

Notes

Chapter I – “The Native Illusionist”

- 1) Paul Ricoeur argues that, “Re-immersion in our archaism is no doubt the roundabout way by which we immerse ourselves in the archaism of humanity, and this double regression is possibly, in its turn, the way to a discovery, a prospection, and prophecy concerning ourselves” (13). This discussion on the re-immersion into the past is quite helpful because it is by rummaging in his past recollections, such as Annabel’s death, that Humbert is capable of forming a prophetic future, his respect for Lolita and her country, thus gaining revelatory knowledge about himself.
- 2) Bradbury explores this idealised notion of America as a land of fantastic discoveries and panaceas: “[...] Fantasies of quite extraordinary wonders – Cities of Gold, Fountains of Eternal Youth, the Terrestrial Paradise – as well as desire for conquest and possession drove [...] conquistadores as they plundered in the ‘golden lands’ of South America” (4).
- 3) ‘Le Vampire’ – “[...] Toi qui, comme un coup de couteau, / Dans mon coeur plaintif es entrée; / Toi qui, forte comme un troupeau/ De démons, vins, folle et parée [...] / — Maudite, maudite sois-tu!’ (25).
- 4) ‘La Muse malade’ – “[...] Le succube verdâtre et le rose lutin/T’ont-ils versé la peur et l’amour de leurs urnes? / Le cauchemar, d’un poing despotique et mutin/T’a-t-il noyée au fond d’un fabuleux Minturnes?” (37). ‘La Beauté’ – “[...] Car j’ai, pour fasciner ces dociles amants,/ De purs miroirs qui font toutes choses plus belles” (44).
- 5) Actually, the age of consent in most American states by 1880 was still 10. In Delaware it was 7 years old. This corroborates Humbert’s argument as well as the lawful normalcy of Poe falling in love with his 13 year old cousin Virginia and marrying her in Richmond, VA in 1836.
- 6) Malcolm Bradbury discusses this interdependency of Europe’s and America’s self-images, as well as America’s land-of-plenty aspect: “And so, over time – as America, or some of it, turned *from terra incognita to gold mine*, from gold mine to colony, from colony to nation, from nation to industrial power *and then superpower*; and as Europe, or some of it, turned from *colonizer to oppressive parent*, from oppressive parent to cultural exporter [...]” (8, Italics mine).
- 7) Pifer argues that, “[...] Humbert Humbert’s own ‘creative fancy’ – what we may more bluntly call his obsessive imagination – transforms the twelve-year-old American kid, Dolores Haze, into the bewitching nymphet. [...] Nabokov [...] hints at the dire consequences this imaginative transformation has for the child. [...] Humbert not only violates Dolly Haze’s body, but stunts her growth” (9).

Chapter II “The Friendly Abyss”

- 1) As Truman stated once, by “[...] helping free and independent nations to maintain their freedom, the United States [were indeed] giving effect to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations [...]” (Bradbury 34), the United States were also conveying that their sympathy was only matched by their bounty a message targeting the Soviet Union, the great enemy lurking on the other side of the recently drawn Iron Curtain.
- 2) Teresa Alves rightfully notices that the 50s “retained an aura of domesticity” (25), which accounts for the generalised success of “[...] low-key dramas, a kind of domestic realism, whose effect derives from its accuracy in reflecting the ordinary man’s conceptions of the world [...]”. A whole play may be based on a very trivial incident, chosen because everyone in the audience will have experienced something similar” (Podhoretz 92, Italics mine).
- 3) Examples of these bland female icons are found in young actresses such as Deanna Durbin (*I’ll Be Yours* 1947), Shirley Temple (*Honeymoon* 1947), Elizabeth Taylor (*Cynthia* 1947), Jeanne Crain (*State Fair* 1945), and Janet Leigh’s early roles in *The Romance of Rosy Ridge* (1947) and *Little Women* (1949).
- 4) This allusion to a pair of “big brother” spectacles mirrors Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, with the big billboard glasses of Dr. Eckleburg watching over every character’s mishap.
- 5) Teen girls’ power inside their houses reached an almost comical height, for teenage girls were seen as the jewel of a father’s crown , as “[...] it was even appropriate for fathers to be fully invested in the changes [...] that accompanied their daughters’ adolescence – changes that were by definition sexual in nature” (Devlin 84).
- 6) “The middle-aged woman [...]” had some kind of “real and compelling ‘baby’ [...] in her final helplessness [...],” John Harvey states. What is saddening in Marilyn’s lionisation as 50s primordial baby doll is the same sadness surfacing in *Lolita*: the conclusion that “[...] in the end America is rough on babies whether they are real or imagined ones. That’s one of the truths she [Marilyn] inadvertently made us look at. *We’re hard on innocence and then we want it back*” (71, Italics mine).
- 7) Rachel Devlin argues that the “[...]postwar public [was] eager for expiations of ‘war neuroses’, [and] psychoanalysis had a kind of authority during these years that was unparallel, not just in the history of psychiatry, but in the history of social-scientific ideas” (20). Teresa Alves furthers this claim, remarking that, “A backward glance over the budding fifties, however, cannot but disclose signs of rampant anxiety, [...] before complacency, material prosperity and the so-called American way of life prevailed” (25).
- 8) Lhamon also argues that 60s dilemmas were not a “[...] series of immaculate conceptions arising from the orthodox understanding of the fifties. [...] It was inconceivable to

contemporary observers that there might have been vitality *where they assumed a vacuum*” (Italics mine, 4)

- 9) Another interesting perspective concerning America’s pending decline nonetheless, is Andrew Delbanco’s, who cleverly asks, “[...] if America has always seemed in decline, even at times that we now recall as innocent and eager, then the proverbial question arises – What else is new?” (86).
- 10) Michael Maar retells a famous anecdote concerning *Lolita*’s American publication in 1958: “[...] a copy of the scandalous work had been under examination by the Director of Public Prosecution; twenty thousand copies were waiting in bookshops to be either sold out or quietly pulped” (5).
- 11) “[...] by May, his shows were literally creating a riot. By June, he'd outgrown his manager. By July, he'd hit the national charts. By October, he'd outgrown his label. And by the end of the year, he was ready for the big time” (Fontenot).
- 12) “Movie-star-turned-director Robert Redford locates *the end of public trust in the quiz show scandals [...]*” which exploded in November 2, 1959 with Van Doren’s confession that he had cheated on the Twenty-One TV quiz show, deceiving a whole trusty nation. On the other hand, “[...] the novelist *Don DeLillo thinks that ‘the last time people went spontaneously out of their houses for [...] wonder and amazement’ was when Bobby Thomson hit an inside fastball off Ralph Branca [...]*” as early as October 3, 1951. (Delbanco 85, Italics mine). Coincidentally, 1951 is the year the “American Dream” also faded for Humbert, the year around the time his nymphet escaped him forever.
- 13) Paul Carter quotes Elmer Davis, in his beliefs that “[...] the modern West had something going on for it that the intellect of Grace and Rome at their most glorious never quite achieved: ‘the scientific method and above all the freedom of mind that makes it possible’. And we, despite all the frightening parallels to our own situation that one can discern in the late Roman republic, are not Rome” (167).
- 14) Bestor goes as far as stating that, “the educational system had plunged into a [...] level of mediocr[ity] [...] and students had become completely bored. *A ‘soft’ educational system had put their brains to sleep.*” (39 – 40, Italics mine.)
- 15) As far as Goldman is concerned, the era’s greatest symbol is “[...] a kind of creeping piety, a false piety and religiosity which has slithered its way to astounding popularity.” Goldman further on ruefully epitomises the American bourgeoisie in the college “[...] *student of ‘beauty and brawn [...]* the ordinary American boy’ who will only make a million in later life, [and] *the ordinary girl who wants a husband*” (50, Italics Mine). Goldman’s exaggerated stereotyping of America’s prototypical youths is reminiscent of Humbert’s own mocking caricatures of a “degenerated” teen culture *Lolita* represents.
- 16) Many cultural analysts have since followed Goldman in his scolding of America’s postwar years. Teresa Alves notices “how inappropriate were some of the[se] epithets by which the fifties were lampooned as the ‘Dismal Decade,’ the ‘Years of Neuroses’ or more disparagingly the ‘Age of the Vacuum Tube.’ [...As a matter of fact] the fifties harbored the

seeds of the sixties' counterculture, of the seventies' ethnic revivals, as well as of the eighties' and the nineties' multicultural trends" (25/40). As Alves, Lhamon also argues that this epoch was undeniably a time when "[...] style and decision [actually] quickened in American life. [...] People were coming out of hibernation [...] to the feeling of 'infinite possibilities [...]" (Lhamon xi); a tug and pull of emotions convulsed this apparently sedentary era, keeping it culturally alive and vibrant.

- 17) Stephen Schiff, 1997 *Lolita's* scriptwriter, summarises this period very well by describing it as a time when "[...] America had not been fully explored in the movies yet [...] before the invention of the great American teenager and the distinct consumer culture that sprang up to serve it; [...when a country could be defined as] the vulgar, beautiful, immature and undeniably powerful young America that emerged from the Second World War" (xiii).

Chapter III - "The World of Tough Kids"

- 1) "All they want is to work down in the peninsula where they can have a little house in the country and play golf or tennis and live the good life [...]." Statements like these are taken as clear evidence that "[...] youth's ambitions have shrunk [...]. Some observers regard this as a sign of youth's passivity" (52). The anonymous journalist goes on describing the uniform traits that categorise these youths as disinterested, as well as disinteresting, human beings.
- 2) Along these lines, and just to cite a few examples, there was the popular *Harvey Girls* (1946) and *Ziegfeld Follies* (1946) starring the singing star Judy Garland, or *Angel and the Badman* (1947) starring the Westerns' tycoon John Wayne.
- 3) This phenomenon was visible since the war days and their preoccupation with pathological psychology. It consisted of portraying the hidden truth about the girls "[...] who somehow got caught up in the wrong crowd or who were *disillusioned, bored, or unhappy* [...]", epitaphs that could easily fit the Dolores Haze Humbert came upon on the spring of 1947 (Devlin 74, Italics mine).
- 4) *Lolita* once mixed candour and deviousness in Humbert's separation of girl from nymphet; even when she is tagged down as a juvenile criminal *Lolita* remains elusive. She is both the "[...] disrespectful [...] and lazy [...]" child from the pre-war years, and simultaneously the "[...] hostile and provocative [...]" teen from the mid-50s (Ibid 68).
- 5) Quickly, Humbert showers "his vulgar darling" with "a [...] quite expensive vest [...] and a brilliant belt [...]" hoping this could assure him a window into her heart. (Nabokov 120)
- 6) Humbert confesses that, "I relied on three other methods to keep my pubescent concubine in submission and passable temper [...returning her to] Miss Phalen's bleary eye in a dilapidated Appalachian house [...] the reformatory threat [...]" and abandonment, so he could "secure her cooperation in keeping (their) relation secret [...]" (148 – 149).

- 7) Humbert not only rearranges the beds where he and Lolita have slept together, so they look inconspicuous, but he also retells one of the situations when they were almost caught lovemaking as a traumatising one - “[...] and so we lay when with one of those jolts that have ended by knocking my poor heart out of its groove, I met the unblinking dark eye of two strange and beautiful children [...]” (169).
- 8) Curiously, in Lyne’s movie, while waiting for Jeremy Irons in *The Enchanted Hunter*’s lobby Dominique Swain reads the *Movie Screen* magazine that has Shirley Temple and Cary Grant demurely embraced. It is a publicity shot for the 1947 hit movie *The Bachelor and the Bobby-Soxer*. This film deals with a young girl’s crush on a worldly older man, that in the end is, in a morally sound little spin-off, better matched with her older sister (played by Myrna Loy) than with her (*Vide Annexe 6*).
- 9) The so-called “wayward girls” phenomenon was promptly explained by the en-vogue psychological theories that recurred to the fact that the “[...] object that substitutes for the father, or reflected the desire for him in some way, was the first material to which the adolescent girl turned as she began to experience the sexual drives of puberty” (Devlin 30).
- 10) One can also build a contemporary pattern for Lolita’s sexual behaviour based on the juvenile delinquency and sexual precocity stereotype that baffled psychologists of the time due to “[...] the report of teenage girls flocking to soldiers’ training camps, ‘determined to have a fling or better’ while they could [...],” plus the rapidly declining age at which girls married (18 by the beginning of the 50s), and the new dating practices as ‘going steady’ (Ibid 23).
- 11) The responsible fatherly prototype rests indubitably in a kind of “post-war ethos.” In his benign firmness, in his sad but determined sense of responsibility – and one can immediately recall James Stewards’ character in Frank Capra’s *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946) – “[...] we can detect the contemporary political climate. He reflects the feeling that the only safe oasis in a dangerous, cold-war world is in our own home, a home which, though it may once have been taken lightly, must now be preserved at all costs [...]”(Podohertz 117).
- 12) Apart from the moralistic mental hygiene movies showed in every classroom, other measures were taken to control those rabid juveniles. A favourite one was sending difficult children to summer camps so they could healthily mingle with other kids of similar ages in outdoorsy activities. This comes only to prove Ken Smith was right in his observation that if the 50s were ever that “[...] vision of an innocent, idyllic past [...] there would have been no need for mental hygiene films, if the young really had behaved so pleasantly.”
- 13) By the end of the novel, Humbert recalls Lolita’s opinion about “[...] what’s so the dreadful about dying is that you are completely on your own [...]” as a proof of a place interdict to him, a place he almost broke and can now show repentance for. But even then, this recollected epiphany comes from an eavesdropping situation, when Lolita was “[...] so very serenely and seriously [...]” talking with her girlfriend, “little Eva Rosen,” not to Humbert directly (284). Sometimes he transmits scraps of domestic quarrels between Charlotte and Lolita as an amusing way to establish Lolita’s quick wit and sharp tongue; but again, these are indirect observations bound to be contaminated by Humbert’s point of view as an unreliable narrator.

Chapter IV - “So Young, So Lewd”

- 1) Humbert describe his past mishaps like this: “Divorce proceedings delayed my voyage, and the gloom of yet another World War had settled upon the globe when, after a winter of ennui and pneumonia in Portugal [...] Upon signing out [from an asylum], I cast around for some place in the New England countryside or sleepy small town (elms, white church) where I could spend a studious summer [...]” (32 –35). The contrast between the sickening mood lived in Europe and the healthy improvement felt in the New World nicely exemplifies Humbert’s correlation of good spirits with America and gloominess with Europe.
- 2) For Lolita is “[...] an inherently unpossessable object, her appeal consists partly in her transience – she will only be a nymphet for a brief time [...],” Humbert is intrinsically condemned to chase after her as after an uncanny mirage. As far as Humbert is concerned, Lolita is a metaphor “[...] for Arcadia, for the past, for the unattainable itself, [and they all sum up] nympholepsy [...]” (Frosch 39 – 40).
- 3) Humbert initially pretends to have no experience and to be the victim in his sexual game with Lolita. “[...] For it was she who seduced me [...],” he coyly argues in his defence, so that he can hold her responsible for his acts of violence and blackmail. He goes as far as accusing her of being an “[...] infernal daemon disguised as a female child [...],” casting Lolita as look-alike of a femme fatale in a noir movie (132 – 139).
- 4) In his legendary review “The Last Lover: Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita*,” Lionel Trilling goes as far as declaring, “Lolita is not about sex, but about love,” equating “H.H.’s relation with Lolita [...with] Tristan’s relation with Iseult, or Vronsky’s with Anna. It puts the lovers [...] beyond the pale of society” (8).

Chapter V – “An Old Scenic Movie”

- 1) Going back to Rachel Devlin’s examples, they state that the cosmetic revolution ensued due to the postwar teenage girl’s “[...] newfound appeal – including her sexual appeal – which was owed in large part to [...] her self-presentation.” There were genuinely “[...] 8 million girls coming of age, cosmetically speaking [...],” as The March of Time newsreel announced back in 1945. By citing the movie “A Date with Judy” (1948), Devlin points out the glaring distinctions, personality-wise, that could be found by studying the make-up habits in teenagers: “[...] although both girls have the same consuming desire to be attractive [...],” the heavily embellished

character “[...] Carol is often conniving and competitive,” while the more discrete main character Judy “[...] is open and trusting” (124).

- 2) Humbert expertly states that “there must be a gap of several years, never less than ten I should say, generally thirty or forty, and as many as ninety in a few known cases, between maiden and man to enable the later to come under a nymphet’s spell” (45).
- 3) This flaw concerning Lolita’s age is consistent with Sue Lyon’s anachronisms and Californian beach-girl look, explained by the late 50s/early 60s’ new female role model. This was generated after 1959 blockbuster hit *Gidget*, which produced several sequels and television series, as well as launched Sandra Dee to stardom.
- 4) For example, when Swain, before leaving for summer camp, “[...] leaps to embrace [Irons], wraps her legs around him [...] kisses him enthusiastically, and is gone, clattering down the stairs in slow motion, as if she had to be slowed down to be believed [...]” (Wood 186); or sitting in “a blood-red armchair” in the lounge, lipstick smeared, sensual, sulky, unaffectedly “reading her movie magazines” after having just copulated with old Humbert (Schiff 104).
- 5) Rasmussen argues that only “[...] after *Lolita* [...] Kubrick was really able to cut loose and make films the way *he* wanted to make them”, thus pointing out *Lolita* as a liminal film, even amid Kubrick’s works (4).
- 6) *Night of The Living Dead* (1990), *Candyman* (1992), *Se7en* (1995), or *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (1997) are just some of the most rentable gory examples this decade came to foster.
- 7) Michael Wood rightly observes that “[...] the attraction in Irons as an actor is that you can see him suffering, see him thinking, but he’s also opaque [...] His wreaked, bleached looks at the end of the film leave you certain only of the finality of his distress [...]” (188).
- 8) John Ray’s hypocritical warnings to the moral reader of the 50s hints that the novel’s centre hides a “sorry and sordid business,” the real confessions of a “[...] demented diarist [...] a shining example of moral leprosy [...]” which may as well contaminate the healthy minds of those who hear his story. Also the ambiguousness of the novel is already there; Humbert is simultaneously described as mastering an unusual “[...] mixture of ferocity and jocularly that betrays supreme misery perhaps, but [should] not [be] conducive to attractiveness” (11).

Conclusions:

- 1) As Packman argues, in *Lolita* “[...] love demands not the fetish, the fragmented, frozen image, but rather the narrative of the body [...]” (50).
- 2) Teresa Alves argues how this new attitude towards teen fun was pivotal in the construction of the American 50s unique culture with its daring “directors like Nicholas Ray - *Rebel without A Cause* (1955) - and Elia Kazan - *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1952), *On the Waterfront* (1954) or *East of Eden* (1955) – [which forged] the heroes of a new era, the rebellious young men as personified by Marlon Brando and James Dean, [...who]

impersonated the new emerging culture, one in which Elvis Presley's or Chuck Berry's rock 'n roll would replace the sentimental tunes of Pat Boone or the anodyne songs of Doris Day” (28 – 29).

- 3) Lolita’s youth mingled with her resemblance to Annabel is the symbolic confirmation of Humbert’s second chance in America. He believes, according to Ricoeur, that “new rites of asylum and welcome in another place, under other eyes, within the jurisdiction of another legislation will be able to give him a new purity,” i.e. transform him again in the happy child from the European setting (40).
- 4) Actually, Quilty is a useful compass to America’s changing fads; in Kubrick’s film he ceases to be the 40s renowned playwright to be the much more up-to-date 60s TV screenwriter.
- 5) “In recording the nymphet’s desire, a film would have indeed made a story of Humbert’s desire. It would have matched the nymphet’s trajectory, her directedness in time and space, with its own. Is not this precisely what Humbert’s narrative succeeds in doing?” (Packman 51).