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Priya Shyam Srivats
Scripps College

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FROM DOLORES HAZE TO DAKOTA FANNING:
HOW NABOKOV'S LITTLE GIRL WENT FROM BEING A VICTIM OF SEXUAL
ABUSE TO A FASHION ICON

PRIYA SHYAM SRIVATS



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PROFESSOR KEN GONZALES-DAY
PROFESSOR NANCY MACKO

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ABSTRACT.

This paper seeks to establish a critical understanding of issues of sexualization and re-appropriation and how they relate to contemporary fashion advertising that specifically utilizes the Lolita Effect.

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“Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins”

The first line of Vladimir Nabokov’s 1955 novel *Lolita* is one of the most famous, and provocative opening lines of any contemporary tome. In fact, the fame of the novel’s opening has only been eclipsed by that of “Lolita” as a media mainstay through frequent usage of what has been termed “the Lolita Effect”. According to Dr. Gigi Durham, author of *The Lolita Effect: The Media Sexualization of Young Girls and What We Can Do About It*, the Lolita Effect is the sexualization and objectification of prepubescent young girls. We see perpetual evidence of the Lolita Effect in the media, particularly in fashion photography and fashion ad campaigns. Over fifty years later, Nabokov could never have anticipated such a popularist personification of Lolita, nor how she has permeated all facets of contemporary media. As Graham Vickers notes in his 2008 novel, entitled *Chasing Lolita: How Popular Culture Corrupted Nabokov’s Little Girl All Over Again*, Vladimir “Nabokov insisted that there should be no little girl at all on the book’s cover because he was in the business of writing about subjective rapture, not objective sexualization”.¹ While the Dolores Haze/Lolita character and her sexual relationship with her stepfather, Humbert, serve as the prototype and namesake, our present-day understanding of The Lolita Effect has strayed considerably from Nabokov’s original depiction of Dolores Haze. Dolores Haze has been reduced from a complex character in a novel to a series of

¹ Graham Vickers, *Chasing Lolita: How Popular Culture Corrupted Nabokov’s Little Girl All over Again* (Chicago: Chicago Review, 2008), 8.

physical traits- pigtails, red lips and knee high socks. This is how modern media simplistically portrays Lolita, and subsequently how society recognizes her. In order to analyze the Lolita Effect one must go back to the source- Nabokov's novel. It is only through establishing who Dolores Haze really was, as well as exploring her relationship with Humbert Humbert, that it will be possible to critically engage with relevant contemporary images, and question the media's current, often perverted understanding of the Lolita Effect.

* * * * *

The novel *Lolita* is told from the perspective of Humbert Humbert, and largely centers on the relationship between him and his twelve-year-old stepdaughter. When Humbert is thirteen years old, he falls in love with a fellow thirteen year-old girl named Annabel.² Annabel dies four months after they met, "...and that little girl with her seaside limbs and ardent tongue haunted me ever since- until at last, twenty-four years later, I broke her spell by incarnating her in another"³. From that point forward, Humbert seems to be stuck, fixated on girls around the age of thirteen, to whom he refers as nymphets. According to Humbert, there is a strict categorization of nymphets:

"Between the age limits of nine and fourteen there occur maidens who, to certain bewitched travelers, twice or many

² Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), 11.

³ *Ibid.*, 15.

times older than they, reveal their true nature which is not human, but nymphic (that is, demoniac)".⁴

Nymphets are only identifiable by their nympholept counter-parts; Humbert explains that "you have to be an artist and a madman, a creature of infinite melancholy...in order to discern" the physical characteristics that every nymphet possesses.⁵ According to Humbert, these include "the slightly feline outline of a cheekbone, the slenderness of a downy limb".⁶ Furthermore, Humbert asserts that there must be an age gap, usually of about thirty or forty years, between the nymphet and nympholept "to enable the latter to come under a nymphet's spell".⁷

Humbert spends the next twenty-five years essentially drifting through the world of academia while detachedly engaging in sexual encounters with prostitutes. Then, after moving to from England to America, he ends up staying in the Haze household, where he falls in love with the twelve year old Dolores. The two have a few sexual encounters before Dolores is sent off to camp at the whim of her mother Charlotte Haze, who despises her. At this point, Humbert marries Charlotte, so that his presence in Dolores's life is cemented.⁸ Mother Haze is then conveniently killed by a car moments after reading Humbert's diary and discovering his feelings for

⁴ Nabokov, 16.

⁵ Ibid., 17.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 74.

Dolores.⁹ Humbert subsequently picks Dolores up from camp, and finds out that she is no longer a virgin. The two then spend a long year traveling cross-country together.¹⁰ Eventually they settle down in a New England town, and Dolores joins the school play, where she meets Clare Quilty, her play director.¹¹ Dolores eventually escapes Humbert's possession with the help of Quilty, and Humbert finds comfort in a woman named Rita.¹²

Humbert never stops searching for Dolores, and one day receives a letter from the now seventeen year-old Dolores, who is married and pregnant.¹³ Humbert immediately leaves Rita to go find Dolores, and when he does he presents her with \$4000 cash and begs her to leave with him.¹⁴ Dolores refuses, saying she would rather go back to Quilty- in the words of Humbert: "*He broke my heart. You merely broke my life*".¹⁵ Humbert then kills Clare Quilty, and the reader discovers in the end that both Humbert and Dolores have died, as Humbert wishes for his memoir to be published only after they both die.¹⁶

* * * * *

The popularity of *Lolita* was immediate and overwhelming, and this popularity subsequently led to movies and numerous images of Dolores

⁹ Nabokov, 97.

¹⁰ Ibid., 145.

¹¹ Ibid., 208.

¹² Ibid., 258.

¹³ Ibid., 266.

¹⁴ Ibid., 278.

¹⁵ Ibid., 279.

¹⁶ Ibid., 309.

Haze/Lolita permeating throughout society. This was pushed even further into commodification in the early 80's:

"...with such advertisements as a girl in jeans, dropping her rag doll by her side, with the headline "13 going on 18" [in 1981] [Figure 1], and the controversial Calvin Klein ad in which the 15-year-old Brooke Shields declared, "Nothing comes between me and my Calvins"".¹⁷

IMAGE REMOVED

Figure 1: 1981 Wilkies Junior advertisement

These 1980's advertisements, combined with the re-appropriation of Dolores Haze in Stanley Kubrick's 1960's film *Lolita*, planted the seeds for what is now known as the Lolita Effect.

* * * * *

According to author and professor Meenakshi Durham, the Lolita Effect has five components, which are as follows:

1. *"girls don't choose boys, boys choose girls—but only the sexy ones*
2. *there's only one kind of beauty- slender, curvy, white beauty*
3. *girls should work to be that type*
4. *the younger a girl is, the sexier she is*

¹⁷ American Psychological Association, *"Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls"* (Washington D.C.: The American Psychological Association, 2010), 13.

5. *sexual violence can be hot*¹⁸

These five key issues have far reaching consequences, from teaching girls to self-sexualize at extremely young ages to reinforcing aspects of rape culture in contemporary society.

Sexualization is at the core of the Lolita Effect, and according to the American Psychological Association, sexualization occurs when:

1. *“a person’s value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behavior, to the exclusion of other characteristics;*
2. *a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy;*
3. *a person is sexually objectified — that is, made into a thing for others’ sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making; and/or*
4. *sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person.”*¹⁹

As the definitions of the Lolita Effect and sexualization display, sexualization is inextricably connected to the Lolita Effect. The fourth and final statement that the American Psychological Association presents on sexualization is particularly relevant- “sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person”.²⁰ According to the APA, “when children are imbued with adult sexuality, it is

¹⁸ Meenakshi Durham, *The Lolita Effect: the Media Sexualization of Young Girls and Five Keys to Fixing It* (Woodstock and New York: The Overlook Press, 2009), 5.

¹⁹ American Psychological Association, 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

often imposed upon them rather than chosen by them”.²¹ The fashion advertisements circulating through magazines, billboards and online content most certainly portray women as objects of desire, rather than capable, intellectual beings; advertisements utilizing Lolita take this one step further, applying that desire to the young, female form.

* * * * *

The problems that arise out of the novel and subsequent commercialization of Lolita highlight a lot of the issues that are found within contemporary fashion photography and female-targeted advertising as a whole. The discussion of underage and underweight models is one that continues to go around in circles decade after decade, yet the concern needs to go beyond that, to how these models are utilized. Having a fifteen-year old model star in an ad campaign selling California-cool style (Figure 2) is quite different from the same model posed on a bed with bows in her hair, a rag doll at her side (Figure 3). The images highlight the difference between ‘sexy’ and ‘sexualized’; while both images could be considered ‘sexy’, the latter presents the teenage model as a sexualized figure, ready for sexual activity. The overt sexuality that is present in fashion photography presents the female body as an object, ready for consumption; this paper will argue that this consumption has ramifications that reach far and wide, starting with making the female body a commodity. The Lolita Effect takes this sexualization one step further through its usage of the prepubescent body.

²¹ Ibid.

This portrayal of the young, female body as a sexy plaything makes addressing the problems already in place through decades of female sexualization even more compelling and urgent.

IMAGE REMOVED

Figure 2: Hailey Clauson for LF, Summer Lookbook 2010

IMAGE REMOVED

Figure 3: Hailey Clauson for Jill by Jill Stuart, Fall 2011

In society today, images are being dispersed and circulated faster than ever- through magazines, fashion websites and blogs, television; the media is coming at us from all angles with images that sexualize girls and women. According to the American Psychological Association's study, young children are especially susceptible to these media and marketing tools, and cannot recognize the purpose of advertisements (to make them want to purchase something) until they are eight years old- by this age they have been bombarded by images that they haven't been able to critically absorb for years.²² Furthermore, girls draw their understanding of what it means to be 'appropriately feminine' from sources around them; this includes parents

²² American Psychological Association, 20.

and peers, but also fictional characters in the media.²³ These fictional female media characters are becoming more and more sexualized- a 1999 study found “that women were three times more likely than men to be dressed in a sexually provocative manner in ads”.²⁴ Yet it goes further than that, into territory that is extremely detrimental to women- a 1993 study found that female models were not only much more likely to be placed in submissive, exploitative and violent positions than their male counterparts, but also that 80% of their sample advertisements contained a female model in a sexually exploitative position.²⁵ While these studies are twenty years old, their findings still resonate today, showing just how little the media has progressed in it’s representation of women as people and not just bodies.

This overwhelming amount of information in the media defining the female form as an object leads to the process in which girls learn to objectify themselves. Self-objectification is defined as “a key process whereby girls learn to think of and treat their own bodies as objects of others’ desires”.²⁶ While this self-objectification is extremely problematic on its own, it becomes even more so because the parameters in which these girls examine themselves are sexualizing and unrealistic- most often stemming from images in the media.²⁷

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²³ Ibid., 19.

²⁴ Ibid., 10.

²⁵ Ibid., 11.

²⁶ Ibid., 17.

²⁷ Ibid.

For a long time, I struggled with the question, “what is the goal of this paper?” This paper is not a call to action. It is not proposing a radical restructuring of society or the media. Rather, my hope is that whoever reads this paper becomes aware of the issues at hand, and hearkens back to them every time they open up a fashion magazine. This paper seeks to establish a critical understanding of issues of sexualization and re-appropriation and how they relate to contemporary fashion advertising that specifically utilizes the Lolita Effect.

One major issue I have had is critically examining images while remaining balanced. Every fashion image publicized and circulated is intentional with regards to props, poses, clothing and aura. However, these choices, while intentional down to the tee, might not be backed by the same critical thinking and historical context that I have [with regards to *Lolita*].

At times it was really difficult to continue writing about this issue, because on the one hand, the images being examined are simply photos in a fashion magazine. However, on the other hand, they are photos that are seen by hundreds of thousands of people- *Vogue* magazine has an average circulation of 1,222,373.²⁸ Writing an academic paper on the topic of fashion is quite rare, a point that is highlighted by the difficulty I had with finding academic appropriate sources. Most of the writing that critiques fashion photography is done in journalism- newspapers like *The New York Times* and the United Kingdom’s *The Telegraph* often yielded the most coverage on

²⁸ Conde Naste, 2013.

controversial fashion issues. The few books that expand upon the ideas in these articles mostly do so in the form of parent self-help books on how to talk to their children about the media and advertising. This thesis strives to bridge these 'non-academic' avenues of thought and critique with gender and media theories, and overall to establish an academic understanding of these issues.

* * * * *

This paper is mostly limited to press sources from the United States and Europe- specifically England and France. There is very little academic information on this subject matter to begin with, and looking beyond Western advertising, one finds hardly any critical analysis. The only exception to this research is Japan, a country in which the Lolita Effect has sprung up and had definitive effects, specifically in the escort business. It is important to note that in the images from France and Japan, although they are international sources, come from *Playboy Magazine* and *Vogue*, which are both magazines founded in America.

One part of why research on the Lolita Effect is so limited lies with Dolores Haze's background. Haze was a young, white American girl, and while the media has twisted and manipulated her into many things, one thing they have not altered is her race. There are numerous studies, many of which have been compiled in the "*American Psychological Association's Report on the Sexualization of Girls*", that examine the effects of sexualization on young women of colour; many of these studies also examine the differences in the

effects on young girls of colour versus Caucasian girls. However blurred the line may be, there is a difference between the Lolita Effect and the sexualization of young girls- one could say that the Lolita Effect lies within this sexualization, but still retains very specific parameters that make an image, item, or person Lolita-inspired. To bring in data that specifically pertains to women of colour would, with the research at hand, be to widen those parameters to a point where the Lolita-driven focus of this paper is diluted or lost altogether. This is not because the Lolita Effect does not influence girls or women of colour (I myself am a woman of colour), but rather because the data and studies I have found tend to focus on the impact magazines directed towards women of colour (*Ebony*, *Essence*, *Latin Girl*).²⁹ Since Lolita-inspired images are almost exclusively of Caucasian women (as far as my research can find), to include these statistics would be incorrectly projecting the Lolita Effect onto women of colour, with no hard facts about its actual influence. The research and statistics presented in this paper do not exclude girls and women of colour, rather they are not a specific focus.

As described in the APA study, “sexual socialization is profoundly heterosexual and heteronormative”- the effects of sexualization can be felt by anyone who identifies as female.³⁰ However, my year of researching this subject, I have not found any information on the Lolita Effect and how it specifically pertains to gay and lesbian communities. Also, given that the relationship in the original novel *Lolita* was a heterosexual relationship, this

²⁹ American Psychological Association, 11.

³⁰ American Psychological Association, 4.

paper utilizes theories on the male gaze, and analyzes the effects of sexualization in a heterosexual context. Sexualization impacts women all over the world, regardless of race, sexual orientation and other facets of identity. However, I am hesitant to speak specifically about the impact sexualization has on women of colour or women who identify as gay because there are not statistics that speak directly to their experiences. This thesis does not seek to exclude their voices and experiences from the data presented throughout, and strives to remain inclusive to the extent that it is appropriate.

CHAPTER ONE.

Going Back to the Source: Establishing *Lolita* within a Historical Context

By revisiting the primary source, this chapter will establish a new understanding of Dolores Haze/*Lolita* that is grounded in Nabokov's original text, as well as layout theoretical frameworks that will enable a broader analysis of the text as a whole, and add nuance to the characters of Dolores Haze and Humbert Humbert. This chapter will examine the character of Dolores Haze, as taken from the original novel. Drawing on a plethora of feminist media theory, including Laura Mulvey's Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, and Freud's Three Essays on Sexuality, Dolores will be sketched out through a combination of physical attributes and telling descriptions of her personality, laying bare her complex relationship with Humbert Humbert. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a historical and critical analysis of the controversy surrounding *Lolita* and its publication- a controversy that first gave rise to the Lolita Effect.

* * * * *

In the first steps of analyzing Lolita, it is necessary to define the two main characters, Humbert and Dolores, as well as their relationship. Since the novel is entirely told by Humbert Humbert, save the preface, the only descriptions of Humbert are his own. It is important to understand who Humbert is, both in terms of physicality and personality, as these descriptions provide the context for his relationship with Dolores. The first physical description comes early in the novel, when Humbert contrasts his

first wife with the “many crazed beauties” he could have obtained instead, due to his good looks:

*“I was, and still am, despite mes malheurs [my misfortunes], an exceptionally handsome male; slow-moving, tall, with soft dark hair and a gloomy but all the more seductive cast of demeanor”.*³¹

Later on, Humbert divulges a few more of his physical characteristics, with regards to what young girls find appealing:

*“I have all the characteristics which, according to writers on the sex interest of children, start the responses stirring in a little girl: clean-cut jaw, muscular hand, deep sonorous voice, broad shoulder. Moreover I am said to resemble some crooner or actor chap on whom Lo has a crush”.*³²

These illustrations of Humbert’s physical assets line up with the male aspect of John Berger’s theory of gendered presence. In his book, *Ways of Seeing*, Berger asserts that males and females have very different social presences.³³ Berger defines a man’s presence as “dependent upon the promise of power which he embodies”.³⁴ The promised power, which may be “moral, physical, temperamental, economic, social, sexual,” lies in positive correlation with a man’s presence. This power is always exerted over others, therefore making the male presence a projection, rather than a part of himself. Humbert

³¹ Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), 25.

³² *Ibid.*, 43.

³³ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 45.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

projects himself as a strong male presence, with the promised powers appearing to be physical and sexual. However, under that projection of male domination, Humbert is a self-loathing and painfully self-aware man, particularly with regard to his nymphet obsession:

"...for all the devil's inventiveness, the scheme remained daily the same. First he would tempt me- and then thwart me, leaving me with a dull pain in the very root of my being. ... But for almost three weeks I had been interrupted in all my pathetic machinations. ...The passion I had developed for that nymphet- for the first nymphet in my life that could be reached at last by my awkward, aching, timid claws- would have certainly landed me again in a sanatorium, had not the devil realized that I was to be granted some relief if he wanted to have me as a plaything for some time longer".³⁵

Humbert often talks about the pain and despair he is feeling, and this passage featuring the devil is an indication, albeit one of many throughout the novel, that Humbert knows his thoughts and desires are wrong, by society's moral standards.

Throughout the rest of the novel, physical descriptions of Humbert are included mostly to highlight and contrast with Dolores's youth. For example, "her lovely nymphet thigh which my huge hairy hand massaged and

³⁵ Nabokov, 56.

slowly enveloped”³⁶ not only contrasts the ages, and sizes, of their two bodies, but also highlights Humbert’s firm belief that Dolores is a nymphet while he himself is a nympholept.³⁷ It is important to note the manner in which Humbert provides these contrasting descriptions is almost always self-deprecating; whether he is describing his physical aspects or emotional desires, there is always a hint of self-loathing.

* * * * *

While Humbert rarely takes the time to describe himself, physical descriptions of Dolores Haze are, unsurprisingly, much easier to come by. When Humbert first meets Dolores Haze, he is immediately captivated. In Dolores, he sees Annabel, his love from twenty-five years previous.

*“...there was my Riviera love peering at me over dark glasses. It was the same child- the same frail, honey-hued shoulders, the same silky supple bare back, the same chestnut head of hair...I recognized the tiny dark-brown mole on her side...her lovely indrawn abdomen where my southbound mouth had briefly paused; and those puerile hips on which I had kissed...the twenty-five years I had lived since then tapered to a palpitating point, and vanished”.*³⁸

³⁶ Nabokov, 60.

³⁷ Ibid., 17.

³⁸ Ibid., 39.

This passage is layered with voyeurism- “the reader, uninvited, becomes a voyeur of Humbert’s own voyeurism”.³⁹ Humbert’s first sighting of Dolores provides the reader with a fragmented description of the young girl, which is almost pornographic in nature; the order of description correlates directly with Humbert’s gaze, which is working its way down Dolores’s body in what Jenefer Shute describes as a striptease code.⁴⁰ Through use of this striptease code, Humbert has effectively sexualized Dolores’s pre-pubescent body, making it readily available for consumption. This availability not only makes the consumption possible for Humbert, but also for the reader, and as an extension, the media; this is key in understanding how the Lolita Effect operates.

Even after Humbert sexualizes Dolores’s body, the physical descriptions continue, “Marvelous skin- oh, marvelous: tender and tanned, not the least blemished”.⁴¹ A few days after meeting Dolores, Humbert painstakingly describes the agony of watching her sunbathe in a black two-piece swimsuit, calling attention to her “slightly raised shoulder blades” and “the seaside of her schoolgirl thighs”, and everything in between.⁴² Humbert later goes on to call her lips “as red as licked red candy, the lower one prettily plump”.⁴³ Throughout the novel, the physical descriptions continue, yet it is

³⁹ Jenefer Schute, “So Nakedly Dressed: The Text of the Female Body in Nabokov’s Novels.” In *Vladimir Nabokov’s ‘Lolita’- A Casebook*, ed. Ellen Pifer, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 116.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Nabokov, 41.

⁴² Ibid., 42.

⁴³ Ibid., 44

never made clear if Dolores conforms to conventional beauty standards. This is important to note, as every physical interpretation of Lolita since the publication of the novel has been a conventional beauty, which also fits the ‘nymphet’ descriptions provided by Humbert.

IMAGE REMOVED

*Sue Lyon, in Stanley Kubrick's film Lolita*⁴⁴

IMAGE REMOVED

*Dominique Swain, in the 1997 remake of Lolita*⁴⁵

IMAGE REMOVED

The 1969 publication of *Lolita*

These physical descriptions are important to note- not only were they instrumental in establishing society's current understanding of Lolita, but also, because of how they were relayed, prompted Dolores/Lolita to become an object ready for society's gaze and consumption.⁴⁶ The pedophilic nature

⁴⁴ *Lolita*, DVD, directed by Stanley Kubrick (1962; Century City, CA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures, 1962).

⁴⁵ *Lolita*, DVD, directed by Adrian Lyne (1997; Guild & Lolita Productions, 1997).

⁴⁶ Schute, 116.

of Humbert's gaze has now become the norm in how the media views the pre-pubescent female body. The Lolita-inspired images that circulate today almost always adhere to the striptease code, and often show models with pouty lips and pigtailed, in simple, childlike dresses (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

IMAGE REMOVED

IMAGE REMOVED

Fig 1: Lily Cole covers Playboy Fig 2: Dakota Fanning for 'Oh, Lola!'

While Lolita has certainly shifted from the descriptions of Dolores Haze present in the novel, shadows of Dolores are still present in contemporary physical representation. What has been completely lost in the media's objectification of Lolita is Dolores's personality- that is in part what qualified her as a nymphet, and therefore Lolita, in Humbert's mind.

* * * * *

"What drives me insane is the twofold nature of this nymphet- of every nymphet, perhaps; this mixture in my Lolita of tender dreamy childishness and a kind of eerie vulgarity, stemming from the snub-nosed cuteness of ads and magazine pictures." -

Humbert Humbert ⁴⁷

While Humbert at first seems entranced by Dolores's personality, after significant time has passed his confusion is replaced by complete dismissal:

⁴⁷ Nabokov, 44.

*“Mentally, I found her to be a disgustingly conventional little girl. Sweet hot jazz, square dancing, gooey fudge sundaes, musicals, movie magazines and so forth- these were the obvious items in her list of beloved things”.*⁴⁸

The lack of respect for Dolores’s personality is overshadowed by Humbert’s overwhelming desire for her, which if anything, would reinforce the ideas Dolores is being fed by her Hollywood magazines. Ironically, in society today, it is Lolita-inspired photos that plague fashion ads and magazines. Dolores Haze was in many ways a typical preteen girl, entranced by Hollywood, with posters of leading men on her wall and a particular fondness for sweets. However, as Humbert is the sole narrator of the novel, the reader rarely gets to see this child-like side of her, indeed rarely is clued in to her personality at all.

As Nomi Tamir-Ghez points out in his work “The Art of Persuasion in *Lolita*”,

*“one of the major strategies [Humbert] employs for self-justification is simply not to allow Lolita to voice her complaints. ...Not only is Lolita’s voice only silenced, her point of view, the way she sees the situation and feels about it, is rarely mentioned”.*⁴⁹

The choice of Humbert to focus on Dolores’s physical attributes rather than her personality is a sign of how deeply entrenched this narrative is in

⁴⁸ Nabokov, 148.

⁴⁹ Nomi Tamir-Ghez, “The Art of Persuasion in *Lolita*.” In *Vladimir Nabokov’s ‘Lolita’- A Casebook*, ed. Ellen Pifer, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 24.

the male gaze. In her 1975 essay, Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, Laura Mulvey asserts that

*“Woman stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning”.*⁵⁰

In Humbert’s eyes, Dolores Haze is certainly a bearer of meaning- from the moment he saw her, he was fitting her in the image of Annabel, his deceased lover. Over time, the comparisons to Annabel desisted, but instead were simply replaced with explanations of how Dolores fit into the category of nymphet- never truly allowing her to be viewed by Humbert as a unique individual with her own personality.

Through silencing Dolores, Humbert has yet again minimized her importance. At this point, Humbert has engaged in striptease coding, imposed a nymphet status upon Dolores and also completely silenced her. This combination amounts to denying Dolores any and all autonomy as an individual. Humbert initiates this denial of autonomy, yet it is reiterated by society today.

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⁵⁰ Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16.3, 1975, 6.

Now that Humbert and Dolores have both been examined as individuals, it is necessary to analyze the relationship between the two. Their relationship begins with a gentle kiss on her eyelid, which turns into secret touches in the presence of Mother Haze- “invisible gestures...to touch her hand, her shoulder”.⁵¹

Several days later, Dolores curiously enters Humbert’s bedroom, and suddenly she is sitting upon his knee; Humbert wants to kiss her and “knew she would let [him] do so, and even close her eyes as Hollywood teaches”.⁵² In this moment, Humbert realizes that Dolores is waiting to see what happens next, which then opens the door even further to his sexual desires. Up until this point, the two have not had a true sexual encounter, making their relationship scopophilic in nature. In Freud’s Three Essays on Sexuality, he isolates scopophilia as a sexual tendency. Famed photographer Nan Goldin defines scopophilia as “the intense desire- and the fulfillment of that desire- experienced through looking.”⁵³ Scopophilia specifically pertains to the gaze, and “taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze”.⁵⁴ While it is especially easy to see how this gaze relates to Humbert’s actions and desires, what is more curious is that this gaze goes two ways, and also applies to Dolores. Freud specifically has examples centered

⁵¹ Nabokov, 45.

⁵² Ibid., 48.

⁵³ “Nan Goldin’s Scopophilia.” *The New Yorker*. 2011, 1.

⁵⁴ Mulvey, 6.

*“around the voyeuristic activities of children, their desire to see and make sure of the private and the forbidden (curiosity about other people’s genital and bodily functions, about the presence or absence of the penis and retrospectively, about the primal scene)”.*⁵⁵

This description of Freud’s work certainly rings true with Dolores’s curiosity, as exemplified by the interaction between Humbert and Dolores on his knee.⁵⁶ While she is sitting upon his knee, Humbert is struck with the realization that “[she was] waiting with curiosity and composure...for the glamorous lodger to do what he was dying to do”.⁵⁷ Mulvey states, “there are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in the reverse formation, there is pleasure being looked at”.⁵⁸ In this specific encounter, Humbert’s gaze seems to be serving the purpose of giving pleasure to both Humbert and Dolores- satisfying his intense desire for Dolores, and her curiosity (and also desire, though perhaps not as sexualized of a desire as Humbert’s) regarding the adult male unknown.

Time passes, and Humbert’s desires are painstakingly documented in a day-by-day diary, which includes descriptions of Dolores’s clothing and Humbert’s annoyance with Mother Haze. Finally, Humbert gets the time alone with Dolores that he desires. Over the course of four pages, Humbert

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ *The relation between Freud’s theory and Dolores’s curiosity is certainly something that Nabokov was well aware of- he referenced Freudian concepts often while discussing his own works, as well as the writings of others.*

⁵⁷ Nabokov, 49.

⁵⁸ Mulvey, 6.

painstakingly describes his first true sexual encounter with his Lolita. In a moment, Humbert and Dolores go from reading a magazine to Dolores on Humbert's lap, legs spread apart. Humbert

"managed to attune, by a series of stealthy movements, [his] masked lust to her guileless limbs...[as she was] resting athwart [his] hap, and the hidden tumor of an unspeakable passion...all the while mortally afraid that some act of God might interrupt, might remove the golden load in this sensation of which all [his] being seemed concentrated".⁵⁹

The narrative continues in this stream, until Humbert reaches climax:

"...there seemed to be nothing to prevent my muscular thumb from reaching the hot hollow of her groin- just as you might tickle and caress a giggling child...she wiggled, and squirmed, and threw her head back, and her teeth rested on her glistening underlip as she half-turned away, and my moaning mouth...almost reached her bare neck, while I crushed out against her left buttock the last throb of the longest ecstasy man or monster had ever known".⁶⁰

This passage can again be analyzed with Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema". In addition to Mulvey's theories on "the bearer" versus "the maker" of meaning, she further articulates that pleasure, specifically with regards to looking, is split into the roles of active/male and

⁵⁹ Nabokov, 58-59.

⁶⁰ Nabokov, 61.

passive/female.⁶¹ The female form is styled according to the projected male gaze and fantasy- this woman-as-sexual-object is at the core of erotic spectacle: “she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire”.⁶² While Dolores Haze might not fit the idea of passivity, she certainly is styled according to Humbert’s obsessive desire with nymphets. In this sexual encounter, Dolores merely sits on his lap for the majority of the time, as if she is acutely aware of her passive position as a sexual object. Although Dolores is only twelve, she knows that she is an object of desire; in navigating this desire, she shows an eerie awareness for her young age.

Curiously, immediately after this encounter, Humbert qualifies his own feelings for Dolores as pathetic, as he now, in spite of his actions earlier in the day, desires nothing more than to “protect the purity” of Dolores, as a mere twelve year old girl.⁶³

Also important to note is Nabokov’s use of the word ‘marvelous’.

“Marvelous skin- oh, marvelous: tender and tanned, not the least blemished.”⁶⁴

The marvelous has theoretical underpinnings going as far back as the 1920’s.⁶⁵ The marvelous, a surrealist term first used by Andre Breton, is implicitly linked to “the re-enchantment of a disenchanted world” and “disruption of identity”.⁶⁶ In his 1924 essay “Manifesto of Surrealism”, Breton breaks the marvelous into two distinct categories- “romantic ruins and

⁶¹ Mulvey, 7.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Nabokov, 63.

⁶⁴ Nabokov, 41.

⁶⁵ Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (October Books 1995), 19.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 19-20.

modern mannequins” (Breton 11).⁶⁷ As Hal Foster explains in his book, Compulsive Beauty, “...in the mannequin the human figure is given over to the commodity form- indeed, the mannequin is the very image of capitalist reification”.⁶⁸

These theories on the marvelous reinforce much of what we already know about Dolores. When Humbert first sees Dolores he states that “*the twenty-five years [he] had lived since then tapered to a palpitating point, and vanished*”. As the reader knows, up to this point, Humbert has been going through life without any clear romantic purpose, sleeping with prostitutes and taking on a loveless marriage. Yet the moment he meets Dolores, everything changes for Humbert- hence “the re-enchantment of a disenchanted world”.⁶⁹ The parallels between Breton’s marvelous and Dolores Haze continue, as one needs to look no further than Dolores to find an example of the modern mannequin. Dolores is an absolute consumer of culture- her room is full of movie posters and magazines, which is one of the things Humbert detests about her.

“Let us not mince words: the marvelous is always beautiful. Anything marvelous is beautiful, in fact only the marvelous is beautiful” – Andre Breton, 1924

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⁶⁷ Andre Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism,” 1924, 11.

⁶⁸ Foster, 21.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 19.

The relationship between Humbert and Dolores shifts dramatically when Dolores's mother passes away. Dolores is away at camp when Mother Haze dies, and Humbert goes to pick her up- Dolores presses him with forward questions throughout their subsequent drive: "Well, you haven't kissed me yet, have you?" "Say, wouldn't Mother be absolutely mad if she found out we were lovers?"⁷⁰ This apparent shift in the power dynamic between the two is reinforced when they engage in intercourse, an act Humbert claims Dolores initiated:

"...by six she was wide awake and by six fifteen we were technically lovers...it was she who seduced me".⁷¹

The relationship continues in this way, with Dolores provoking Humbert, who is at this point a nervous wreck, at every turn. During their next car ride, she says, without warning

"You revolting creature. I was a daisy-fresh girl, and look what you've done to me, I ought to call the police and tell them you raped me. Oh, you dirty, dirty old man"⁷²

all with a smile on her face. When Humbert finally tells Dolores that her mother has passed away, she seems to resign herself to Humbert's possessiveness, for as he himself says, "she had absolutely nowhere else to

⁷⁰ Nabokov, 112-114.

⁷¹ Ibid., 132.

⁷² Nabokov, 141.

go”.⁷³ Here the power dynamic of the relationship shifts again, as Humbert terrorizes and threatens Dolores every step of their cross-country journey-

*“Finally, let us see what happens if you, a minor...complain to the police of my having kidnapped and raped you? Let us suppose they believe you...I go to jail. But what becomes of you, my orphan? Well, you are luckier. You become the ward of the Department of Public Welfare- which I am afraid sounds a little bleak”.*⁷⁴

The relationship between Humbert and Dolores comes to an end when she escapes with Quilty. When Humbert sees her two years later, she still has the same coyness about her, yet her refusal to come with him shows that she has successfully managed to break herself away from his possessive grasp.⁷⁵

Humbert and Dolores’s relationship was problematic in almost every way possible- she was a young girl who had lost her father and was hated by her mother, he was an obsessed, self-loathing older man. Yet one of the most complex issues in the novel lies in the persuasion of Humbert’s narrative, especially with regards to the re-appropriation of Dolores as Lolita.

The biggest influence Humbert’s gaze has on the reader lies in the “artful misdirection” of the title, *Lolita* (Gates 2).⁷⁶ Dolores Haze is simply Dolores Haze, and Lolita is no more than Humbert’s narrative representation.

⁷³ Ibid., 142.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 150-151.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 280.

⁷⁶ David Gates, “Lolita At 50, And Still Forever Young”, *Newsweek*, 2008, 2.

This again demonstrates Humbert's decision to deny Dolores any sort of autonomy and representation separate from her nymphet status in his retelling. Humbert spends the entire novel recalling his obsessive love of a young girl, yet does not even begrudge Dolores her real name. Lolita is ultimately a figment of Humbert's imagination, a dreamt up, perfect nymphet, and Dolores is cast into the role at Humbert's will. Humbert himself perhaps articulates this best, when he says "I knew I had fallen in love with Lolita forever; but I also knew she would not be forever Lolita".⁷⁷ In saying this, Humbert acknowledges that Dolores is going to get older, and that as soon as she turns fifteen she will no longer be a nymphet, as fourteen is the maximum age.⁷⁸ This is perhaps the most distinct differentiation Humbert makes between Dolores and his construed Lolita- however Dolores is again *underemphasized*, with the focus given to the Humbert's dreamt-up nymphet, Lolita.

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Even before *Lolita* was published, it caused controversy all over the globe. As David Gates points out in his 50th anniversary article on *Lolita*, "it's hardly a book addressed to impressionable children- they wouldn't get past its lacy alliterative first line".⁷⁹ Rather, it was the fact that *Lolita* so pointedly addressed pedophilia that made it a source of terror and controversy for publishers, readers and censors alike. The pedophilic nature

⁷⁷ Nabokov, 65.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁷⁹ Gates, 1.

of *Lolita* meant that the novel faced several obstacles before it could be published in many countries. Simon & Schuster called the book “pure pornography”, and four other American publishers rejected the novel before Paris-based Olympia Press offered to publish it.⁸⁰ In September of 1955, *Lolita* was published in Paris, only to be banned fifteen months later in December of 1956.⁸¹ Bans in Australia soon followed, even amounting to police raids on journalist offices.⁸² Meanwhile, publishers in Britain delayed the novel, as the country was in the middle of deciding whether to reject or accept a revision of the country’s pornography law; this decision would affect whether the police would be allowed to arrest booksellers distributing *Lolita* and other novels dealing with similar subject matter.⁸³

All of this international turmoil simply fueled America’s desire for the book, and when *G.P. Putnam’s Sons* finally released *Lolita* on August 18th, 1958, it was a “huge, immediate success”- selling one hundred thousand copies in three weeks.⁸⁴ From then on, any controversy surrounding the book led to more success, culminating in the novel topping the best sellers list.⁸⁵ Cincinnati Public Library banned the book a month after its release, with the library director stating “I don’t think they have to get it from the public

⁸⁰ Vickers, 48.

⁸¹ Ibid., 49.

⁸² Sarah Boxer, "Think Tank; 'Lolita' Turns 40, Still Arguing for A Right to Exist." *The New York Times*, 1998, 1.

⁸³ Vickers, 49.

⁸⁴ Vickers, 51.

⁸⁵ Ibid.,

library”, with regards to adults reading the novel.⁸⁶ R.T. Walker, the church deacon in Lolita, Texas, went on a campaign to change the name of the town to Jackson, stating “the people who live in this town are God fearing, church going and resent the fact that our town has been tied in with the title of a dirty, sex-filled book that tells the nasty story of a middle aged man’s love affair with a very young girl”.⁸⁷ Walker’s campaign failed, but added to the novel’s presence in popular culture.

* * * * *

The legal action against the novel that publishers feared never came, and instead the novel was mainstreamed into pop culture, with the help of numerous comedians.⁸⁸ Groucho Marx joked, “I’ve put off reading *Lolita* for six years, till she’s eighteen”⁸⁹ and Steve Allen produced a skit starring Lolita and Zorro⁹⁰, which headed off the steady stream of Lolita jokes, almost all of which stemmed from the understanding that *Lolita* was a dirty book. The sensationalized controversy surrounding *Lolita* meant that the public quickly came to understand *Lolita* the novel and Dolores Haze the character as one. The complex character of Dolores Haze was simplified, reduced to physical characteristics and nymphet status, just as she had been by Humbert. However, this was simply the first cycle of re-appropriation of Dolores Haze-

⁸⁶ "Cincinnati Library Bans 'Humorous' 'Obscene' 'Lolita.'" *Dover Daily Reporter*, 1958, 5.

⁸⁷ Mike Cox, "Texas Tales: Lolita." *Texas Escapes*, 2006, 1.

⁸⁸ Vickers, 52.

⁸⁹ Matt Harvey, “Still Controversial after all these years: Commemorating Lolita’s 50th with Kubrick and Conversation.” *The Villager*, 2008, 1.

⁹⁰ Vickers, 52.

in 1960, Stanley Kubrick announced that he had the film rights to the novel, and that Nabokov was writing the script.⁹¹ This cemented the novel's place in contemporary media history, both in literary and film circles. This was only the beginning of America's continued fascination with *Lolita*, which would slowly evolve, ending up with the present-day *Lolita Effect*, which will be explored in Chapter Two.

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The character of Dolores Haze has been largely oversimplified in the decades following *Lolita's* publication. Her relationship with Humbert is a fascinating one, with its shifts in power dynamics, threats from both parties and of course, its sexual focus. While it is overwhelmingly clear that Humbert loves *Lolita*, it is not certain that he feels the same about Dolores; furthermore, the way Dolores feels about Humbert is a mystery, especially for the first half of the novel. In the end, Dolores is the most mysterious character in the novel- she is prone to fits, sexually curious, defiant, a nymphet with brown hair, always-red pouty lips and flawless tanned skin.

The fact that Humbert denies Dolores her voice only contributes to her mystery, and forces her into the role of passive/female, as a female form to be used, as Humbert desires.⁹² Humbert quells Dolores's attempts to be anything more than his perfect nymphet- both in their original encounters and in his narrative. Even when Dolores is married and pregnant, Humbert

⁹¹ Bob Thomas, "Kubrick to film 'Lolita'", *The Calgary Herald*, 1960, 1.

⁹² Mulvey, 8.

can only see her as his Lolita, and expects her to play the role of the passive female by throwing away the life she has built and coming away with him.

Due to *Lolita's* subject matter, it has become one of the most controversial books of the last century (Gates 2). This controversy only helped catapult the novel into pop culture fame, where it still resides. Although Nabokov originally did not want Dolores Haze personified, things were quickly changed with the Kubrick movie, for which Nabokov himself wrote the screenplay. Dolores Haze was re-appropriated the moment she entered the public sphere- she was forgotten while Lolita became a pop culture icon. Society shifted away from the complex, multi-dimensional Dolores Haze of literature, opting instead for the visually enticing nymphet, Lolita. The contemporary understanding of Lolita is no longer grounded in Nabokov's novel, but instead in the fashion industry's interpretation of Lolita- an interpretation that does not begin to do justice to the original character. In Chapter Two, the Lolita Effect will be examined and used to analyze modern media references to Lolita found in advertising, fashion photography, and editorials.

CHAPTER TWO.

The Effects of Re-appropriation of *Lolita* in Contemporary Fashion

Photography & Advertising

This chapter will examine various media sources and how they relate to the Lolita Effect. Among these sources are images that have circulated widely in popular fashion magazines, famous musicians who have channeled Lolita at some stage in their career, as well as clothing items and perfumes. The second part of this chapter highlights some of the issues that have come from these contemporary media portrayals of Lolita, and how they are affecting young girls and women psychologically, physically and interpersonally. Throughout the course of the chapter, the shift away from Nabokov's original Dolores Haze will also be discussed, and highlighted as detrimental to how society perceives both *Lolita* and young girls today.

* * * * *

Lolita has been inspiring fashion photography for over two decades, utilizing models from Kate Moss to Lily Cole as dolled up nymphet-like figures. This section will examine four images in particular- a 2011 Jill Stuart ad campaign image featuring fifteen year old Hailey Clauson (Figure 1), a 1992 *Vogue* editorial image with then-eighteen year old Kate Moss (Figure 2), *Vogue Nippon's* 2001 editorial featuring Natalia Vodianova, who was nineteen at the time (Figure 3), and finally *Playboy France's* controversial 2008 Lily Cole cover- Cole was 20 at the time (Figure 4). While the images

take place in a variety of settings, there are many overlapping characteristics. Images of Hailey Clauson (Fig. 1), Natalia Vodianova (Fig. 3) and Lily Cole (Fig. 4) all feature the models with bows in their hair- the last two images taking the childishness aspect a step further with pigtails. All four images feature distinctly child-like props- two stuffed animals, one rag doll and a picture book. In three images the models are wearing heels- in these three they are positioned around a bed. Knee socks are featured in three images, red lipstick also in three. Clauson and Moss are playfully looking down, while Vodianova and Cole provocatively stare directly into the camera. Aside from Clauson, the models are of average age as far as modeling goes. All four girls are, unsurprisingly, white- I have yet to come across a Lolita of color in fashion photography.

IMAGE REMOVED

Figure 1: Hailey Clauson for Jill Stuart, 2011

IMAGE REMOVED

Figure 2: Kate Moss, Vogue 1992

IMAGE REMOVED

Figure 3: Natalia Vodianova, Vogue Nippon 2001

IMAGE REMOVED

Figure 4: Lily Cole, Playboy France 2008

In numerous studies analyzing sexual content in female magazines, a prevalent theme is that magazines present the female figure as “sexually desirable and thereby gaining the attention of men”, and also push this idea as an important goal for women.⁹³ The Lily Cole photo in particular speaks to this notion; the image of a nude twenty-year old woman in pigtails clutching a teddy bear is quite alarming, given that it is on the cover of Playboy Magazine.

These specific images also qualify as “costuming for seduction”, a term coined in 1996 by Duffy and Gotcher.⁹⁴ In these four images, the models have been costumed for a very specific seduction- the idea of the young (school) girl inviting an older man’s sexual advances.

According to Cook & Kaiser in a 2004 study:

“Advertising imagery present the public with both a “trickle up” and a “trickle down” framework on girls and women; thus the distinction between women and girls may become

⁹³ American Psychological Association, 7.

⁹⁴ American Psychological Association, 7.

*blurred...young girls are “adultified” and adult women are “youthified”.*⁹⁵

The models used for these images range in age from fifteen to twenty-Dolores Haze was twelve when her sexual relationship with Humbert Humbert began. A key aspect of “trickle up” and “trickle down” imagery is that the lines between teenager and adult woman become blurred; with these Lolita images, that line is extended to include pre-teen girls as well. In a society where twenty is considered ‘old’ in modeling years, the trickle down approach to advertising is most often utilized. According to Jean Kilbourne, as cited in the APA study:

*“The trickle-down or “youthification” side of the equation includes sexual portrayals of adult women as young girls in advertising, often wearing schoolgirl clothing and licking lollipops or popsicles or wearing scaled-up versions of children’s clothing styles like baby-doll dresses and tops, knee socks, and Mary Janes, all marketed as adults women’s wear...[a trend otherwise known as] pedophilic fashion”.*⁹⁶

All four of the images above fall under the category of pedophilic fashion as described by Kilbourne, due to the props and poses they use. As the American Psychological Association’s study points out, *“it is worrisome when dolls designed specifically for four to eight year olds are associated with*

⁹⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁹⁶ American Psychological Association, 12.

an objectified adult sexuality".⁹⁷ Dolls, teddy bears, lollipops and Mary Janes have all been re-appropriated thanks to their frequent usage in Lolita-inspired imagery, and now are associated with pre-pubescent sexuality rather than staples of a young girl's life.

* * * * *

One of the most famous recent examples of Lolita in the media was the ad campaign starring Dakota Fanning for Marc Jacobs' perfume 'Oh, Lola!'. Marc Jacobs specifically chose Dakota Fanning for this ad campaign because he felt she could perfectly embody the attitude of the new fragrance; Jacobs described 'Oh, Lola!' as "...more of a Lolita than a Lola, but we weren't going to call the fragrance Lolita...Oh, Lola is sensual, but she's sweeter".⁹⁸ On Jacobs' website, the sale page for 'Oh, Lola!' has the following description:

*"VIBRANT. FLIRTATIOUS. LIGHT HEARTED. Oh, Lola! is a new take on our original Lola fragrance. Oh, Lola! is flirtatious and charming with a sparkling personality. It leaves you feeling light-hearted and youthful."*⁹⁹

In an interview with Women's Wear Daily, Jacobs explained why he chose Dakota Fanning specifically for the Oh, Lola ad campaign:

"I've been a big fan of Dakota since the first time I saw her in a movie...I had recently seen 'The Runaways'. Dakota was in it, and

⁹⁷ Ibid., 13.

⁹⁸ Julie Naughton, "Marc Jacobs Launches Lola Sister: Oh, Lola" *Women's Wear Daily*, 2011, 1.

⁹⁹ Marcjacobs.com

I knew she could be this contemporary Lolita, seductive yet sweet".¹⁰⁰

Between Jacobs' vision for the perfume and his reasons for choosing Fanning, it is clear that Lolita was a large inspiration for the entire creative process. When the ad campaign itself was released, that Lolita inspiration became even more apparent. The ad, which was released in late 2011, featured Fanning in a sheer white dress staring at the camera, with an oversized perfume bottle placed provocatively between her thighs (Figure 5). Oh, Lola and its subsequent ad campaign is a perfect example of contemporary society's convoluted understanding of Lolita. 'Flirtatious', 'youthful', 'seductive', 'sweet', 'sensual'- these words are a demonstration of how shallow and incomplete society's current understanding of Lolita truly is.

IMAGE REMOVED

Figure 5: Dakota Fanning for Marc Jacobs' 'Oh, Lola!'

Fanning was only 17 when the ad was released- that fact, combined with the "sexually provocative" nature of Fanning's body language, led to the ad being banned in the United Kingdom in November of 2011.¹⁰¹ The Advertising Standards Authority released the following statement regarding the banned image:

¹⁰⁰ Naughton, 1.

¹⁰¹ Olivia Bergin, "Dakota Fanning's 'Oh! Lola' advert for Marc Jacobs is banned", *Telegraph*, 2011, 1.

"We noted that the model was holding up the perfume bottle which rested in her lap between her legs and we considered that its position was sexually provocative. We understood the model was 17 years old but we considered she looked under the age of 16. We considered that the length of her dress, her leg and position of the perfume bottle drew attention to her sexuality. Because of that, along with her appearance, we considered the ad could be seen to sexualise a child".¹⁰²

Jacobs responded to the ban with complete surprise, stating:

"It was our pleasure to work with Dakota Fanning for the Oh, Lola campaign. She is a smart, pretty, interesting, talented young woman, and we would never have suggested an advertising concept that we thought was inappropriate. I believe she is also very thoughtful about the projects she takes on and would not have done something that she felt was in questionable taste. It's really unfortunate that people have taken anything negative from what we believe is a really good campaign, and one that so perfectly embodies the fragrance."¹⁰³

The final sentence in Jacobs' response is significant- he stands by his belief that the Fanning and the ad campaign embodies exactly what he hoped, and is an accurate representation of the fragrance itself. Jacobs fails to see the

¹⁰² Bergin, 1.

¹⁰³ Nina Jones, "Marc Jacobs' Oh, Lola Ad Banned in U.K." *Women's Wear Daily*, 2011, 1.

problem with a Lolita-inspired fragrance and subsequent Lolita-inspired ad campaign; this once again reiterates just how far removed society's understanding of Lolita is from the actual character and novel. Jacobs himself admitted that the perfume and ads are inspired by Lolita, and sees no problem in equating a modern-day perfume described as 'light-hearted and youthful' with Dolores Haze, a twelve year old at the center of a middle-aged man's sexual desire. Fanning stands by the ad campaign as well, also stating her surprise in an interview with *Glamour Magazine*:

*"If you want to read something into a perfume bottle, then I guess you can. But it's also like, Why are you making it about that, you creep? I love Marc and trust him, and we just laughed about it."*¹⁰⁴

Both Fanning and Jacobs seem to fail to realize that ultimately, the reason people viewed the campaign as sexualizing a child is because that was the frame they (being Jacobs and his creative team) presented to the public. In saying something is Lolita-inspired, one injects whatever they are creating with an air that is sexual, childlike, and in the case of print media- often voyeuristic.

* * * * *

Recently, Lolita has become a mainstay not only for fashion photography and advertising, but also for fashion itself. Designers and

¹⁰⁴ Amy Spencer, "Glamour's March Cover Star Dakota Fanning on Going Braless: 'Deal With It'" *Glamour Magazine*, 2013, 1.

retailers alike use Lolita as a descriptor for clothing items, citing the novel as inspiration for both individual items and fashion shows or collections as a whole. Shopbop.com, a large online retailer, has four items that come up on a search of the term 'Lolita'. A miniskirt, a pair of wedges, a fringed top and an ivory, eyelet skirt. All of the items are from different designers, and range from \$128-\$395 in price. Shopstyle.com, an online shopping style aggregator, yields 97 results. These include a \$295 silk nightgown (Figure 6) and a vintage 1995 Swatch watch (Figure 7). Other items include cutoff jeans, evening dresses, shoes- the range is vast and varied. However, the most common item that comes up is by far, lingerie.

IMAGE REMOVED

Figure 6: Natori Lolita Chemise, \$295

IMAGE REMOVED

Figure 7: 1995 Swatch watch, \$110

The Lolita imagery has been so pervasive that it has become a distinct 'brand' of its own- for fashion designers and consumers alike. Lolita-esque style is currently a trend of its own- one only has to examine current social media to see just how popular Lolita is. A search for '#lolita' on Instagram, a

popular photo-based social media smart phone application, reveals over 100,000 pictures tagged with the novel title- the images range from photos of the book cover, to childhood pictures of little girls in bikinis, to pictures of 20-somethings in white lacy dresses and flower crowns.¹⁰⁵

Contemporary artists have also drawn inspiration from *Lolita*, the obvious example being Britney Spears' famed 1998 music video for 'Baby One More Time'. The then-sixteen year old Spears was seen scantily dressed in a schoolgirl outfit, roaming the halls of a school, singing while doing a perfectly coordinated dance routine (Figure 8).

IMAGE REMOVED

Figure 8: Britney Spears, 'Baby One More Time'. 1998.

The music video is credited with changing what was acceptable in terms of public sex appeal, especially for teenagers. In 2003, Andgaser and Roe noted that "such tactics [as displayed in Spears' music video] often provoke sexualized discussion of the artist- that is, discussion focuses not on her talent or music but rather on her body and sexuality".¹⁰⁶ In the case of Spears, the focus shifting from her music to her sixteen year old, barely pubescent body, became an issue of sexualization that extended beyond her, to girls all over America.

¹⁰⁵ *The initial instagram search '#lolita' was conducted in mid-February and revealed just under 70,000 photos. As of April 24, 2013, that number had grown to over 102,000 photos.*

¹⁰⁶ American Psychological Association, 6.

Now, fifteen years later, another artist has emerged who evokes a Lolita aura- Lana del Rey. Del Rey is 26, a full decade older than Spears was at the time of 'Baby One More Time's release. However, that has not stopped her from being very public about her desire to parallel with Lolita- del Rey described her persona as "Lolita got lost in the hood" to a reporter, and even has a song simply titled 'Lolita'.¹⁰⁷ She sports the heart-shaped sunglasses that have been incorrectly attributed to Dolores Haze for decades, while embracing the modern day Lolita aesthetic of flower crowns and sultry stares (Figure 9). Lana del Rey has had a meteoric rise to fame, starting with her first single, 'Video Games', going viral- the music video has over 37 million hits on youtube.com. While much of the contemporary Lolita aesthetic was already in place due to fashion photography, del Rey's popularity has solidified and mainstreamed it further.

IMAGE REMOVED

Figure 9: Lana del Rey, Lanadelrey.com, 2013.

So what does all of this tell us, and young girls who turn to the media for inspiration and guidance? Clothing bearing the description 'lolita' is most often lingerie, or sheer, lacy items. Fashion photographs with distinct Lolita inspiration feature girls on beds, with bows in their hair and stuffed animals at their side. Perfumes bearing variations of her name are described as

¹⁰⁷ Nitsuh Abebe, "The Imagination of Lana del Rey", *Pitchfork*, 2011, 1.

flirtatious and seductive. Though the amount of commercial items bearing her name or alluding to Lolita as inspiration is large and varied, there is a distinct aura that all of these things project: seductive, yet youthful and innocent. This aura has been reflected and re-emphasized by celebrities and pop culture icons over the decades- from Britney Spears to Dakota Fanning to Lana del Rey. All of this circulation of Lolita imagery has led to the normalization of sexualized pre-pubescent bodies, coming from young girls themselves, and also projected onto them by others.

* * * * *

In an interview from 1967, Vladimir Nabokov very clearly explains the difference between Lolita and the contemporary young girl engaging in a relationship with an older man. *"Humbert was fond of 'little girls'- not simply 'young girls'. Nymphets are girl-children, not starlets and 'sex-kittens'"*.¹⁰⁸ For Nabokov (and Humbert Humbert) there was difference between a nymphet like Dolores Haze and a typical young girl interested in sex and her looks. This subtle difference has been completely lost upon society and contemporary fashion advertising as Lolita has become mainstreamed and minimized; she is no longer a unique, complex girl with a very specific host of traits, but instead any sexualized girl in a sheer dress with bows in her hair and a penetrating stare. Contemporary portrayals of Lolita follow specific patterns, yet are severely lacking nuanced, historical understandings of the

¹⁰⁸ Herbert Gold, "Interview with Vladimir Nabokov on the Art of Fiction No. 40" *The Paris Review* (1967): 1.

original *Lolita*. These stylized portrayals are flat, lacking any of the emotional and psychological depth of Dolores Haze, yet they still carry a loaded, sexualized message that is not lost upon young girls and women. This simplification of *Lolita* was something Nabokov was wary of, and subsequently went on to lament after Kubrick's film was released in 1962:

*"[A] project I have been nursing for some time is the publication of the complete screenplay of Lolita that I made for Kubrick. Although there are just enough borrowings from it in his version to justify my legal position as author of the script, the film is only a blurred skimpy glimpse of the marvelous picture I imagined and set down scene by scene. I do not wish to imply that Kubrick's film is mediocre; in its own right, it is first-rate, but it is not what I wrote[...]. I shall never understand why he did not follow my directions and dreams. It is a great pity; but at least I shall be able to have people read my Lolita play in its original form."*¹⁰⁹

Nabokov clearly recognized the danger of over-simplifying *Lolita*, but at this point, it was too late. Kubrick's wildly popular film was only the beginning of a now half-century obsession with *Lolita*, an obsession that has led to serious psychological, emotional and real-life consequences for the young girls and women of today.

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¹⁰⁹ Gold, 3.

Girls are starting to sexualize themselves at shockingly young ages- a recent study by Christine Starr and Gail Ferguson entitled “Sexy Dolls, Sexy Grade-Schoolers? Media and Maternal Influences on Young Girls’ Self-Sexualization”, revealed that girls are beginning to self-sexualize as young as six years old.¹¹⁰ This is two years younger than the age at which children can process the purpose of advertising, highlighting how effective and problematic current media marketing is, particularly with children.¹¹¹

However, the sexualization of young girls is not only self-sexualized, but also projected. Going back to the American Psychological Association’s report on the sexualization of girls, sexualization results when the following occurs:

1. *person’s value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behavior, to the exclusion of other characteristics;*
2. *a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy;*
3. *a person is sexually objectified — that is, made into a thing for others’ sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making; and/or*
4. *sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person.*¹¹²

The APA goes on to say that,

¹¹⁰ Gail Ferguson & Christine Starr, “Sexy Dolls, Sexy Grade-Schoolers? Media and Maternal Influences on Young Girls’ Self-Sexualization,” *Sex Roles* 66, no. 2 (2012): 8.

¹¹¹ American Psychological Association, 20.

¹¹² American Psychological Association, 1.

*“Self-objectification involves adopting a third-person perspective on the physical self and constantly assessing one’s own body in an effort to conform to the culture’s standards of attractiveness”.*¹¹³

This adaptation of the third-person perspective resonates with John Berger’s theory on how women see themselves. According to Berger,

*“To be born a woman has been to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men...this has been at the cost of a woman’s self being split into two. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself...from earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually...and so she comes to consider the surveyor and the surveyed within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman.”*¹¹⁴

Sexualization takes this surveillance a step further, leading to intense self-critique that can be emotionally damaging and lead to a host of psychological issues.

Studies have shown that advertisements not only sexualize the female body, but also go further and “encourage young women to think of themselves as sexual objects whose lives were not complete unless sexually

¹¹³ Ibid., 20.

¹¹⁴ Berger, 46.

connected with a man”.¹¹⁵ While this encouraged attachment is problematic with any sort of advertising, it is further complicated in the context of the Lolita Effect. A study published in 1998 found that advertising in popular magazines (*YM, Teen, Seventeen, Glamour, Mademoiselle*) not only encouraged women to style themselves in a way that is desirable to men, but also pushed ‘innocence’ as the most attractive quality to possess.¹¹⁶ Projected innocence is a cornerstone of the Lolita Effect, and having fashion magazines tell women and teenagers to be more virginal and innocent only further pushes women in the direction of dependence on a male presence- be it age appropriate or not. This information ties into the usage of younger models in advertising as well. A 2004 study examined the usage of “barely legal” celebrities in sexualized advertising and concluded that:

*“The message from advertisers and the mass media to girls (as eventual women) is they should always be sexually available, always have sex on their minds, be willing to be dominated and even sexually aggressed against, and they will be gazed on as sexual objects”.*¹¹⁷

The effects of Lolita-based sexualization are very real and detrimental to young girls. A 2006 study conducted by Tolman, Impett, Tracy and Michael shows that eighth grade girls who objectify themselves more tend to have

¹¹⁵ American Psychological Association, 8.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Debra Merskin, “Reviving Lolita?: A Media Literacy Examination of Sexual Portrayals of Girls in Fashion Advertising.” *American Behavioral Scientist* (2004): 120.

much lower self-esteem.¹¹⁸ This is hardly surprising, as marketers work very carefully to establish a (false) connection between their products and popularity and social acceptance- when these products play into sexualization, it only re-emphasizes the link between overt sexuality and popularity. Self-sexualization is also linked to appearance anxiety, body shaming and an overwhelming desire to be thin.¹¹⁹ Perhaps the most alarming and telling study was one published in 1991, conducted by Lucas, Beard, O'Fallon and Kurland.¹²⁰ The four

*“studied the incidence of anorexia nervosa among ten to nineteen year old girls during a fifty year period, and found that it paralleled changes in fashion and idealized body images”.*¹²¹

This study confirmed what many have always suspected about the impact of fashion on young girls, however in the 22 years since the study was published, little to nothing has been done to alleviate this issue, both with regards to body image and usage of the Lolita Effect.

* * * * *

The objectification of Lolita extends beyond psychological impact, in very real, problematic ways. In Tokyo, hundreds of ‘image clubs’ have sprung up and become highly popular among men.¹²² They first began appearing in

¹¹⁸ American Psychological Association, 20.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 22.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 24.

¹²¹ American Psychological Association, 24.

¹²² Nicholas Kristof, “A Plain School Uniform as the Latest Aphrodisiac”, *The New York Times*, 1997, 1.

the 1990's, and still maintain their popularity today. In these clubs, "Japanese men pay about \$150 an hour to live out their fantasies about schoolgirls".¹²³ In Tokyo, the age of consent is one of the lowest in the world at only thirteen-only a year older than Dolores Haze at the beginning of her relationship with Humbert Humbert.¹²⁴ These clubs stem from what people in Japan call the Lolita Complex, or Loli-con- a direct homage to Nabokov's novel.¹²⁵ These clubs provide a very real example of how cultural re-appropriation of Lolita is affecting the way society sexualizes young girls. Furthermore, the clubs are leading to pedophilic spin-offs in the media, including "A magazine called *V-Club* featuring pictures of naked elementary-school girls [and] another called *Anatomical Illustrations of Junior High School Girls*".¹²⁶

Another very real, alarming consequence of the Lolita Effect and the subsequent sexualization of young girls and women is how these images contribute to rape culture and violence against women. According to studies referenced in the American Psychological Association's report,

"women and men exposed to sexually objectifying images of women from mainstream media [specifically referencing magazine advertisements] were found to be significantly more accepting of rape myths (e.g., the belief that women invite rape

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ William Sparrow, "The Young Ones", *Asia Times*, 2008, 1.

¹²⁵ Jean Kilbourne, *Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel* (New York: Touchstone, 1999), 282.

¹²⁶ Kilbourne, 282.

by engaging in certain behaviors), sexual harassment...[and] interpersonal violence than were those in control conditions.”¹²⁷

In the past few years, this acceptance of rape culture has shifted to violent acts against women and young girls nation-wide. In 2010, Cleveland, a small Texan town with just under 8,000 residents, was shaken when 19 young boys and men were arrested for the gang rape of an eleven-year old girl.¹²⁸ The crime itself was horrific, and quickly gained national attention, amounting to a New York Times article published in early 2011. The article very clearly played into victim-blaming, making statements questioning the validity of the victim’s claims, even though scenes from the multiple rapes were recorded on the cell phones of several perpetrators. James McKinley, the article’s author, asks the question: “...if the allegations are proved, how could [the town’s] young men have been drawn into such an act?”¹²⁹ McKinley then goes on to say (unnamed) residents of the town discussed the young girl as someone who “dressed older than her age, wearing makeup and fashions more appropriate to a woman in her 20s” and hung out with older boys on the playground.¹³⁰ Not only did McKinley’s article shift the focus and blame away from the rapists, boys and men ranging from fourteen to 27 years old, onto the young victim, but it also highlighted the maddening double standard the Lolita Effect perpetuates. Every day young girls and women are bombarded

¹²⁷ American Psychological Association, 30-31.

¹²⁸ James C. McKinley Jr., “Vicious Assault Shakes Texas Town”, *The New York Times*, 2011, 1.

¹²⁹ McKinley Jr., 1.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

with images of models dressed up in highly sexualized and stylized ways, and then when a young girl who has attempted to emulate these models is raped, the blame is placed squarely on her for self-sexualizing and 'asking for it'.

This trend of victim shaming has continued, and has become even more pervasive and detrimental to the victims of rape with the use of social media. In the past year, three gang rapes have received national and international attention due to the role social media played in the unfolding cases: the Steubenville, Ohio rape and the rapes of Audrie Pott and Rehtaeh Parsons. All three cases begin with the same story- a young high school girl goes to a party, gets too drunk, and then is sexually assaulted by multiple boys. Yet the horrific similarities do not stop there- in all three cases, the assailants documented their sexual abuse of the young girls, and then spread the photos via social media. The Steubenville case was arguably the most-publicized underage rape case in recent history, and the entire country watched as two high-school football stars were found guilty of "digital penetration" (which is considered rape in Ohio) and sentenced to at least one year each in juvenile detention, as well as a lifetime on the juvenile sex offender registry.¹³¹

Sadly, the stories of Audrie Pott and Rehtaeh Parsons did not end in a conviction for the perpetrators, or even with the alleged rapists being charged with sexual assault, much less taken to trial. Instead, both girls, ages fifteen and seventeen respectively, committed suicide, no longer being able

¹³¹ Diana Reese, "Steubenville, India, Turkey: Steps toward justice for women around the globe." *The Washington Post*, 2013, 1.

to take the bullying and victim shaming that was a result of images from their rapes being spread to peers via social media. Rape and cyber bullying are unfortunately all-too-common in society today, and this new combination of the two is a horrific, continued violation of victims' physical and emotional space. Audrie Pott committed suicide on September 12, 2012- eight days after being sexually assaulted while unconscious at a party with friends.¹³² Rehtaeh Parsons was taken off of life support on April 9, 2013- four days after her attempt at hanging herself, and eighteen months after being raped by four boys while intoxicated at a small gathering.¹³³ Only now, after the deaths of Pott and Parsons, have the police begun earnest investigations into their respective cases.

In all three of these cases, the young girls were further victimized and humiliated by their peers and community after images of them being sexually assaulted went public. Rehtaeh Parsons was bullied so much that she switched schools, yet still could not walk through the halls without being called a slut.¹³⁴ During the Steubenville trial, the victim was called a liar, both by the defendants' attorney and members of the Steubenville community who rally around their high school football stars as if they can "do no wrong".¹³⁵ These highly publicized incidents of victim shaming have dire consequences, both for the women involved, but also for the future, as they

¹³² Alexander Abad-Santos, "How Bad Is 'Viral' Rape Shames? It Pushes Teenage Girls Into Killing Themselves." *The Atlantic Wire*, 2013, 1.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹³⁴ Abad-Santos, 1.

¹³⁵ Reese, 1.

set a precedent of placing the blame on the victims rather than the perpetrators.

In her essay, "Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words" Sharon Marcus argues that a misplaced focus on rape is what leads to the perpetuation of rape culture.¹³⁶ According to Marcus,

*"Attempts to stop rape through legal deterrence fundamentally choose to persuade men not to rape. They thus assume that men simply have the power to rape and concede this primary power to them, implying that at best men can secondarily be dissuaded from using this power by means of threatened punishment from a masculinized state or legal system."*¹³⁷

The assumption that rape is an inherent possibility for every male is one of the key factors for why victim blaming is so pervasive in society's current understanding of rape. By refocusing and redefining rape as something that is "enabled by narratives, complexes and institutions", rather than an inherent gender-based force, society will be able to better combat rape from the outset, and provide support for victims when rapes do occur. Narratives that sexualize young girls and women are everywhere, urging girls to 'channel your inner sex goddess' (as seen in *Cosmopolitan*, *Women's Health Magazine* and *Redbook*) and project an aura of innocence to lure in

¹³⁶ Sharon Marcus, "Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention," in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), 388.

¹³⁷ Marcus, 388.

boys and men.¹³⁸ These narratives encourage women to dress and act in ways that will attract men, and also reinforce ideas about women that lead some men to rape. When a girl who tries to follow the standards set by these magazines is raped, just as with the eleven-year old girl from Cleveland, the girl is blamed for trying to make herself attractive to boys, and subsequently 'asking for it'. This violent cycle continues as more and more sexualized imagery is forced upon young adults, further reinforcing what Marcus describes as the 'social script'- "the creation of our [female] powerlessness and the rapist's power".¹³⁹ Reducing the amount of Lolita imagery in fashion photography and advertising is clearly not going to singlehandedly disrupt this cycle of violence against women, but it can be a step in the right direction of reducing the ongoing narrative that sexualizes women and glamorizes abuse.

¹³⁸ American Psychological Association, 8.

¹³⁹ Marcus, 392.

Conclusion.

Nearly six decades later, does Dolores Haze still matter? She has been twisted and warped every which way, had heart-shaped sunglasses plopped over the eyes that told the story of this mysterious nymphet, and been reduced to a series of props and pigtails plastered all over the glossy pages of magazines around the world. After researching Haze and her contemporary counterparts, I would resoundingly say that yes, she does still matter, and that her trials and tribulations are perhaps more relevant now than ever. For as long as a celebrity child star does not understand why posing in a sheer dress with a provocative bottle between her legs is problematic, and for as long as residents of a small town in Texas can say that an eleven-year old girl was asking to be raped by nineteen boys and men because she wore makeup and dressed older than her age, Dolores Haze will matter. Even after society breaks the horrific cycles of victim shaming, glamorizing sexiness in pre-teens and violence against women, Dolores Haze will matter.

Dolores Haze is one of the most well known, yet misrepresented characters of our time, and this fact speaks volumes. Before *Lolita* was even released worldwide, people were calling for it to be banned and burned, but now *Lolita* has a prevalent status as a pop culture and fashion icon. Haze has been simplified, stripped of her complexity and replaced with a glamorized version lacking depth or any of the traits that made her such a notable nymphet in Nabokov's original novel.

When will society's obsession with Lolita end, if ever? Perhaps Nabokov himself said it best in a 1962 interview: "*I think it is all a matter of love: the more you love a memory, the stronger and stranger it is.*"¹⁴⁰ Nabokov's novel is at once a work of literary genius and a psychological masterpiece, however that in no way means it should be translated into a societal standard for how to treat girls and young women. As society's understanding of Dolores Haze, Lolita and *Lolita* grows stranger and yet more prevalent, it is important to remain grounded in the original text. Dolores Haze was a confused young girl who was taken advantage of by a much older man, and glamorizing her while lessening the problematic aspects of her life does a disservice to the young women of today who are subject to sexualization on a daily basis. Lolita should not be an ideal for young girls, and until fashion photography and the media stops portraying her as such, society will continue to force girls onto a problematic and ultimately precarious trajectory.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Vladimir Nabokov. *BBC Television*, 1962.

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