b) the material is patently offensive because it affronts contemporary community standards relating to the description or representation of sexual matters and (c) the material is utterly without redeeming social value. In other words, the main question is "whether to the average person, applying contemporary community standards, the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole appeals to prurient interest." Since – again – a word such as 'prurient' is not wholly free of ambiguity itself, *Webster's New International Dictionary* (Unabridged, 2nd ed., 1949) is quoted, defining 'prurient' as follows: "... Itching; longing; uneasy with desire or longing; of persons, having itching, morbid, or lascivious longings of desire, curiosity, or propensity, lewd..." In spite of these obvious efforts at precision, it is perhaps relevant to draw attention to the fact that the dissenting opinions in both *Roth* and *Paris Adult Theater* insist on the vagueness surrounding the term 'obscenity,' on its obscurity, on the failure of defining it in a satisfactory manner (since what is deemed 'obscene' at a certain point in time

may soon after become completely inoffensive¹ and since what an entire community thinks and feels is difficult to infer).

All these discussions around the term are meant to support one of the two views circulated in all these cases: (a) that obscene speech is protected under the First Amendment versus (b) that it is not. Incidentally, in *Roth* the Court ruled that the defendant should be punished for mailing obscene materials, since “obscene material is not speech entitled to First Amendment protection;” in *Memoirs*, where John Cleland’s *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* is put on trial, the court decides that it had socially redeeming value, in spite of graphic details of sexual encounters, whereas in *Paris Adult Theater* it was ruled – based also on the decision in *Roth* and *Stanley v. Georgia* – that “exhibition of obscene material [two films, in this case] in places of public accommodation is not protected by any constitutional doctrine of privacy” and that “a nexus does or might exist between antisocial behavior and obscene material.” In what follows we shall look more closely at the advantages and disadvantages of these decisions which indicate whether or not sexually offensive speech is protected by the First Amendment.

Firstly, it is important to outline some relevant distinctions made within the body of these court decisions. One of these is a distinction between obscene ideas and obscene conduct. In all these cases the

¹ It would be useful to point out that – as Michel Foucault shows in his 1976 *History of Sexuality*, Chapter I – one cannot even say with certainty that with the passage of time people have taken a progressively relaxed view of sexually offensive speech (or conduct, in Foucault’s analysis). For instance, in the eighteenth century (in Europe) the nude body was much more often displayed (in public) and references to sexual activities appeared much more often than in the ‘Victorian’ prudish nineteenth century, where sexuality was confined to the marital bedroom or strictly delimited to a commercial space (i.e. the brothel) or other closed spaces of confinement (such as the prison or the madhouse).

question is whether the ideas contained by the material under scrutiny may entice antisocial or offensive conduct. Again, this is an extremely thorny issue, since almost anything may generate offensive conduct in, say, a mentally disturbed person. For instance, in the opinion of the court in the *Memoirs* case there is the example of a serial killer who started off by finding the Anglican mass ‘arousing.’ Hence, this matter cannot be simplified, since subjectivity is bound to intervene and in none of the three cases involved does the material on trial explicitly encourage offensive conduct. Quite the contrary, in *The Memoirs of Fanny Hill*, the account is filled with pieces of advice and warning for young people who might be tempted to go the same way as the heroine (who is at first an innocent girl, slowly corrupted into becoming one or another’s kept mistress, ending up in a brothel and being saved from it by ‘true love’). It is quite interesting that one of the supporters of the book in this trial is Reverend John R. Graham, of the First Universalist Church of Denver, who asserts not only that *Memoirs...* does not encourage offensive behavior, but that it “symbolizes the quest for what is moral.”² The same opinion is expressed differently and perhaps more to the point by Mr. Justice Douglas, who dissented in the *Paris Adult Theater I* case: “There is no protection against offensive ideas, only against offensive conduct.”

Another issue at stake is the difference between the private and the public realm. As the decision in *Stanley* had pointed out, this distinction (between the public and private space) is extremely significant. Hence, both in *Roth* and *Paris Adult Theater I*, it was deemed that the defendants had knowingly

² Quite interestingly, it is compared with another book having the same purpose, i.e. *Sin, Sex and Self-Control* by Dr. Norman Vincent Heale, a well-known clergyman of New York City. Rev. Graham finds that “*Fanny Hill* is a more valuable book than *Sin, Sex...* because it teaches us the importance of self-expression, rather than self-control.”

disseminated obscene materials (and thus, had more than toed the line between the public and the private sphere) and privacy was no longer at stake. But on the other hand, one might argue, still, privacy is at stake here. For instance, Roth's addressees had – at least some of them – ordered the materials he had sent them, thus expressing the wish of probably using them in the privacy of their own home. And even if this argument is slightly far-fetched, at least one can say that privacy is at stake here because nobody's privacy is actually impinged upon. Nobody can force you to peruse or watch materials that you know are offensive. The same argument was used in the *Reno v. ACLU* case, where they insisted that one is warned about the contents of the site one is about to enter (if only by the name of the site). In our case, it is very probable that Roth's addressees had been able to infer what sort of materials were in their mailboxes (this, if they had not ordered them) and the clients of the Paris Adult Theater I had been warned about the nature of the materials on film not just by the name of the movie theater, but also by signs placed at the entrance, saying: "Atlanta's Finest Mature Feature Films," and "Adult Theater – You must be 21 and able to prove it. If viewing the nude body offends you, Please Do Not Enter." This is a piece of information that the ruling opinions in both cases discuss very little, and still, it is essential. It seems extremely important that nobody's privacy had been actually infringed upon and the decisions to punish both Roth and the Theater seem, at least from this perspective, to infringe upon the autonomy of the subject. Also, it is extremely surprising that neither of these cases touches on the question of minors being affected/exploited (in the case where they had been photographed or filmed) by these materials. There is a brief mentioning (in Paris Adult Theater) that "there was no evidence presented that minors had ever entered the theaters. Nor was there evidence presented

that petitioners had a systematic policy of barring minors, apart from posting signs at the entrance." However one puts it, it is surprising that the protection of minors should be so easily dismissed.

However little emphasis may be placed on the protection of minors from more or less obscene materials, there is definitely more stress on the problem of censorship, which comes with several attachments. With the First Amendment came the care for the expression of personal tastes and beliefs, and an increasing awareness of the dangers that uniformity of thought presents, as well as the tyranny of the majority. All these direct consequences of the First Amendment are endangered by the decisions in *Roth* and *Paris Adult Theater I*, which could have opened the way for intolerance in other fields as well. This danger is perhaps best dwelt upon in the *Memoirs* case, where Rev John R. Graham spoke on the dangers of labeling forms of speech 'obscene' and excluding them from First Amendment protection:

If our society collapses, it will not be because people read a book such as *Fanny Hill*. It will fall, because we will have refused to understand it. Decadence, in a nation or individual, arises not because there is a lack of ability to distinguish between morality and immorality, but because the opportunity for self-expression has been so controlled or strangled that the society or the person is a robot.

Closely connected with the issue of censorship is the question of obscene speech being protected or not under the First Amendment. In the *Roth* case, obscene speech is not included under the protection of this amendment, and, deriving from this, the

majority dismisses very fast the question whether the obscene materials at hand induce offensive conduct or not: "Since obscenity is not protected, constitutional guaranties were not violated (...) merely because (...) convictions could be had without proof either that the obscene material would perceptibly create a clear and present danger of antisocial conduct, or probably would induce its recipients to such conduct." The same line of thought is used in the *Paris Adult Theater I* case, where the court does not deem necessary the use of expert opinions on the two films that had been labeled by the Georgia Supreme Court as "hard core pornography," leaving "little to the imagination:" "Nor was it error to fail to require 'expert' affirmative evidence that the materials were obscene when the materials themselves were actually placed in evidence" (Mr. Chief Justice Burger, delivering the opinion of the court). The same arguments are used by the dissenting opinion in the *Memoirs* case (Mr. Justice Clark³), choosing to dismiss as irrelevant the various (professional) critical opinions issued with regard to the book itself. But – as the ruling in the *Reno* case has shown – the dangers of not including sexually offensive speech under the protection of the First Amendment are much greater than the consequences of its exclusion from such protection.

One of these consequences would be the censorship of art and literature, especially if judges pursue a line of thought that excludes expert opinions on the materials on trial. And the danger becomes more evident if one looks at the manner in which Mr. Justice Clark, mentioned above, chooses to analyze John Cleland's book. He decides that "beautiful prose" is unimportant in this case (a somewhat narrow perspective, one might think), after

³ There is probably no coincidence here that Mr. Justice Clark's vote in *Roth* was the deciding one for the majority opinion, as he himself asserts in his *Memoirs* dissenting opinion.

counting the sexual encounters in the book and deciding that "this book is too much even for me." Why "even for" himself, we are not told. However, we consider that a very fine line is being trod whenever judges feel that they have the duty to dismiss literary works or, as a matter of fact, any works of art, without the proper background that would enable them to understand the full implications of that particular work of art.⁴

Therefore, although sexually offensive speech (sometimes related to libel, such as the *Jerry Falwell v. Hustler Magazine* case) is an extremely complex issue that does not seem to be incorporated in a coherent line of decisions so far. But it seems reasonable that it should be protected by the First Amendment (irrespective of the "socially redeeming value" factor) if it does not impinge upon people's privacy, if it does not openly encourage offensive or antisocial conduct, and last but not at all least, if it does not purposely involve minors in its production/consumption. With the *Reno v. ACLU* case, where the stress is so much upon the distinction between minors and adults, we have probably not seen the end of such cases, but at least future decisions in related cases will start from there.

Works Cited:

- Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality*. Paris: Gallimard, 1976
- *Roth v. United States*, 354 U.S. 476 (1957)
- *Memoirs v. Massachusetts*, 383 U.S. 413 (1966)
- *Paris Adult Theatre I v. Slaton*, 413 U.S. (1973)

⁴ But then again, the issue does not end here, since even among scholars there are very different opinions about various works of art. However, scholars do not have the power of placing the works they dislike outside the law – only perhaps of influencing a syllabus or two.

Film

Filming and Entexting *Lolita*: A Step-by-Step Account of How to Render a Twelve-Year-Old Girl in Written Form

by Ileana Grama

Critics of various kinds and persuasions have commented upon the solipsism of Nabokov's *Lolita*, on the cruelty with which the young Dolores Haze is turned into a simple object of contemplation. In this essay I suggest a reading of Nabokov's novel as a poem that seeks to capture the moving nymphet in the static girl, as an endeavour squeezed somewhere in between questioning the possibility to seize the essence and the desire for there to actually be an essence. I propose to pursue the thread of the various renditions of Dolores/Dolly/Lo/Lolita throughout the novel and to unearth a saga of Humbert Humbert's attempts to deal with her as a subject, to enclose her in immortal verse, in cinematic memory or in essence-craving intellect.

As an aside, I make a point out of *not* referencing any of the film versions of *Lolita*, as tempting as it may be to speculate on the script of Kubrick's 1962 version (authored by Nabokov himself). My purpose is to follow the camera as it moves around the only intended subject of the narration, little Lo, and to see where Humbert comes in, not as a character or a background object, but as a cameraman who cannot make us blind as to the fact that he is an intrusive observer with a faulty piece of recording machinery. Hence, I have steered clear of any form of rendition which inscribes Humbert in the texture of the narrative, thus obscuring his attempt (and failure) to be the "eye" in the story.

Let us begin by quoting the opening pages of the book, where the narrator seems to expose his technique of foregrounding memories:

There are two kinds of visual memory; one when you skilfully recreate an image in the laboratory of your own mind with your eyes open (and then I see Annabel in such general

terms as: 'honey-coloured skin', 'thin arms', 'brown bobbed hair', 'long lashes', 'big bright mouth'); and the other when you instantly evoke, with shut eyes, on the dark innerside of your eyelids, the objective, absolutely optical replica of a beloved face, a little ghost in natural colours (and this is how I see Lolita). (11-12)

By inserting this sly remark right at the onset of his trip down Memory Lane, the careful autobiographer Humbert Humbert (who, as well we know, has had plenty of time to 'fix' the text, until the blood and marrow sticking to it are at the right angles) leaves his audience in no doubt that his narration is presented in reel-format, simply as a strange movie. Indeed critics have noted that references to the cinema, stardom, and Humbert as the man behind the camera abound (Power 102). In light of all this, the main traits of the book's descriptive technique are explainable in a very straightforward manner by Nabokov's own passion for detail, for zooming in on that which is punctual and hence extremely realistic.

Thus, Humbert's games of perspective may be dismissed as the director's little tricks of the trade. 'Special effects' are noticeable in the first description of Lolita, a strangely unimpressive piece compared to the other depictions of the girl throughout the novel; here, images of Annabel and Lolita overlap, and the ethereal figure of the past-girl sheds clothes that hide the body of the present nymphet:

It was the same child – the same frail, honey-hued shoulders, the same silky supple bare back, the same chestnut head of hair. A polka-dotted handkerchief tied around her chest hid from my aging ape eyes, but not from the gaze of young memory, the juvenile breasts I had fondled one immortal day. [...] I saw again her lovely indrawn abdomen where my southbound mouth had briefly paused; and those puerile hips on which I had kissed the crenellated imprint left by the band of her shorts – that last mad immortal day behind the Roches Roses (39)

These details that the camera sweeps over, especially the ones in the first half, are not mere points where memory and direct experience are stitched together – they are

running motifs in the book, and their presence is more than superficially relevant. It is not a mere coincidence that despite the narrator's expert use of the English language and of original imagery, Lolita is recurrently rendered through various combinations of the same basic visual and linguistic items. The girl's 'downy limbs', her shoulder blades, her long toes, all these crop up over and over again without losing their evocative power. This seems paradoxical, but it makes a great deal of sense if we consider that Lolita's whole identity only relies on these shards of a broken body, because pieces is all that Humbert Humbert's camera can capture.

To wit, if we zoom in on the camera itself, instead of what the camera captures, we are left with that sad, Bergsonian piece of wisdom about the impossibility of properly conceiving time as the fluid experience that it is. In between two seconds in real life, there is an infinity of motions and images; in between two seconds on a film reel, there are about thirty pictures. If you slow down the reel the movie is exposed as the sneaky little strip of individual images with nothing to tie them together. This is in fact what happens in the (in)famous tennis scene: Humbert complains about not immortalizing Lolita's movements and gestures on 'segments of celluloid'(230), and goes on to describe them in passionate detail; what is striking about his use of metaphors is that her movements are likened to pearls and gems, and are treated almost as heavy objects falling at the feet of the opponent. In fact, Humbert would like this scene in movie-format precisely because he becomes aware of the impossibility of rendering these motions, so typical of Lolita's charm and essence, and he would welcome at least the impression of reality given by the silver screen.

Critic Marie Bouchet addresses the devices through which Humbert manages to circumscribe the problem of fluid reality: metonymy, surgeon-like precision with details and 'markings on the body'(110), intelligent devices that make the reader summon up the character without realizing how little of it is given to him. The frustrated desire (Nabokov's as much as Humbert Humbert's) behind these techniques is that of mastering the whole of

the object while being fully aware of its immensity and unreadability. This is very neatly explained by Peter Brooks as "a desire that the body [Lolita's whole being] not be lost to meaning—that it be brought into the realm of the semiotic and the significant—and, underneath this, a desire for the body itself, an erotic longing to have or to be the body". (qtd. in Bouchet 110, paranthesis mine)

Thus, we have arrived at the crux of the matter: the nature of Humbert's sexual and artistic yearning is revealed in his failure to give us all of Lolita, which would mean grasping all of Lolita. As it is, he is working with bits and scraps, pieces of nymphet body that he must fit into the text in various ways. And since he is a clever little Humbert and his craft is subtle enough for the task, his text manages to become visually indicative of the attempt to cram a live human being into isolated signs and static pictures: 'Parentheses repeatedly whisk the reader forward to Humbert's imprisoned state, and the bracket marks themselves serve as claustrophobic, typographical prisons of punctuation.'(White 52); "the crenulated imprint" on Annabel's hip is not only a sensual detail, but also a textual one. As the word "imprint" indicates, it is a sign that relates her body to a page on which a text is printed'(Bouchet 109). It appears that the blood and marrow sticking to Humbert's manuscript at the moment of completion is the blood and marrow of two mangled bodies, the lover and the nymphet, which have been first dismantled and then introduced into the text at all levels, graphically, phonetically (in the musicality of the text) and conceptually, two synthetic synesthetic figures.

Like a symbolist poet, Humbert tries to create a living, breathing testimony of his experience, of his dealings with a subject that remains mostly a blank space, a sort of void transcendental like that of Rimbaud or Mallarme. His final perception of Lolita is most revealing:

What I used to pamper among the tangled vines of my heart , *mon grand peche radieux*, had dwindled to its essence[...]. I insist the world know how much I loved my Lolita, *this* Lolita, pale and polluted and big with another

man's child, but still grey-eyed, still sooty-lashed, still auburn and almond, still Carmencita, still mine. (276)

Yet what Humbert fails to understand is that this *essence* merely consists in the evocative power of Lolita's features, in his own reaction to Lolita, and not at all in the surfacing of *her* essence. The final excerpt that we will quote is a truthful account of her inscrutability, and we must acknowledge that whatever the secret of her fascinating personality is, it remains a secret to the very end of the novel:

Her complexion was now that of any vulgar untidy highschool girl who applies shared cosmetics with grubby fingers to an unwashed face [...]. Its smooth tender bloom had been so lovely in former days, so bright with tears, when I used to roll, in play, her tousled head on my knee. A coarse flush had now replaced the innocent fluorescence. (...) How mad I was! Everything about her was of the same exasperating impenetrable order – the strength of her shapely legs, the dirty sole of her white sock, the thick sweater she wore despite the closeness of the room, her wenchy smell, and especially the dead end of her face with its strange flush and freshly made up lips. (202)

To conclude, our essay has meant to provide insight into the various techniques that Humbert uses to break the orderly inscrutability of the object of his study and of his passion, Dolores Haze. We have treated him as an alchemist struggling to separate pure gold from the debris of subjective impression, or a photographer endeavouring to segment the unsegmentable. We feel we have demonstrated that *Lolita* is a story of unreadability and failure to interpret, like the incipiently postmodern *oeuvre* it is considered to be.

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Not your average love triangle

– Humbert – Lolita – Quilty –

by Loredana Vlaicu

In this essay I will discuss and compare the two 'Lolita' films, focusing on the most relevant scenes and details which are used in reinterpreting Nabokov's book. I will allot a great deal of space to Quilty's character while dealing with the different Lolitas, Humberts and Quilties, and try to determine what intentions each director had in mind. I have found significant information about this by consulting two sources, Jerold J. Abrams' "The Philosophy of Stanley Kubrick" and in a review to Lyne's version written by Matt Prigge, which is not so much the opinion of a specialist as is relevant to the topic under discussion.

Like most (if not all) movies transposing books, these two pictures have left out a large number of instances, scenes and story elements because of the limited amount of time movies have at their disposal. Therefore, the parts that ended up being used render significant meaning in making sense of what the script writer intended; especially considering Kubrick's version, given that Nabokov himself contributed to the script, indicating his personal perspective towards the story:

Film adaptations can also add events – for example, in the form of Peter Seller's (Quilty) inspired improvisations in the Kubrick 'Lolita'. These additions can have any number of motivations: to take advantage of a brilliant actor, to suggest contemporary relevance, or to "correct" the novel for aesthetic reasons. (Stam 72)

The main difference between the two movies, besides being filmed in different countries (the 1962 one in England and the 1997 in the U.S – thus having more scenes filmed outdoor, giving an accurate portrayal of the landscape presented in the book), consists

of the way in which sexuality is being dealt with. Lyne's version breaks loose from the restrictions of the various censorship codes imposed on film in previous eras, while Kubrick focuses more on Humbert's obsession, being careful not to go overboard with it, and on Quilty's interventions throughout the movie.

[...] the first time being filmed in 1962, by Stanley Kubrick, who couldn't possibly have brought the novel to the screen with as much faithfulness as Lyne has been able to do, but did the next best thing: he economized for everything and came up with a droll black comedy about obsession in general. In that film, he used the traps of society as benefits. The studio demanded the final scene, that of a heinous murder, come first in the film so to portray Humbert first as a murderer and second as a pedophile...and when you see it, it gives the film depth of a man trapped by obsession. The censors wouldn't allow anymore than a couple glances and subtle dialogue to show the relationship between Humbert and Lolita, so Kubrick decided to play it as comedy, but still allow the tragedy to seep through. (Matt Prigge)

The 1962 Humbert is somewhat older than I had pictured him by reading the book, but his performance is not less exquisite than Jeremy Irons', both of them enacting a perfectly troubled, paranoid and psychotic character in his relation with Lolita. And the nymphet herself is quite grown up, in both movies, mainly because people would still find the idea of a relationship between a minor and an adult shocking. In Kubrick's movie especially, the fact that Humbert almost looks more like the grandfather figure in her life than that of the adult lover originally implied, and that Lolita is not exactly pubescent, is a subtle step to shift perspective, making the audience pay more attention to the conflict between Humbert and Quilty than the actual relationship between him and Lolita.

Lyne is more devoted to the text, to some extent, following the original sequence of events, narrating the Annabel episode so as to stress the idea that the character was traumatized and couldn't grow out of it, but he also alters some parts of the story so as to give it a somewhat different significance in the end. The movie begins by showing Humbert driving chaotically, after he had killed Cale Quilty, and the detail I want to underline is him holding Lolita's hairpin, which he took when she was sent to camp; just like he had kept hold of Annabel's panties string she had given him at the beach, which he used as a bookmark. This detail is relevant for depicting his unhealthy obsession and for showing the connection between the two nymphets that Humbert bore in mind. The change in meaning Lyne manages is directed to Humbert's remorse towards the end of the movie, when he apologizes to Lolita, making it seem like the story has a moral, but this is also subtly encouraged throughout the movie by employing different elements. For example, when they spend the night at the Enchanted Hunters there is a religious convention taking place and while Humbert passes by a group of priests, the following lines can be heard: 'The Lord knows all, the Lord sees all, the Lord forgives all'; this may imply a future redemption or just a warning to be taken into account, because nothing had happened until then. In relation to this, Humbert's death in prison, awaiting trial, is followed by Lolita dying in childbirth, which could imply that they were punished by divine powers, both of them being considered guilty.

Moving on to Kubrick's version, we find significant differences, especially in what concerns Quilty, switching the tone there for a bit and making him a key figure in the story.

"The narrative sequencing can also be rearranged, with clear ideological overtones. The circular structure of the Kubrick Lolita clearly draws attention away from Humbert Humbert's nympholepsy and toward the murderous rivalry between Humbert and Quilty in ways that lead one to suspect that this was a sop to the censors." (Stam 73)

The '62 version begins with the murder scene, and Quilty appears quite often throughout the movie, even if just mentioned (by Charlotte), in a picture (in Lolita's room), at the dance, or 'in disguise' to mess with Humbert. By introducing him like this, the viewer pays more attention to him, knowing he has an important part in the development of the story. As Jerold J. Abrams puts it, Clare Quilty, as in 'clear guilty' is Humbert's double ("As doubles, Humbert and Quilty are very much alike: both are literary men, both have pedophilic interests, both have loved Lolita, both are detectives[...]); he also makes associations between the two characters and Poe's Dupin, suggesting that "the two sides of Dupin's mind become two actual persons, Humbert and Quilty, both of whom are detectives as well as criminals—and both of whom are quite mad." He goes on saying that while Quilty's madness is creative and sophisticated, Humbert is dull in his ongoing obsession, unable to see through Quilty's mind games.

Quilty is presented as a genius, as Lolita points it out to Humbert in the ending:

"[...] He wasn't like you and me. He wasn't a normal person. He was a genius. . . . You know that hotel that we stopped at on the way back from camp. Well, it was just by accident that he was staying there. But it didn't take him long to figure out what was going on between us. And from that moment on, he was up to every brilliant trick he could think of.

Humbert: And he did all these brilliant tricks for the sheer fun of tormenting me?"

He uses Humbert as a mere puppet in one of his plays, toying with his head to observe his reactions, fears, the way he handles different situations and also in order to make him follow his 'directions'; he pretends to be a cop, then a psychiatrist (Kubrick changes the original text, where Humbert was confronted by the school's principal, who if I remember correctly was supposed to be a woman), and taunts him constantly by being one step ahead of him. In

Lyne's movie, Quilty is presented as a seemingly godlike figure, his face is not revealed, surrounding him with an aura of mystery and magic fascination. The murder scene takes place in the ending, for dramatic purposes, unveiling him as a character and throwing him off his pedestal.

"[...] Clare Quilty (Langella – 1997 movie) takes a totally different direction than the one Peter Sellers took in the original. Quilty was a comic character in the original: a threat in the form of many forms, popping in states of rambling, German, proning, and eventually drunk. Langella takes the other route, allowing all of the creepiness to be unearthed, and the result is a character who exists in shadows and low shots, and who meets a wonderfully ironic ending, the exact opposite of what we thought of him." (Matt Prigge)

In the 1997 version, he only talks to Humbert at the Enchanted Hunters, their dialogue being spiced up with derisive wordplay (Q: Where did you get her?/ H: What?/ Q: I said the weather's getting better; H: She's my daughter/ Q: You lie, she's not/ H: Sorry?/ Q: I said July is hot.)

The murder scene is filled with symbols and interpretations, both Quilties put on a show, proving their artistic value which must prevail even in such fatal circumstances. The '62 Quilty enters the scene as a Roman character, wearing the sheets as a toga, like in a theatrical tragedy, as if to announce from beforehand that murder is to take place and making clear innuendoes to it ('Hope I don't get overcome with power'). Besides, the environment in which the murder takes place adds up to that, showing the decadent flamboyant lifestyle Quilty has, alluding to his moral decadency as well.

The murder scene in Lyne's movie I think is rather more complex and each detail speaks for itself, promoting a pseudo-biblical interpretation, the many parts Quilty plays in front of Humbert, his composure throughout the movie and the way he breaks in the final scene. The scene where Quilty 'begs' for his life,

creeping forward like a snake, trying to tempt Humbert into joining him, revealing all his vices and tricks so to say, he shares 'his perversions' managing to disgust even Humbert. Quilty is abominable compared to Humbert, and Humbert is appalled by him, but mostly because he knows Lolita preferred Quilty instead of him, thus for her he was the truly disgusting one.

In what concerns Lolita, I think the modern version of her brings a more accurate description of what the character was supposed to be like, and even though in Kubrick's movie she was in on the game much earlier, I think, and knew Quilty from beforehand, admitting she loved him since she first met him, Lyne's Lolita proves more manipulative towards Humbert, perhaps because of all the implied sex scenes which the first film lacked.

Both directors make use of various techniques to supply an accurate interpretation of the original text, either because they introduce new elements to enrich the initial meaning, or exclude some parts to focus on a certain element. In this matter I have discussed significant details present in the movies, the Humbert – Quilty relationship status, Quilty's importance and the murder scene.

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Literature

Dark Alice or Light Lolita: The Palimpsestic Nature of *Lolita*

by Maria Zirra

What I intend to do in this very short essay is to prove that there are common places to be discovered between *Lolita* and the Alice books. I shall try to present *Lolita* as a darker version of the Alice story, but also, relying on Martin Gardner's notes in the *Annotated Alice*, I will attempt to prove that there was more than meets the eye to the relationship parallel between Carroll and Humbert Humbert. In a previous paper I discussed three layers of meaning present in *Alice in Wonderland*, a public one, where the parody and the nursery rhyme part of the story lies, thus catering to adult and young public alike, a middle part that makes Alice "an inside joke" in Rev. Dodgson's circle of friends and a third layer in which the author is seen struggling with his own existential quandaries. This structure has been likened to the of the infamous Velazquez painting *Las Meniñas* and the gradual visual awareness in the three distinguishable layers of the painting can function just like my three proposed layers of the book in question. My thesis of course, is not that *Lolita* can be simplified to that three-leveled reading, rather that the story will prove, to a close-reader, to share a lot of common images and premises as well as several narrative strategies with *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*.

Nabokov happened to be the one of the translators of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* in Russian and he deems his work as "not the first one, but certainly the best." In my experience as a translator it always happens to some extent or other that bits of the books translated seep into my consciousness and I find myself reciting short paragraphs from time to time or being reminded of certain plotlines or characters vividly and out of the blue. Therefore it is not so hard to speculate that Nabokov was suffering from this affliction. I shall now quote a note by Nabokov on the affinities between *Lolita* and Alice in *The*

Annotated Lolita as pointed out by Elizabeth Prioleau: "I always call him Lewis Carroll Carroll because he was the first Humbert Humbert" (Prioleau, 428). Unfortunately I could not actually gain access to Alfred Appel's *The Annotated Lolita* where I understand a lot of notes explain Nabokov's intense connection with Alice, so I choose to improvise and find my own common places. Without this very note, however, we could still detect, as readers of both books are wont to, great kinship between the two characters as well as the strategies employed by Humbert Humbert in presenting *Lolita* clearly proved that he was no stranger to the politics of nonsense. Aside from all the obvious references to Wonderland: "A breeze from wonderland had begun to affect my thoughts," (131) "the wonderland of her hair" which are clearly clues/traps that Nabokov lays bare for his readers, there's a quality of darker and more twisted nonsense than that of Carroll's to *Lolita*, albeit the nonsense strategies spring from the same source. Thus *Lolita* becomes a Darker Alice or Alice was, from the very beginning, a concept of Lighter *Lolita*, which is a view that Phyllis Greenacre particularly endorses in her Freudian reading of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*.

Moreover, in Michael Holquist's essay on the modernism of Lewis Carroll's *Hunting of the Snark* and his style of nonsense as an inspiration to such modernist writers as Joyce, Robe-Grillet and even Kafka, let alone postmodernist ones such as Nabokov, he postulates that nonsense is building a whole new universe of morality and existence in parallel with the real one where words are defamiliarized and logic is still very much present. This would come to explain the difference between nonsense and gibberish. It is by no accident that when Alice arrives in Wonderland she cannot get right any of the poems and songs learnt in school and from popular books, and all the characters she encounters will give various nonsense versions of popular poems. Also Humbert Humbert's songs and poems for *Lolita* are by no means gibberish, they are usually very intelligent parodies of various poems and songs of the time working in the same roundabout jocular

manner while never actually straying for the text.

Carroll uses the common place of parody with Alice as a means to establish a personal language, he uses the pastiches and embedded memories such as that at the Caucus Race (see Gardner 28-29 on an explanation on the characters of the Caucus Race where the Lory is Lorina Lidell, Rev. Duckworth is the Duck, Edith Lidell is the Eaglet and Dodgson is the Dodo) and the Mad Tea Party (Gardner 72) this way as well as the various songs such as "How doth the little crocodile" (Gardner 23) and "You are Old Father William" (Gardner 51-54). Of course, in the case of Humbert all his luring nonsense techniques have no enchanting effect on Lolita, so communication fails, which is where Lolita and Alice part ways. Humbert wants to summon a live-Lolita (and from the very beginning of the book we find out that Dolly Schiller has died in childbirth), "A greater endeavor lures me on: to fix once for all the perilous magic of nymphets." Much like Lewis Carroll who jokingly remarks in one of his letters to his child friend: "Some children have a most disagreeable way of getting grownup. I hope you won't do anything of that sort before we meet again." Therefore Humbert and Carroll both want to have their nymphets frozen in time, transcending eternity.

Although the slick Humbert Humbert claims to aim towards educating Lolita, he only uses his educated wisdom and snide remarks to mock her and lure her to something she cannot comprehend. Carroll tries to lure Alice to a world she cannot comprehend, but does so in order for her to discover the various miracles and stumble upon the revelations hidden in the grass much like Easter eggs only for her pleasure. In my previous paper I discuss Alice's role as an oracle for Carroll, the pure voice of prophecy, guiding Carroll through the interpretation and windmill bout with personal dilemmas, thus Alice, like Lolita plays a double role. Humbert's darling daughter, however, plays the role of the oracle only to the point where oracles were captive young maidens, blinded at the age of 4 and initiated by older men. This initiation presupposed the oracle's development of a third eye, the three-

dimensional eye where the future presented in a compressed and mystical manner. Alice does receive the gift of prophecy from Carroll, but Lolita is merely blinded and restrained. The pretext of education in Lolita is exposed as that fraud that it is and for that there is not better illustration than that of Professor Chem and the association that his name prompts.

Parodic couplets and songs appear just as visibly in Lolita, they progress from the obviously Carrollian songs of Little Carmen, his poetic roll-call of Lolita's classmates and his musings upon their names (Lolita 51-52), his most famous:

The Squirrel and his Squirrel, the Rabs
and their Rabbits

Have certain obscure and peculiar
habits.

Male hummingbirds make the most
exquisite rockets.

The snake when he walks holds his
hands in his pockets... (255)

The various plays upon names that Humbert comes up with: Humbert the Hummer (57), Humbert the Hound (60), Humbert the Humble (55), Humbert the Terrible, Humbert the Wounded Spider (54), Humbert the Cubus (71) who, like certain mysterious characters in the Alice books have the same function prompting Alice to ask questions (The Catterpillar), entrancing her (The Cheshire Cat), ensnaring her (The Red Knight), trying to control her (Humpty Dumpty), asking for salvation (The White Knight) etc. Humbert's avatars, excepting the tyrannical ones, work according to the same principles as Carroll's, which prompt Alice to explore. They attract Lolita and make her want to join the seduction games or just plain games for the nymphet while keeping a distance. Humbert Humbert's story gets dark after his second meeting with Aubrey McFate, that is Charlotte's fatal accident.

Gardner notes at some point in *Alice in Wonderland*:

Gloves are the topic of one of Carroll's
most amusing letters, written to Isa

Bowman's sister Maggie. Carroll pretended to that when Maggie spoke of sending him "sacks full of love and baskets full of kisses, she actually meant to write "a sack full of gloves and a basket full of kittens!"

A sack full of 1000 gloves arrived, he goes on, and a basket full of 250 kittens. He was thus able to put four gloves on each kitten to prevent their paws from scratching the schoolgirls to whom he gave the kittens:

So, the little girls went dancing home again, and the next morning they came dancing back to school. The scratches were all healed, and they told me: "The kittens have been good!" And when any kitten wants to catch a mouse, it just takes off one of its gloves and if it wants to catch two mice, it takes off two gloves, and if it wants to catch three mice [...] . But the moment they've caught the mice, they pop their gloves on again because they know that we can't love them without their gloves. For you see, "gloves" have got "love" *inside* them – there's none outside. (Gardner 41-2)

which immediately made me want to quote the conclusion to the "davenport incident" (my inverted commas):

I felt proud of myself. I had stolen the honey of a spasm without impairing the morals of a minor. Absolutely no harm done. The conjurer had poured milk, molasses, foaming champagne into a young lady's new white purse; and lo, the purse was intact. Thus had I delicately constructed my ignoble, ardent, sinful dream; and still Lolita was safe and I was safe. What I had madly possessed was not she, but my own creation, another, fanciful Lolita perhaps, more real than Lolita; overlapping,

encasing her; floating between me and her, and having no will, no consciousness indeed, no life of her own (Lolita, 62)

Not to mention Humbert's own spoonerism: "What's Katter with misses?" (122) which goes hand in hand with the glove love-letter.

As long as the gloves are still on, there can be love, but when Humbert takes his gloves off, that is he actually, tangibly rapes/seduces Lolita, the nonsense meant to make Alice laugh and wonder turns into some sort of solipsistic prison as many critics have put it. But, as Amy Hungerford explains in her final lecture on Lolita in the online version of the Yale Open Courses, the more violent and twisted Humbert Humbert gets, the harder we laugh, the nonsense turns from tones of high sarcasm and manic moods:

"Come and kiss your old man," I would say, "and drop that moody nonsense. In former times, when I was still your dream male [the reader will notice what pains I took to speak Lo's tongue], you swooned to records of the number one throb-and-sob idol of your coevals [Lo: "Of my what? Speak English"]. That idol of your pals sounded, you thought, like friend Humbert. But now, I am just your old man, a dream dad protecting his dream daughter.

"My chere Dolores! I want to protect you, dear, from all the horrors that happen to little girls in coal sheds and alley ways, and alas, comme vous le savez trop bien, ma gentille, in the blueberry woods during the bluest of summers. Through thick and thin I will still stay your guardian, and if you are good, I hope a court may legalize that guardianship before long. Let us, however, forget, Dolores Haze, so-called legal terminology, terminology that accepts as rational the term 'lewd and lascivious cohabitation.' I am not a criminal sexual psychopath taking indecent liberties with a child. (149-50)

or

The rapist was Charlie Holmes; I am the therapist, a matter of nice spacing in the way of distinction.

I am your daddum, Lo. Look, I've a learned book here about young girls. Look, darling, what it says. I quote: the normal girl - normal, mark you - the normal girl is usually extremely anxious to please her father. She feels in him the forerunner of the desired elusive male ('elusive' is good, by Polonius!). The wise mother (and your poor mother would have been wise, had she lived) will encourage a companionship between father and daughter, realizing excuse the corny style that the girl forms her ideals of romance and of men from her association with her. (150)

to lingering songs of desperation Wanted, wanted Dolores Haze (Dolorous Haze, literally Wanted, wanted painful confusion)(255-56), to Kafkaesque trials and prisons as well as highly poetic and painful confessions (299-298).

The horrid and lurid games and Humbert's painful realisation that he can never penetrate Lolita's innermost part, that he has raped her and she is a locked book to him is what eventually makes him a prisoner to his Looking Glass world (cf. Prioleau 5). As Prioleau also points out, "And that the White Knight continues falling on his head, is perhaps emblematic of Humbert the narrator's end in Lolita" (436). He tries to transcend time and fix the nymphets into eternal "*aesthetic bliss*" (Nabokov in *On a Book Entitled Lolita*, the afterword to his first French edition of *Lolita*). What Prioleau states is that Humbert tries to attack the "mirrored surface of reality;" she also makes a lengthy argument as to the importance of mirrors throughout the book and their opposition to windows, which appear to be Nabokov's solution to transcending the vicious circle of time and turning it into a spiral. From Our Glass Lake/Hourglass Lake to the motel mirrors of the first rape, to the mirrors in Quilty's house and finally Humbert's remark when Lolita

denies her affair with Quilty to the various instances of twins and doubles, be them Humbert's doubles: Gaston Godin, his own aliases, Quilty, Quilty's playful and harmful aliases, Humbertson, Mr. Taxovich, Uncle Gustav etc or the several pairs of twins in Lolita's class, the twins taking care of Miss Opposite, and most importantly the image "we paid ten for twins[...]in crowning insult, the pictures above the twin beds were identical twins". The twins (Tweedledee and Tweedledum) and mirrors are very much analogous as important images in *Through the Looking Glass* where chess, also used as a symbol of two sides of the story turned topsy turvy is also employed to make Alice perceive the two sides of world.

Last but not least, another common place that I feel to be quite obvious is the parallel between the Duchess and her relationship to love and the relationship between Charlotte Haze and Lolita as seen by Humbert. Charlotte's obvious ill-equippedness to be a mother and her neglect of Lolita as well as her passion for women's magazines and popular culture wisdom, reminds me of the Duchess' preposterous ideas of finding a "common knowledge" moral to whatever Alice says in the *The Mock Turtle's Story* chapter:

"Tut, tut, child!" said the Duchess. "Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it." And she squeezed herself up closer to Alice's side as she spoke.[...]

"I dare say you're wondering why I don't put my arm round your waist," the Duchess said after a pause: "the reason is, that I'm doubtful about the temper of your flamingo. Shall I try the experiment?"

"He might bite," Alice cautiously replied, not feeling at all anxious to have the experiment tried.

"Very true," said the Duchess: "flamingoes and mustard both bite. And the moral of that is--"Birds of a feather flock together."

`Only mustard isn't a bird,' Alice remarked.

`Right, as usual,' said the Duchess: `what a clear way you have of putting things!'

`It's a mineral, I think,' said Alice.

`Of course it is,' said the Duchess, who seemed ready to agree to everything that Alice said; `there's a large mustard-mine near here. And the moral of that is--"The more there is of mine, the less there is of yours." (Gardner 95-6)

Carroll, much like Humbert's entry style in his journal showed quite a lot of contempt towards his mother-figure characters in the Alice books, mostly representing them as unfit and abusive. Humbert treats Charlotte Haze in his diary with nothing but contemptuous and exaggerated hatred and is so very convincing, that one can hardly help but notice the likeness of the Duchess and the Queen of Hearts and Humbert's mother-figures in the novel such as the "authoritative" Mrs. Pratt, Charlotte, Annabel's mother etc.

All these being said, I believe there's "Atlantic seepage" (as Seamus Heaney might put it) in between Carroll's and Nabokov's characters which proves to be of much importance to the tenderness and highly insightful and poetical side of *Lolita* as opposed to the usual prudish response of ignoring the aesthetic bliss it might bring you and regarding the acts of violence in this book without the extremely fine-woven and gauzy fabric of its poetical and nonsensical side.

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Implications of the Confessional Mode in *Lolita*

by Roxana Mustață

Whenever we hear the word *pedophile*, the first image that usually comes to our mind is that of a cruel and deranged person – a monster. However, how many of us would be curious about what goes on in that person's mind? Probably very many. Vladimir Nabokov was almost certainly aware of this fact when he decided to write his novel *Lolita* in the form of a confession.

The main character, Humbert Humbert, tells the story of his life before and after meeting Dolores Haze (*Lolita*), his 12-year-old lover, in his prison cell. He is writing a journal within a journal: in part, he is retelling events that he had written in a journal that no longer exists. At the time of his writing the story, several years have already past since his last encounter with *Lolita*. He is now able to write from a more detached point of view, and furthermore, to present the events artistically. Humbert is very much aware of this: "You can always count on a murderer for a fancy prose style" (Nabokov 6), he writes. He reflects on his writing style and he even analyzes it for the reader: "It will be marked that I substitute time terms for spatial ones." (Nabokov 15) Humbert knows that it is almost impossible to retell those events with great precision, and he takes advantage of this by attempting to distract the reader with his style of writing.

Humbert refers to his work as "exhibit number one" (Nabokov 5) – he is not just the narrator, but he is also his own lawyer, witness and judge. Throughout the book, he reanalyzes his memories and tries to find a way to make the reader understand him, at least logically, if not emotionally. More precisely, what Humbert wants is not only to make the reader sympathize with him, but he also doesn't want the reader to sympathize with his young lover, *Lolita*. He portrays her as a superficial girl who doesn't have the slightest interest in art, especially his field of expertise, literature. He also insists on the fact that he had not been her first sexual partner. In short, his goal is to

portray *Lolita* in a bad light – he probably imagines the fact that the reader has put *Lolita* on a pedestal, that of the innocent child, and he wants to destroy that image, in order to make himself appear as less of a monster. As Azar Nafisi points out, "Humbert appears to us both as narrator and seducer – not just of *Lolita* but also of us, his readers, whom throughout the book he addresses as "ladies and gentlemen of the jury"." (28) Consequently, the reader only sees fragments of *Lolita*'s personality. There is more to *Lolita* than meets the eye, especially Humbert's eye. At one point he acknowledges the fact that he had never really tried to discover her as a person. Therefore, it can be said that he knows just as little about her as the reader, maybe even less. Azar Nafisi also explains that Humbert has not only taken over *Lolita*'s life, but also the story of her life – her past. (Nafisi 28)

Throughout the narration, he apparently tries to create a relationship between the reader and himself. Humbert tries to portray himself in a detached way, often talking about himself in the third person: "Humbert Humbert tried hard to be good. Really and truly, he did" (Nabokov 18) and resorting to self-irony by giving himself descriptive titles, some of which give the impression of mock-royalty: Humbert the Terrible, the Small, the Hoarse, the Wounded Spider, the Humble, the Hummer, the Hound, the Cubus. This is also an instance of the narrator's indulging in word play, particularly alliteration. Another way in which he tries to form a connection with the reader is by simply addressing him directly: "Imagine me, reader" (315), or by picturing him and anticipating his reactions: "I have to go into those details (which in themselves can interest only a professional psychologist) because otherwise the reader (ah, if I could visualize him as a blond-bearded scholar with rosy lips sucking *la pomme de sa canne* as he quaffs my manuscript!) might not understand the quality of the shock I experienced upon noticing that the P had acquired the bustle of a B and that the 6 had been deleted altogether." (287)

Humbert's writing has several purposes. Firstly, he needs this document for the trial he is awaiting. Secondly, as Kevin Ohi points out, his writing is a way for him to "recover the past"

(10) – it could be further implied that he derives both pleasure and pain from the act of writing and remembering. Kevin Ohi explains that “Humbert uncovers a lavish excess in confession, its unsettling decadence or aestheticism; he suggests that one may confess not for truth, redemption, remorse, restitution, or retribution, but simply for its own sake. More troublingly, he suggests that any narrative of truth, redemption, remorse, restitution, or retribution might be – at best – a merely fortuitous outcome of, or – at worst – a self-serving rationale for, the guilty pleasure of confession for its own sake.” (Ohi 159) Therefore, if Humbert sees his writing as a piece of evidence for the trial, a confession and a work of art all at the same time, it could also be said that it is not (only) the reader Humbert is trying to impress, but (also) himself.

However, sometimes it appears almost as though he was urging the reader to psychoanalyze him. He proudly remembers the way he used to trick his former psychoanalysts, but he also does the same himself: for example, he adds to the story a poem he had written about Lolita, and he imagines what a psychoanalyst would deduce from it. Humbert’s confession is a desperate cry for understanding. He lets the reader know his darkest secrets, and he also discloses his tendency to justify himself by means of rationalization: for instance, he repeatedly points out the fact that in some cultures girls even younger than Lolita often get married. Kevin Ohi also points out the fact that the reader might expect Humbert to use the confessional form in order to overcome his guilt, an expectation which actually is not met. (160) Humbert does indeed regret his deeds to an extent (for example when he sees children playing and realizes he has robbed Lolita of her childhood), but his style of confession is not what one would normally expect from such a person and in such a situation. Therefore it could be argued that Humbert is addressing both himself and a potential reader.

Tony Moore describes him as “narrator and narrated” (94), and he notices three aspects of the character: “(1) the character who has the solipsistic experiences with Lolita; (2) the teller who has distanced himself from, and

changed his attitude to, these experiences before he starts his tale, but withholds an overt statement on this development until the fifty-sixth day of his creative enterprise; and (3) the artist who moves even further outside his solipsism as he writes and reads his memoir.” (92)

To sum up, Humbert Humbert’s act of confession can be explained in different ways: as an artistic expression that doubles as an attempt to manipulate the reader into siding with him over Lolita, a cry for understanding, which derives from his need to be psychoanalyzed, and also a way of obtaining gratification by reliving his time with Lolita.

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Humbert Befallen: Seeing Through the Affable Monster

by Alexandru Florin Popa

... with devotion's visage

And pious action we do sugar o'er

The devil himself.

(Hamlet 3.1.47-9)

It could have been a horror story, it could have been a cheap pornographic tale destined to circulate as a borrowed copy among sexually tense men, or it could even have risen to the rank of aesthetically appealing smut, a category so clearly exemplified by the works of the Marquis de Sade. What is most surprising about reading *Lolita*, given its reputation as a piece of filthy fiction, is just the utter lack of cheap, sensationalistic stimulation that one gets. Instead of a sexual tale of villains and victims we get a complex multilayered chronicle of sexual desire, thwarted expectations and continually surprising characters. As many other postmodern texts *Lolita* is not what it pretends to be, it continually baffles the reader, forcing him to readjust his view in order to catch the substance behind the seemingly descriptive text.

Nabokov achieves this by providing a singular voice that he continually undercuts. Throughout the course of the novel the reader is permanently aware of Humbert's status as an unreliable narrator. In the course of this paper I will be looking at the strategies employed by the narrator and protagonist of *Lolita* to win over the reader to his side and the way in which the true force behind the story, Nabokov, undermines him.

When writing this novel Nabokov was not concerned with how it would affect the reader's sensibilities because he "always believed that fiction was neither moral, social, nor psychological but a sensuous exercise in style [that] leads to as state of 'aesthetic bliss'." (Bercovitch 206) In this sense we can say that some of the author spills into his main character, but to see a complete concurrence

between the two based on such scant evidence would be in my opinion a grave critical mistake.

Humbert is an accomplished wordsmith who seeks to draw the reader to his side by first instilling doubt about the reader's moral certitudes. To an imagined revulsion to the tale he is about to present he gives an historical counterargument:

Rahab was a harlot at ten years of age. [...]. Here are some more pictures. Here is Virgil who could the nymph sing in a single tone, but probably preferred a lad's perineum. Here are two of King Akhnaten's and Queen Nefertiti's pre-nubile Nile daughters (that royal couple had a litter of six), wearing nothing but many necklaces of bright beads, relaxed on cushions, intact after three thousand years, with their soft brown puppybodies, cropped hair and long ebony eyes. Here are some brides of ten compelled to seat themselves on the fascinum, the virile ivory in the temples of classical scholarship. Marriage and cohabitation before the age of puberty are still not uncommon in certain East Indian provinces. Lepcha old men of eighty copulate with girls of eight, and nobody minds. After all, Dante fell madly in love with Beatrice when she was nine, a sparkling girleen, painted and lovely, and bejeweled, in a crimson frock, and this was in 1274, in Florence, at a private feast in the merry month of May. And when Petrarch fell madly in love with his Laureen, she was a fair-haired nymphet of twelve running in the wind, in the pollen and dust, a flower irif ight, in the beautiful plain as descried from the hills of Vaucluse. (Nabokov 12)

By giving pedophilia a high culture status and a historical setting, Humbert hopes to disarm the members of his imagined jury of their initial resistance, to win just enough rhetorical ground to be allowed to make his case. His trick, however, is a common one and his examples stand on shaky ground for anyone who is even superficially familiar with

the historical reality behind his examples. King Akhnaten was a tyrant who managed to cause the ire of his people and was deposed; a parallel between Dante and Petrarch's *donna angelicata* model and his lustful fantasies is risible at best. But this failure to impress, to fully take in the reader is exactly what keeps our interest going. Because we become aware of his status as a verbose trickster, we can enjoy Humbert from behind the veil of fiction. As Moore observes:

Humbert determines his own presence in three forms: (1) the character who has the solipsistic experiences with Lolita; (2) the teller who has distanced himself from, and changed his attitude to, these experiences before he starts his tale, but withholds an overt statement on this development until the fifty-sixth day of his creative enterprise; and (3) the artist who moves even further outside his solipsism as he writes and reads his memoir. (92)

Numerous hints are provided to the reader to indicate the farcical nature of the work. In this respect Bercovitch calls it "an antinovel" because he sees it as "a metafictional tissue of literary allusions [...] and parodic names (characters like Humbert Humbert, Harold Haze, and Miss Opposite, places like Lake Climax, Insomnia Lodge, or 'the township of Soda, pop. 1001')" (206-7) All these element undercut the reader's sense of a 'real world'.

As Tony Moore notes, Humbert "is imprisoned within his own masculine rhetoric. He cannot avoid the obvious and crucial disadvantage he shares with all first person narrators who aim to mislead others from the imagined security of their own delusions: he is both the narrator and the narrated." (94) He is constantly displaced by, and deceived within, his writing. This becomes obvious in his failure to control Lolita. For all his carefully laid plans he cannot contain the youthful energy that stems from her. Of course, this is not to say that she somehow comes out the victor in this story. In Humbert's tale there are no winners.

Lolita's problem is indeed the fact that her youthful desires are given free range; her childhood development is sidetracked by the lack of restrictions and parental guidance of her development. As Bercovitch notes "Lolita is not only immature but [...] the complete product of American popular culture, the teenage consumer for whom the ads were written, the movies were filmed, the candy bars confectioned, the roadside attractions promoted." (207)

But it is these very characteristics that keep her from falling under the complete control of Humbert. When Lo takes the bold initiative of pleasuring him one morning he surprises himself by his inability to integrate the moment is his mental catalogue of delights. "My life was handled by little Lo in an energetic matter of fact manner as if it were an insensate gadget unconnected with me" (Nabokov 89). She proves to be so far from his constructed image of her that he loses his bearings and is no longer capable of living out his fantasies.

In the course of this paper I have sought to look at some of the ways in which Humbert's voice is made effective mainly by the use of high rhetoric to confuse the reader's moral bearings, while at the same time making his story palpable by underscoring the author's non-allegiance to his character.

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Music

Ennio Morricone's Glimpse at Humbert Humbert

by Diana Mihai

Adrian Lyne's 1997 version of *Lolita* is carried on with the accompaniment of the Italian composer Ennio Morricone's orchestra. Working for both the American and the European movie industry, the word that could describe an aspect of the composer's career is versatility; the range of movies for which he contributed with his scores extends to various types, from Westerns to Horror movies and also from Action to Drama (cf. www.enniomorricone.com).

It is safe to say that the soundtrack in "*Lolita*" invariably corresponds to Humbert's state of mind from the very beginning. The movie sets off the moment the character, who suffered the loss of the nymphet called Lolita, lets his car slide aimlessly on a country road. All through the movie Morricone produces a wistful tone and in reference to this scene, it seems to work in favor of the character as one can even picture the viewer entertaining the thought of sympathizing with the downhearted Humbert. For a more down-to-earth assessment, it can be claimed that the composition adds up to the melodic features of Nabokov's prose. But it can also take sides with Humbert Humbert and it may succeed acting positively on the emotions of the viewer by communicating desolated feelings from the character's behalf. All it's due to the dramatic tone and to the moments reserved for Morricone's orchestra.

The songs echo down to all of Humbert Humbert's decline and as the movie proceeds they remain faithful to his sorrows and even amplify them here and there. Morricone musically indicates Humbert Humbert's stance towards the situation, amounting to his dreamlike mood. When he is on the road with

Lolita, the thoughts he nurtures is that he experiences paradise. But this is the moment when Humbert sees that the whole affair is practically doomed, he recognizes in it the "hopelessness of it all." The musical interpretation can be extended to yet another outlook, considering the aim that guides the soundtrack to be a preparation for the final effect. Taken from this angle, it is easy to see how the musical arrangements follow Humbert Humbert's evolution all the way up to the peak of his depression and it has the role of hinting at how he responded to the unfavorable resolution of his long-time obsession. At his outmost moral discouragement, after he encounters numerous dead-ends in tracking down Lolita, the score is consistent with his anguish and despair.

Morricone successfully wraps the movie in a sound of nostalgia which singles out Humbert's sentiments as important elements of the movie. The way I see it, Humbert Humbert may receive pity and he may be sympathized at the sound of the prolific composer's background music.

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Popular Culture

Lolita Reloaded in L.A. - Mid-life Crisis and the Teenager

Tempress in *Californication*

by Mihaela Mircia

Novelist. Writer's block. Crisis. Lolitified muse. These are the keywords that best describe Showtime's 2008-premiered production, *Californication*. The purpose of this article is not to review this 30-minute show as a wide net of gender roles and breathing stereotypes, although some can be traceable throughout the twelve episodes. Instead, the article will only focus on the relationship between Hank Moody, the New York writer rootlessly transplanted to Los Angeles, and Mia Lewis, the rock&roll nymph.

Hank "gave man birth to a tome" called *God Hates Us All* which was subsequently thrown into the Hollywood cookie cutter and on the other side there came a movie surprisingly called *A Crazy Little Thing Called Love*, starring celebrity *bad guy-Lolita* couple, Tom and Katie. All this turn of events threw the Gotham City novelist into a severe five year writer's block, culminating in a life of abuses (substances included). 'Benefiting' from the 'advantages' of a complete lack of commitment, a passion for spirits and knowledge of how to delve right into difficult and sensitive situations, Hank is a walking mid-life crisis scenario.

In *Californication*, like in many other popular TV shows, a crisis can only be dealt with through another crisis so Hank respectfully lets it in when it comes a-knockin'. In this case, the door is opened to 16 year old Mia Lewis, who, in a manner which makes us think of an Ancient Greek tragedy, is none other than Hank's ex-girlfriend's fiancée's daughter. A patricide waiting to happen, some might think. Well, no, not in Hell-A, where family drama and adolescent sexualization happily stroll hand in hand on the Sunset Strip.

So what about Mia? Mia is rich and spoiled, she is the daughter of a publishing mogul and she lives in an architectural wonderland. Mia is lost and scared, her mother died and her father is always away on business trips. Mia is an ill-adapted sociopath who looks like a catwalk model and is not afraid to flaunt her sexuality luring older men.

Mia is not Dolores Haze. Mia is Lolita.

Mia and Hank meet in the Pilot episode, when he is in a grimy bookstore, browsing through his black and red paperback *God Hates Us All*. After Hank sees leather-booted Mia reading from the tome and laughing, he mischievously decides to approach her, under the impression that "you were just calling me over." "No, I was totally ambivalent" (was that even the right word?) she says, toying with him. "What would I want to know a guy who is so in love with himself that he hangs out in bookstores reading his own work?" she asks and with these words Hank's flaw of character is revealed. The Humbert of the 2000s, Hank is an emigre himself or at least he feels so on the West Coast and this fact transpires in Mia's remark "someone's battling some low self-esteem. Poor baby." The displacement that the novelist feels is manifested through "traditional machismo combined with modern 'slackerism'" (Molin 27). The attraction that the young girl represents could be rooted in Hank's desire to fill the empty space left in his life after the falling apart of his family. This manner could be comparable to Nabokov's Humbert's "fantastic attempt to revive the past and incarnate an impossible vision of imperishable bliss" (Haegert 778). The flirtatious encounter leads to a one-night stand which will throw Moody's life into further chaos.

Starting with the pilot episode and all throughout the first season, Mia is contrasted with Hank and Karen's daughter, Becca, a goth-teen who more often than not shows more responsibility and maturity in thinking and acting than both of her parents combined. In the same night when Hank finds himself seduced by Mia, he goes on a rescue mission to get his 12 year old daughter from an all-you-can-drink party in the aftermath of which he finds out about Mia's age and her relation to

Karen. Mocking his attempt at protecting his own daughter from vice and temptations, Mia says "It's nice to see some good old-fashioned family values in this morally bankrupt city of ours".

Mia's relationship with her own father, Bill, is distant to the point of being nonexistent. She calls him by his name, even though he insists on being called "dad or daddy." Bill believes in the complete innocence of his daughter which is the direct consequences of his good parenting skills. "My daughter is 16 and she's an angel. Clearly I'm doing something right," he says in the second episode. The one time that Bill gets the chance to show some parental involvement, he delegates this responsibility to Hank who steps in as an inspirational speaker in a Creative Writing class at Mia's high school, Mayflower High. Bill's almost permanent absence from the tumultuous years of Mia's teen hood lead her to crave the company and attention of older men, whom she gets sexually involved with as a way to feel appreciated. This kind of bond is created between the teenager and Hank, who steps in as a surrogate father figure. It is Hank who jumps to Mia's rescue when she calls him begging for help from her pedophile teacher's house. It is still Hank who brings her home after an overdose of Valium vodka cocktail. It is again Hank who offers to make notes and suggestions on her creative writing homework. He doesn't do these things simply to wash his sins or to avoid manipulation. It is the masculine parental side of him which is the driving force behind his protective gestures. "Hank Moody, as I live and breathe, are you looking out for me?" Mia asks with surprise. "What wouldn't I? Besides from the fact that you're mad as a hatter, you're a good kid" Hank answers genuinely. What the two have in common is their rebellious attitude towards a rather strict set of 'values' and their incapacity to adapt and to blend in. Mia rebels in order to receive some type of unconditional love and attention from her father. Hank wants the same things from the mother of his child, all the while remaining "unwilling to adapt, thus still on the outside of the dominant ideology" (Molin 30). When he calls Mia "a smart little sociopath," Hank obviously does it with admiration and it

could be argued that this phrase could also be an accurate description of him. Hank constantly picks up fights, he smokes and drinks, he takes drugs, recklessly drives a wrecked and very dirty Porsche and steals dogs and paintings for a woman. He is incapable of finding meaning and his quick-witted deliveries do nothing but emphasize his deviant behavior. He begins the first blog entry which he is commissioned to write for Hell-A Magazine with the sentence "Hank hates you all". He comments upon the shallowness and superficiality of LA every chance he gets and feels he is forced to live there only because his (ex-)family lives there. "Hank is the ultimate cliché, a writer who has not written in years, lonesome and constantly intoxicated and unwilling to change and whom exclusively socializes with other shallow characters of the city" (Molin 32). Mia rebels by seducing and then blackmailing Hank. Her dysfunctional ways extend to the relationship she has with her literature high school teacher, who admits that teaching to a class of teenage girls is the best job he's ever had. She stops things from going further by taking an overdose of Valium, leaving the drunk and stoned teacher exclaiming "Do you think I wanted Silvia Plath to come here and get all *Bell Jar* on me?". With a mix of jealousy and remorse, Mia talks to Becca about how lucky she is to have a father such as Hank and about how much she misses her mother and feels the need for a real family.

Under the threat "what's the word again for that? Oh, yes, statutory rape", Mia presses Hank into helping her with her writing. She starts by breaking and entering into his house and scaring him (after which she mocks him "you scream just like a little girl") in search of "some piece of shit short story you never published around here somewhere" to turn in as a mandatory assignment for a creative writing class. Even though Hank refuses to give her any of his stories, Mia steals one from a drawer and flees out the window straight to school. As a further proof that he does not know his daughter at all, Bill, Mia's father, takes pride in this piece of writing which doesn't resemble his daughter's style or her character: "I am proud to report that my daughter has just penned one of the most impressive short

stories I have ever had the pleasure of reading". The second time Mia comes to Hank for a story, he advises her to write something herself, to which she responds "I can't. I'm lazy. I'll cry rape". This represents the shifting point in which Hank realizes that he is no longer in control over the girl, that she is now in the dominant position and he has to pay a high price for the reckless lifestyle that he is so stubborn to embrace, because "Hank set out as a conqueror, depending on his male advantage, however he found that the table had turned as he became the conquered" (Molin 36). When Hank finally succeeds in writing a novel of his own, after the death of his father, Mia steals it and passes it for her own to Charlie Runkle, an LA-based literary agent and Hank's best friend. As the novel, which Moody leaves unnamed but Mia calls "Fucking and Punching", is a recollection of their relationship, Mia feels entitled to call it her own as much as Hank's. In this case, the temptress who serves as a muse, inspiring the writer out of his creative block, is at first objectified and turned into a fictional character, only to subsequently take revenge on the creator of her fictional persona. She impersonates the writer, depriving him of acknowledgement and manages to play this game through the end, even though, ultimately, she is nothing but a fraud. Hank's use of his experience with Mia to draw inspiration for his creation resembles Humbert Humbert's crazed obsession with Lolita which "is less a matter of physical desire than of aesthetic compulsion, and less a matter of either than of metaphysical envy"(Haegert 779). Hank himself calls the novel "a modern-day answer to Lolita [in which] an older man unwillingly beds an underage girl, unravels his life completely". The main reason that Mia claims for stealing his novel and altering it to make it look like her own is purely practical: "What else is out there for me? College? Going to Europe? Working in an agency? In a network? A Studio? Boring. This has been fun". However, there is also an emotional logic to the act and that is punishment and redemption - "we all pay for our sins sooner or later, Hank" - she says, which could be interpreted as referring both to Hank and to herself but also to her father.

Watching the relationship between Hank and Mia unravel, the spectator is torn apart. The gaze is ambivalent, both to the feminine as to the masculine. Hank is deeply flawed and not ashamed to admit it and this makes him more human than anyone else in the show. He is both the victim of circumstances, mainly of living in LA, as it is "Hollywood's odd fantasy about itself that it is more hedonistic and corrupting than anywhere else in America" (John Leonard). But he is also the creator of his own distress because of his incapability to grow up and act responsibly. Women in the audience feel sorry for him, men envy him but sometimes find it hard to do so because "all throughout the Western world, a host of Hanks feel sorry for their boyish ways, their cheeky behaviors. They would grow up, really they would, if only the culture stopped encouraging them to imagine themselves as Peter Pans among a bunch of horny Tinker Bells" (Leonard). Hank seems to have it all, yet he has nothing.

Mia inspires the same type of love/hate relationship because "the feel good the Lolita effect promises is a consumer fantasy, and it's designed to be short-lived" (Durham). Sometimes, this kind of attraction to her "is a sexual Venus' Flytrap, seducing unwary victims with promises of nectar, then devouring them" (Durham), while other times her sensibility and coveted helplessness reach to the surface, because, at only 16, what difference is there between right or wrong?

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Visual Culture

The Innocent and the Erotic

in Audrey Kawasaki's Paintings

by Adelina Vartolomei

Audrey Kawasaki is a new artist who is quickly making her way up to the top. Unfortunately, not enough attention is paid to her work and what little information there is about her can be gathered from the several interviews she gave to various magazines. For example, Jess Hemerly and Chris Mitchell are among the few who have managed to get in touch with her and pick her brain. What they found out was that she studied at Pratt institute in New York for only two years. Kawasaki focused on fine arts painting but when she brought her own original perspective to the canvas, her professors asked her to stop. However, it was not the lack of encouragement that made her drop out but the conceptual style that did not fit her own more figurative and illustrative style.



Yasuragi © Audrey Kawasaki
Oil and graphite on wood 24x17
'Ephemera' @ Nucleus Gallery 2007

The first time one sets eyes on her paintings, one might think that he or she stumbled upon Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. Humbert Humbert's nymphet appears to have crawled out of the pages unto the canvas.

There is this mixture of innocence and eroticism in the Kawasaki girls' gaze, poise and movements. In Chris Mitchell's interview, Kawasaki confesses the fascination for women's bodies she has had since she was a child: "Since i was young, i was attracted to female faces and forms, especially the darker somber ones. Sensual. Erotic. And i was pretty comfortable with such subjects. i was never embarrassed. My parents might have shrugged a bit, but they never forbade me to draw what i wanted to draw. They were always encouraging."



Leah © Audrey Kawasaki
Oil on wood 9x11 2005

Moreover, she reveals, in a conversation with Jess Hemerly, the influence that manga comics had on her while growing up: "I learned from Japanese manga comics actually. That's where it began. I wanted to be a manga artist. Girls with big dreamy, twinkling eyes, and cheesy girly drama... I still think you can see the influence in my current things, though. Like in the attention to line flow and eyes and expression." Indeed, the manga influence can be seen around the dreamy eyes she keeps on painting. However, Kawasaki is constantly worried that she might draw asymmetrical faces because of her own lopsided eyes. She is also afraid that this may generally affect her perspective of the world she is living in.

On top of being influenced by manga comics, glimpses of art nouveau can be seen in her style as well. The lines she draws are flowing slowly on the canvas like music while her nymphets appear to be dancing. The fact that they are distant and have wavy hair can also be seen very art nouveau like. Furthermore, the presence of nature is spread throughout Kawasaki's work. This use of flowers and animals could easily lead to an identification of the young women with nature, innocence and frailty. The nymphets are like young Eves floating around in a garden in paradise before committing the original sin. They are not ashamed of their nudity but seductive with an air of melancholy emanating from their eyes. Moreover, their direct stare creates a type of distance with any potential viewer. They are calling out like the sirens, luring sailors with their song but when the men happen upon their shore, the nymphets quickly push them away (*Art Nouveau World Wide*)



My Dishonest Heart © Audrey Kawasaki
mixed media on wood 10"x12"
'The Drawing Show' @ Thinkspace

On the other hand, the idea of game might create a gloomier atmosphere. Thoughts of death seem to surface from the canvas because of this idea of hunting. If the young women are identified with the animals, such as butterflies and other small insects, thus inspiring frailty, then they might also be easily identified with prey. Their vulnerability is attractive as perhaps was Lolita's for Humbert.

The presence of memento mori is recurrent through skulls, which are hanging in the women's wavy hair, or skeletons of animals, dearly embraced by innocent children, only to emphasize this idea of death which creates an odd contrast on the whole.

The background supports this process of decay. In Mitchell's interview, Audrey Kawasaki expressed her opinion regarding the lack of perfection of her painting surfaces: "I started experimenting with painting surfaces at a life painting class of nude models. Canvas was too white and rough textured for me so I went on a scavenger hunt in alley ways and picked up planks of wood and panel. Old and eaten up. I didn't even think of sanding them down back then, just brought them to class." Nowadays, she uses large wood panels and sanding the wood down so as to make it smoother became the favorite part of the whole process for her. However, the lines in the background suggest imperfection and decomposition. The wood appears to have passed through centuries of admiration like the canvases of Michelangelo.



Uria © Audrey Kawasaki
oil and graphite on wood 11.25"x18"
'Kakurenbou' @ Mondo Bizarro
2008

In his article, "Parody and Authenticity in Lolita", Thomas Frosch describes Dolores Haze as a daimonic visitor. The daimonic visitor is that one with "a quality of uncanny power possessed originally by beings, whether good or evil, midway between gods and people". Lolita was such a visitor because of her transience. In his description of nymphets, Humbert asserted that their most important quality, which gives them a magic aura, disappears too quickly to be drunk in as it only lasts for a couple of years. Audrey Kawasaki appears to have had such daimonic visitors on her mind while she was trying to paint. She does not have anyone to model for her; therefore she is set on painting more than ordinary girls or ordinary nudes. Her girls are out of this world and perhaps her perspective is different from that of the rest of the world and she is an outcast just like Humbert Humbert.



Overlap © Audrey Kawasaki
oil and graphite on wood 28"x14"
Outre Gallery
2009

Nonetheless, when it comes to the place of art, she is not set on only painting and drawing. She admits this in one of her interviews: "I'm down to make more affordable products, like postcard sets. Calendars? Toy figures? Wood chairs!" She has actually designed the cover for Alice Smith's album, "For Lovers, Dreamers and Me." This has been one of the few times when Kawasaki actually had a real person as a model and it was a different experience for her.

However, no matter what Audrey Kawasaki draws, she always manages to separate the young girls from the viewers' world. Because of their direct gaze that makes them accessible and inaccessible at the same time, the audience feels it might be penetrating a world different than its own, which is either far away or which has been lost long ago. A heavenly world that Humbert wanted to go into but the moment he did, he wrecked it because of his earthly nature.

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Creative Writing

Invocation

by Alexandru Macarescu

Long, flowing hair, you sinful daughter of
Medusa,

Lips dipped in blood, forbidden fruit of the
Kousa

Tainted your touch, petite, precious mimosa.

Lost in your scent, I yield to you my temptress,

Lingering agony, you vile, gorgeous
enchantress,

Take home the spoils, my all, slayer of men,
sweet empress!

Locusts that swarm, your words into my ear,

Light, burning hot, you do not touch but sear,

Taste my excruciatingly ecstatic fear.

Love me, consume me, ingrain me in your
thoughts

Like I, you, delightful pray of satyrs, servant of
the gods.

Tantalizing taboo, rose-buds beneath the
undeserving cloths.

Loan me your body

Lie here besides me

Tame my lust.

White-Skinned Girl

by Adriana Boagiu

I envisage him dreaming of another and her
white skin...

Remembering all the moments in which they
touched as if by mistake,

Remembering her soft, beckoning voice and
unforgettable perfume...

I envisage him adoring her reddish lips and
their aroma...

I envisage him wanting to touch her
promisingly soothing breasts...

I envisage him offering his heart to the white-
skinned girl...

American Studies in Romania

Just like any respectable academic institution, the University of Bucharest has an American Studies Department, which offers both undergraduate and graduate studies. Bogdan Tudor, one of the MA students of the aforementioned department, highlights the most important details of this program.

by Silvia Filip

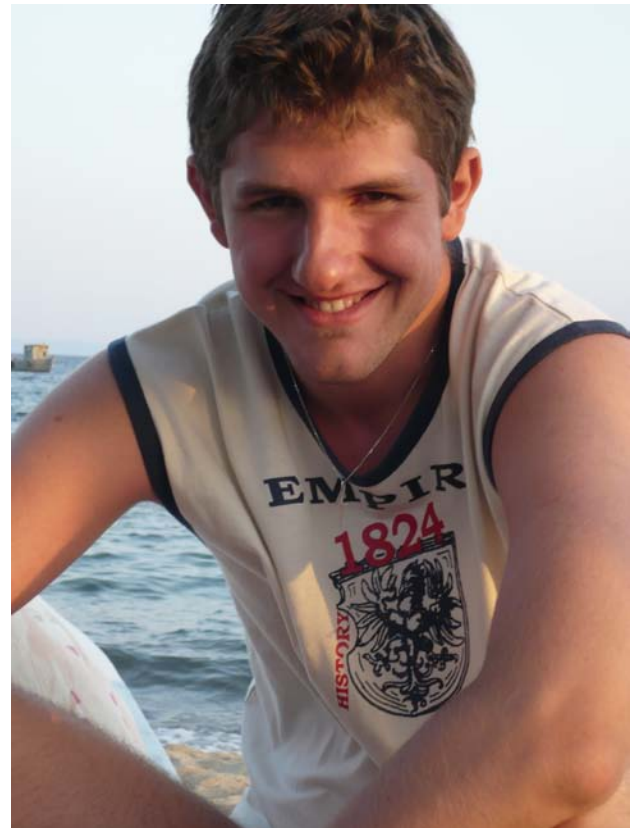
1. To begin with, please give us some details about your background.

I am a mild sociopath [pause for laughter], who in 2004 graduated from “Mihai Viteazu” National College in Ploiesti (Social Sciences class) and decided it would be a good idea to pursue the study of English and of Anglo-Saxon culture in a more professional academic environment. Consequently, in September 2004 I took two exams (one in English and the other in French) in order to gain admission to the Faculty of Foreign Languages and managed to pass them with grades high enough to ensure that I would not pay a tuition fee. I opted for English as my major and Dutch as my minor because I also wanted to study a lesser-known Germanic language. Since my sophomore year I've been taking part in most of the academic and extra-curricular activities of the American Studies Department and have shown my inclination towards political thought, annoying my more literature-oriented colleagues, to whom I am grateful for displaying surprising amounts of patience during my ramblings.

2. Why American Studies for your MA?

Much like my life, it's quite a twisted story. I grew up with American movies and sitcoms because I loved the language and my parents were not allowed to come within 10 yards of the remote control. Since the age of 5 until the age of 16 I had a tutor in English (my parents never admitted it, but I knew I was being prepared for export). After we got cable TV in December 1993 (no rhyme intended), I began a love affair with

Cartoon Network, Matlock, Perry Mason, Jessica Fletcher and later on, The Gilmore Girls (to name but a few). I was very disappointed when, at age 13, I found out that the American judicial system did not apply in Romania. I turned to American movies for familiar things whenever life puzzled me and it was only natural that I would do so in college as well. I grew very fond of the professors and rediscovered what came natural to me: discussing the USA, my make-belief homeland, in all its forms.



3. What attracted you to the University of Bucharest's offer?

Applying for this MA was the logical extension of my college “activism,” so to speak. The professors knew me and knew that I was first and foremost a “zoon politikon.” I knew they would understand my wish to focus mainly on political thought and anthropology and later on “branch out” into literature, film, or ethnic studies. I could not pass on the opportunity to remain in my natural environment.

4. Can you please describe the steps you had to take to get to study here?

The exam itself was not very complicated. We received a reader containing numerous essays on subjects such as ethnicity, feminism, history, anthropology or political culture and we had to choose a topic from that reader and write a 4-page essay on it. The exam also consisted of an interview where we had to present our essay and talk about the reasons that made us choose this particular MA. Enrolling for the exam, however, was different. For someone accustomed to the ways of our secretaries, it was “business as usual,” but for an outsider the lines that formed on the hallways of the University might have been described as Orwellian, to put it mildly.

5. Do you have any international colleagues or teachers?

We don't have as many foreign students as, let's say, other universities from the West. We only have a colleague from Moldova. As far as the professors are concerned, this year we've had a Film class with Prof. Barbara Nelson and there have always been professors from the United States teaching at this MA.

6. Are there opportunities of getting enrolled in exchange programs abroad?

Theoretically, yes. There is the possibility of benefiting from an Erasmus scholarship (provided you haven't already benefited from one in college) to an American Studies program at a university in Europe. There is also the exchange program our Department has with Arizona State University and Kansas State University, which is advertised on our website, and the possibility of applying for a Fulbright scholarship.

7. What can you tell us about the subject matter, examination and getting your degree?

The field of American Studies encompasses many disciplines and it's difficult to grade their level of importance. It is my belief that the general approach aims to familiarize us students with most of the aspects pertaining

to American Studies: politics, ethnicity, gender studies, critical theory, anthropology, film, religion, imagology, etc. and then have us choose the area and the critical framework which we wish to study further. As far as the examinations are concerned, we “benefit” from the standard exam session (roughly a month) we all know and, let's say, love. But the professors are free to decide on the form of examination and we generally have a lot of readings and a lot of in-class presentations during the school year. The amount is fairly reasonable, though, and it does not prevent us from having a social life (if we must). In order to graduate, we have to present a project of 40 pages minimum, if I'm not mistaken.

8. And what about the employment opportunities?

There are a number of employment opportunities upon graduating from this MA, provided you are an intelligent human being who does not want to make a lot of money [insert look of disbelief here, followed by raised eyebrows upon realizing that it was a joke]. The department has several opportunities for internships (followed by possible employment) at leading NGOs, there is the possibility of staying on as a lecturer and the US embassy might be very interested in “recruiting” us. Depending on each student's background and networking abilities, there can be a lot of other prospects, as well, but I don't want to be too presumptuous.

9. Do you have a tip for those who want to apply for this program?

The fact that the subject matter of an MA “sounds cool” does not necessarily mean that you have to apply for it. Our MA looks really good on paper, but without some previous knowledge of the “issues,” it's difficult to get by regardless of what you majored in (getting in is not as difficult as getting by). Do join us... but not by all means.



As [Inter]sections is a monthly student publication, you are kindly invited to send contributions to our editors, usually during the last week of each month). Also, should you wish to respond to any of the articles published in this and any other future issues, send your comments to: **intersections_amst@yahoo.com** .

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