

Analysis of vladimir  
nabokov's book, lolita  
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**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Nabokov unveils in chapter 13, Humbert Humbert as the devious predator, a paedophile convinced of his own cunning genius. Through his narrative voice can we, the reader, be both sickened by his perverse insanity and perplexed by our own advocacy of his pursuit of Lolita. When stripped of linguistic and significant embellishments, this chapter perpetuates a lewd account of masturbation and sexual exploitation, through Humbert's confused and romanticised perception. Humbert becomes the soapy-eared intellectual and the ravenous beast simultaneously, as his sexual corruptions surface.

Humbert Humbert is both an ironic conglomeration of all duplicitous heroes and an anomalous mess of sexual iniquity and false pretensions. The crux of his foggy character is manifested in chapter 13, in an erotic account of his masturbation over his 'little maiden' Lolita. Unbeknown or not to Lolita, Humbert hunts her sexuality in an attempt to consummate his desires, transforming himself into a beast in the process, 'while I crushed out against her left buttock the last throb of the longest ecstasy man or monster had ever known' (page 61). The study of his character becomes one of moral contention, should we trust Lolita as 'safely solipsized', or should we, as the reader stop the progression of the narrative and put down the book? In Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell Tale Heart*, in which the protagonist is comparable to Humbert, the unreliable narrator is again encouraged innately by the reader to carry out his murder by the mere turning of the page. Nabokov is aware of this, and the metafictional role the reader plays, 'we should ponder the question how does the mind work when the sullen reader is confronted by the sunny book. First, the sullen mood melts away, and for better or worse the reader enters into the spirit of the game'. Nabokov disregards the

'truth' that is searched for in fiction, like he disregards psychoanalysis, both being distillations of human conceptions and ideas, which he believes should stay deceitful and therefore magnificent. Humbert's narrative perspective in this particular chapter is accentuated by the excitement of the language. Rather than an objective account of his sexual encounter, wonder prevails through the run on sentences and erotic language, 'and all the while keeping a maniac's inner eye on my distant golden goal, I cautiously increased the magic friction that was doing away, in an illusional, if not factual, sense, with the physically irremovable, but psychologically very friable texture of the material divide (pajamas and robe) between the weight of two sunburnt legs, resting athwart my life, and the hidden tumor of an unspeakable passion.'(59). His inability to state, without adornments, the reality of his sexual perversions shows an awareness of his wrong doings in moral perspective. He constantly refers to Lolita as Eve, or a temptress, and at one point likens her to a snake, 'She twisted herself free, recoiled, and lay back in the right-hand corner of the davenport' (58).

Regardless of Nabokov's disdain towards symbolism, the apple in chapter 13, as in the existence of Christian faith, becomes an emblem for corruption. By likening himself and his experiences to those of the divine, Humbert Humbert aggrandizes his base desires into a spiritual pursuit of his nymphet. If Lolita is Eve, she eats the fruit and thus renders Humbert as the blameless Adam, 'she had painted her lips and was holding in her hollowed hands a beautiful, banal, Eden-red apple. She was not shod, however, for church'(58). Humbert's profane referencing excuses his acts on the grounds of Lolita as the temptress and not the vulnerable girl. Humbert manifests his sexual

desires through biblical allusions, playing into humanity's innate blame of women. His woman-hating attitude is most prevalent in his approach to Lolita's mother, and his licit lover, Charlotte Haze or, 'big cold Haze' (57). The apple becomes 'Delicious', a named facilitator for sexual feeling in Humbert's attempt at a surrealist representation of his 'unspeakable passion'. Lolita is an ancient projection of femininity, for Humbert she is Eve, a nymph, a surrealist Venus, Carmen, the illusion of a half-woman to the erudite man.

In chapter 13, Humbert declares himself a man turned monster, filled with clandestine sexual gratification by the will of God, 'Blessed be the Lord, she had noticed nothing!' (page 61). Humbert's euphoric achievement becomes his defining characteristic, his 'cunning of the insane' and his further quest for the nymph who exists in his mind's eye.