

Programmed Desire: A Darwinian Reading of Humbert Humbert's
Predilection on Lolita in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*

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This MA thesis study explores Darwinian evolutionary explanations of character motives and behavior in Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita* (1955). The aim of the study is to interpret the main character's sexual-romantic obsession with a female child character within the framework of evolutionary sciences such as evolutionary psychology.

The study is conducted by close reading of the source material in connection with applying and explaining findings within the theoretical position of evolutionary sciences.

The main finding is that the main character's predilection and molestation on the girl character has an evolutionary basis based on age, reproductive potential, and fertility but the desire of his becomes individualized towards the girl over the course of the story, muting psychological predispositions shaped by evolution. Additionally, the child's characterization construed evolutionarily could have made her amenable to be sexually exploited by the main character.

The thesis suggests further research in terms of evolutionary analysis of the discourse and social practices of the novel, general encouragement for evolution-inspired reading of literature, and possibly empirical reader reaction research on Nabokov's *Lolita*.

Key words: evolution, evolutionary psychology, inclusive fitness, life history strategy, parental investment, mating preference, Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (1955)

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Abbreviations

EP—Evolutionary Psychology

H—Humbert

HH—Humbert Humbert

IF—Inclusive Fitness

L—*Lolita* (1955)

LD—Literary Darwinism

LHS—Life History Strategy

LHT—Life History Theory

MPI—Male Parental Investment

PI—Parental Investment

RV—Reproductive Value

1 Introduction

My aim in this thesis is to apply the methods of Literary Darwinism (LD) to a famous (or infamous) work of 20th-century literature, Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955). *Lolita* has been subjected to multifarious literary analyses, from purely aesthetic, (post-)structuralist, or postmodern readings to feminist disquisitions against the novel and even the author himself (Goldman 2004; Meek 2017; Wepler 2011). I have not found specifically Darwinian readings of the work. I have adopted as my research topic the sexual dynamics of the two most salient characters of *Lolita*, the focalized protagonist Humbert Humbert or HH, an adult male, and Dolores Haze, referred to as Lolita or Lo in my thesis, a twelve-year-old girl for whom Humbert Humbert has a singular sexual desire culminating in molestation; Nabokov's book has a vivid sense of pedophilia. I will scrutinize his desire and sexual exploitation from the evolutionary perspective, to explain the behaviors and motives of the two characters in the vein of "vulgar Darwinian criticism". Regrettably, a more comprehensive formal and discursive analysis is beyond the ambit of my thesis. Potential fitness benefits gained by reading *Lolita* might seem unfathomable on the surface but could inspire future research.

However, my reading of Nabokov's work through the lens of LD may impart an impression of reductivity. Admittedly *Lolita* lends itself to a huge variety of literary theoretical readings: the use of language and signification, construction of narrative identities, diegetic linearity, themes, motifs, foreshadowing, historicist deconstructions, and many more aspects sanction all sorts of further literary study. As being aware of the potential the novel has, I recognize that my reading of the novel is reductive. Nonetheless, I do argue that many other literary theories, for instance, (post-)structuralism, postmodernism, psychoanalytic, and Marxist theories are in their methods rather reductive as well, interpreting different works of literature within the same underlying thematic phenomena. I recommend other literary research on *Lolita* should those other properties be of more interest.

Darwinism, a theory named by the biologist and natural philosopher Charles Darwin, has acquired an ideologically incendiary reputation, at least in its perverted forms. However, the vulgar notions of Darwinism contain multiple misconceptions of evolution. To begin with, evolution is not akin to an intelligent designer, motivated to develop and refine terrestrial creatures into their final, most perfect designs excelling in any environmental conditions. Rather, evolution is tethered to contingent changes in the physical environment, other creatures coexisting in that environment, and social organization of the animal species.

Evolution bears resemblance to seafaring ship that is adrift: its destination is wherever winds and ocean currents carry it. Were any of the factors to be altered, evolution would favor some genetic traits over others which could have been beneficial in another environments. An example of this would be external colors of camouflage on animals: if the environment evolves into predominantly luxuriant vegetation, more indistinguishable colors would be more advantageous for survival, hence in reproduction to pass the genes manifesting the trait onto offspring than other, more discernible external characteristics. With the human species, the history of eugenics, or ideologies of ethnic cleansing, tried to advance evolution by witting artificial selection, not genuine natural selection. At any rate, any teleological ideas of evolution and natural selection are misconceived.

Another major popular misconceived notion related to Darwinism, evolution, and natural selection is the trite catchphrase, “the survival of the fittest”. *Fitness*, in proper evolutionary discourse, refers not to a physical and mental ability for survival but the ability to reproduce and pass on the individual’s genes to offspring. No matter how strong and intelligent an individual is, if they cannot secure a mate and successfully procreate, their fitness is subpar. For instance, a male bear might have superior survival abilities in contrast to another male but if the latter is successful in locating, courting, and copulating with fertile female bears, his fitness is greater than the former’s. Thus, gene replication in successive generations is the true measure of *Darwinian fitness*, not mere capability to cope with one’s environment. Some evolutionists argue that the gene’s perspective is more pivotal than the individual’s carrying that gene, that the individual’s well-being matters only if it serves gene transmission (Workman & Reader 2014, 59). Thus, if the ‘vehicle’ organism eventually dies, the gene is immortal by replicating myriad copies of itself in several organisms.

As terrestrial organisms, humans have been forged by evolutionary processes among other creatures. Evolutionary explanations of physical features are relatively widely accepted; when the object of evolutionary-minded research is the human mind and its functions, the theoretical domain of uncertainty and speculation is entered. *Evolutionary psychology*, or EP in my thesis, is the interdisciplinary field devoted to the study of the human mind by invoking evolutionary explanations for human behavior, mating, emotions, language, mental health, and other features of the psyche. The most fundamental principle is that the sapient mental matrix has been subjected to various evolutionary selection pressures, ranging from the diverse array of habitable environments to incredibly intricate different social organizations of

human communities. John Tooby and Leda Cosmides (1990, 408–409; 412), among trailblazers of the field, liken the human mind to computing machine operating dense networks of algorithms designed to detect important cues for survival and reproduction thereby activate mental algorithms for apposite behavioral output and reactions to challenges known as *adaptive problems*. What is imperative to emphasize is that evolution by natural selection is a slow phenomenon: the mechanisms of the human mind were evolved into their current forms in the distant past of the species, tens of thousands of years ago when humans were living as hunter-gatherers in small family groups. This era is known as the *Environment of Evolutionary Adaptedness* or EEA (Workman & Reader 2014, 1). This means that the evolved psychological constitution of humans adapted to that past ancestral environment; the technological and cultural developments have resulted in a drastically different environment wherein those ancestral mental *adaptations* might be starkly ill-fitted or *maladaptive*. People vary in those adaptations: sex, age, genetics, physical features, rearing history, and social factors activate different sets of psychological problem-solving “algorithms”.

The scientific-scholarly debate rages on around the question of whether arts, especially literature, are biologically driven psychological adaptations or *by-products* or side-effects produced by more primary adaptations, such as storytelling (Dubreuil 2009, 5). Does literature bear fitness benefits for authors and readers? Laurent Dubreuil (2009, 8–9, 17) suggests that empirical experiments conducted by neuro- and social sciences on the hypotheses of literature’s role as a sexual display of author for mate attraction, as an instrument of social cohesion, or a device in relating adaptive knowledge to posterity, are wanting. How could it be empirically studied how literature modulates inner workings of the human mind thus providing authors and readers with adaptive fitness benefits? A vital caveat needs to be stated in the discussion of hypotheses on human evolution: many of them are to remain partially speculative, on account of the inaccessibility of the EEA of *Homo sapiens* (Workman & Reader 2014, 28). That environment is not accurately replicated by the few contemporary hunter-gatherer tribes still extant; most of those peoples have had contact with the modern civilization and human species is exceptionally capable of adapting to almost any environment in the world (*ibid.*). A tribe living in an arid desert with its peculiar social organization is unlikely to represent the general condition of ancestral humans of the EEA. Concerning arts and storytelling, we do not know, for example, if the evolution of language preceded arts or co-evolved with it (Dubreuil 2009, 6–7). Veridical causation and coincidental correlation are eternal conundrums of scientific method.

Such preserve of research is intertwined with a particular strain of literary theory known as *Darwinian literary criticism*. As evolutionary psychology gained disciplinary legitimacy in the early 1990s, Darwinian Literary Criticism or Literary Darwinism (LD in my thesis), had its provenance in EP's wake (Carroll 2010, 54). The most fundamental tenet of LD is the employment of notions, ideas, theories, and researched hypotheses from EP and other evolutionary sciences in the interpretive analysis of literature (ibid.). Some evolutionary-inspired literary scholars herald, sensationally in my mind, that LD would subsume other strands of literary theory because it predicates its theoretical framework on empirical sciences of physics, chemistry, biology, ethology, neurosciences, and psychology; it proclaims to grant the "master key" for literary reading and examination (Carroll 2011, 82). I regard such statements exaggerated: Darwinian readings can confer reader with sensible character motives in narratively conventional novels, but readings of that sort might reductively ignore and dismiss other facets of literary works, for instance, ambiguity of language, play of signification, or structural qualities of narration. Joseph Carroll (2010, 59), a prominent figure in Darwinian literary criticism, introduces the term "vulgar literary Darwinism" for referring to Darwinian readings that simply underscores themes and motifs appurtenant to evolutionary concepts. He also proposes that the mental mechanisms shaped by evolution of human species or *human nature*, i.e., "genetically mediated characteristics typical to humans" (Carroll 2011, 4) interacts with environmental, social, and cultural factors in an individual, creating an "emergent complexity" capable of creative innovation (Carroll 2010, 60). I elaborate on this in the theoretical background section. Other eminent LD scholars, whose scholarship are not included in my thesis, are Jonathan Gottschall and Brian Boyd, known for their evolutionary analyses of works from the Greek antiquity such as the *Iliad* (2008) and the *Odyssey* (2009).

The structure of my thesis is the following: Introduction is followed by the theoretical background chapter 2, providing an explication of evolutionary psychology, other evolutionary theories, and Darwinian literary criticism. In chapter 3 I introduce my primary literary material *Lolita* and literary research related to it. In the main analysis and discussion section in chapter 4, I apply my chosen theoretical principles to the novel's content relevant to my research question and discuss my findings and interpretations. Finally in chapter 5, I conclude with remarks on my study and propose future directions of LD research and for Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. First, I establish the theoretical basis of my thesis.

2 Theoretical Background

Evolutionary sciences harbor many different theories and hypotheses some of which have been empirically researched. The most pertinent ones for my thesis are sexual selection (Darwin 1871), inclusive fitness (Hamilton 1964), parental investment theory and parent–offspring conflict (Trivers 1972; 1974), sexual strategies theory (Buss and Schmitt 1993), and life history theory (Belsky 1997; Workman & Reader 2014, 159–61). These are relevant for my Darwinian analysis of *Lolita*, its characters, their relationships, motivations, and behavior.

As for Literary Darwinism, Joseph Carroll’s (2010; 2011) texts bestow me with the greatest contribution for the application of evolutionary human sciences into the context of studying literature. Criticism is elaborated for necessary equipoise. I exemplify Darwinian readings by discussing research papers of evolutionarily-minded literature interpretation and reflect on them for my reading of *Lolita*. While they fall into the category of “vulgar” LD, Daniel Kruger et al. (2003) integrate empirical study of female reader reactions to different male literary character archetypes. This domain of literary theory could host lot of research potential.

2.1 Evolutionary Theories

In this section of my background theory, I explicate a few fundamental concepts pertaining to the general evolution of life. The first one is sexual selection, then inclusive fitness, followed by parental investment theory and parent-offspring conflict, and finally life history theory. The rationale of the explication order is to begin with more primitive notions and then proceed to more complex ones.

2.1.1 Sexual Selection

Charles Darwin (1871, Vol. 1, 253–423; Vol II, 1–405) is not only connected to concepts such as evolution and natural selection but to another, just as crucial notion: *sexual selection* (SS) (see Workman & Reader 2014, chapter 3). When natural selection in sexually reproducing organisms is linked to survival and reproduction, sexual selection refers to an organism’s ability to attract a mate for procreation and passing on one’s genes. As a prime example of this, a peacock’s tail is an outcome of this kind of selection: the bigger and more elaborate the tail, the more attractive is the peacock to peahens for mating (Workman &

Reader 2014, 64). Ambiguously, sexual selection may conflict with natural selection, that is, traits chosen for sexual selection might hamper survival efforts. For instance, a trait that is attractive to the opposite sex could expose individuals to increased predation. A hypothesis known as the “handicap hypothesis” posits, as Amotz Zahavi (1975, 205; 213) argues, that such “exaggerations” attest to organism’s quality as a mate (see Workman & Reader 2014, 68–69); the statement could be: “Look how well I am faring despite having this debilitating thing as part of me!” Therefore, it is an indication of superior survival skills and ability to invest in and protect potential offspring. In this way, natural selection can clash with sexual selection.

As sexually reproducing organisms choose mates for the most exemplary samples of the sexually selected trait, genes manifesting that trait increase in the gene pool of a population and its design evolves as the offspring carrying that trait are more likely to secure mating partners. A kind of runaway process might begin: by being increasingly preferred in reproductive mates, the trait’s design can achieve exaggerated forms thus its original purpose as a cue of vitality and genetic quality might be superseded by only SS considerations (Fisher 1930, 131–32; see Workman & Reader 2014, 67). Ronald A. Fisher (1930, 137) calls this SS process “a runaway process”. This means that the trait is attractive on its own accord and not as an indicator of other characteristics. Despite its reproductive asset, further refinement of the feature reaches its maximum when it significantly begins to beleaguer individual’s survival; natural selection will eventually arrest the trait’s development (ibid.).

Females, as contrasted to males, have vital roles in parturition and rearing offspring. Darwin (1871 [1981, 273]) writes that “the female, though comparatively passive, generally exerts some choice” in mate selection by gauging characteristics of the males, known as the *female choice* (see Workman & Reader 2014, 65). Sexual selection and female choice are intertwined as females select male characteristics for mating attractiveness.

2.1.2 Inclusive Fitness Theory

As I propounded in the Introduction, ‘Darwinian fitness’ consists of the ability to replicate one’s genes in their offspring via reproduction. That would be labeled as “direct fitness” but William D. Hamilton’s (1964, 7–8) seminal research has introduced a new aspect of Darwinian fitness, *inclusive fitness*. In inclusive fitness (IF), the individual’s own reproductive effort is only one part; it extends to every individual carrying the same genes,

namely, one's siblings, parents, grandparents, cousins, and other kin (ibid.). However, the more distant the kinship relation is, the lesser is the genetic relatedness: an individual shares with their children, siblings and parents 50% of their genes; 25% with grandparents, the parents' siblings, and half-siblings; 12,5% with cousins and even less with cousins' progeny (Hamilton 1964, 16). Hamilton (1964, 15) suggests that inclusive fitness could explain some facets of altruistic behavior in nature, but he applies a rule of cost–benefit ratio from the individual's viewpoint: mathematically stated, if one's degree of relatedness with another individual is 50%, the altruistic act's benefit ought to be doubled compared with the cost of the act, four times when the genetic relation is 25%, eight times when it is 12,5%, and sixteen times with even lesser relatedness (Hamilton 1964, 16). In this model the individual's perspective is the locus because they are related to themselves full 100%, thereby prioritizing their direct fitness by default. If their own direct fitness efforts are severely compromised, they can improve their inclusive fitness by aiding their kin's direct fitness by, for instance, providing them with alimentation or by self-sacrifice in lethally dangerous situations. The technical cost–benefit equation is not a conscious determinant of behavior; many evolutionary theories do not imply conscious calculations by organisms. Hamilton's inclusive fitness theory is also known as “kin selection” in John Maynard Smith's (1964, 1145) coinage.

2.1.3 Parental Investment and Parent–Offspring Conflict Theories

Building upon Hamilton's inclusive fitness theory, Robert Trivers (1974) developed evolutionary theories known as the *parental investment theory* and the *parent–offspring conflict*. According to the parental investment theory, in many sexually reproducing species females invest more effort, resources, and time in offspring rearing than males do (Trivers 1972; in Trivers 1974, 249). Trivers (ibid.) argues that this asymmetry could be considered to begin at the cellular level of gametes or germ cells: males produce numerous expendable low-cost sperm cells and females have their finite resource of valuable eggs. What this entails is that the costs of copulation are significantly lower for males (perhaps only contracting a sexually transmitted disease, or, in the case of an infertile female, they just lose some semen but are immediately ready to seek another female) than for females who shoulder the burdens of gestation, lactation, and a huge portion of post-partum rearing. For this reason, evolution has favored females of many species to be selective as to which males are allowed to fertilize their eggs, connecting with Darwin's concepts of sexual selection and female choice (Trivers 1972; in Draper & Harpending 1982, 261). The influence of female choice on male traits is an

object of study in ethology in which it is speculated that contemporary male characteristic may subsist in the selective procedures of their ancestral mothers (Workman & Reader 2014, 69).

The theory of parent–offspring conflict is related to Trivers’ parental investment theory. Organisms allocate their finite time and energy to various fitness-enhancing activities: feeding, growth, predator evasion, learning, and mating efforts. However, time and effort directed to one activity preclude investing them in another activity; for instance, rearing and teaching offspring reduces time and energy for the parent’s own feeding, survival, and, most of all, finding new reproductive opportunities for IF maximization.

The core of the parent–offspring conflict theory is that because parent and offspring have incongruous strategies for their own inclusive fitness maximization (the degree of relatedness between them is $\frac{1}{2}$), the latter would like to extract more parental investment than the parent is eager to confer (Trivers 1974, 249). On one hand, it would be to the progenitor’s IF benefit if they limited their energy and resource investment onto one offspring and allot it instead to new mating opportunities to create more offspring, usually siblings of the existing progeny (Trivers 1974, 250). On the other hand, the offspring could improve their IF by inducing more PI for themselves in forms of alimentation and learning survival and social skills (ibid.). Trivers (1974, 251) argues that the conflict is at its peak when the mother begins to wean off the offspring in order to allocate resources to new progeny. An intensifying factor for the conflict would be if the new offspring was sired by a different father, the genetic relation being only 25% (Trivers 1974, 252). As a side note, the conflict is not only confined into post-natal life but occurs even during gestation: it is communicated chemically and hormonally via the placenta in mammals (ibid.). Due to this struggle between parent and offspring, Trivers (1974, 257–58) postulates that natural selection has advocated in parents the evolution of parental attentiveness to cues in offspring for assessing the need for investment while the young has evolved to dissemble their needs to receive more PI, such as by resisting parental guidance or regressive demeanor which refers to behaving more immaturely than their age presupposes. One could say it is a perpetual evolutionary arms race.

In humans the parent–offspring conflict could be manifested by parents encouraging sharing and altruism among siblings and by other socialization processes while children on their part may show reluctance in, for example, sharing food or toys (Trivers 1974, 259). Additionally, IF and kin altruism can be bodied forth by wishes on one’s children to marry cousins for the

prevention of further dilution of genetic relation thus having future generations carry as much of the individual's DNA as possible (Trivers 1974, 261). *In fine*, romanticized ideas of parental love and care characterizing family life is not the whole story evolution propagates.

2.1.4 Life History Theory

Before I move to discuss evolutionary psychology, it is relevant to consider *life history theory* (LHT). It is related to Triver's PI and parent-offspring conflict theories (Belsky 1997; Workman & Reader 2014). In LHT, offspring are not merely passive recipients of PI and environmental influences but they are recharacterized as active agents adopting IF strategies as response to the environmental input of their formative years (Workman & Reader 2014, 158). In other words, childhood is a period of adopting life history strategies (LHS) for inclusive fitness maximization later in life, placing emphasis on environmental factors of reproduction of which the higher salience leads to more intense selection pressures (Belsky 1997, 363; Workman & Reader 2014, 160). Jay Belsky (1997, 363; 366; also Draper & Belsky 1990, 151) puts forth that the idea of LHS is directly connected to the nature-nurture debate in terms of thinking environmental factors as biological mechanisms that could be demonstrated in varied attachment styles between progeny and mother. Given the selective forces of evolution, the period of sexual immaturity would be least disadvantageous by being as brief as possible for the optimization of progenitiveness of an organism and minimizing PI from the parents' viewpoint. The question here is: does childhood serve a Darwinian fitness purpose (Workman & Reader 2014, 159)?

A more fundamental biological-ecological theory, a sort of 'predecessor' of LH theory, known as *r-K continuum* deserves quick exploration (Draper & Belsky 1990, 143; MacArthur & Wilson 1967; Drickamer, Vessey & Jakob 2002; Workman & Reader 2014, 161; 209). Different species are mapped onto this spectrum. Closer to the r-end are species which produce as many live progeny as possible, as quickly as possible, and parental investment onto each offspring is constrained to minimum; this procreative strategy relies on large quantities of offspring only a fraction of which will reach reproductive maturity; many species of fish and amphibians are examples of the r-strategy (Workman & Reader 2014, 161). At the opposite side of the continuum, K-species are characterized as producing few offspring, but they receive lot of PI thereby causing many of them to reach maturation (ibid.). Many mammals, primates, and humans are deemed to exhibit the K-strategy (Draper & Belsky 1990, 145; Workman & Reader 2014, 209). The adoption of the strategy is facultative: K-

approach is more auspicious in stable environments whereas the r-end is associated with unpredictable conditions wherein the gene carriers' life cycle is fast (Draper & Belsky 1990, 143–44). Considering the r-K continuum, life history theory could be regarded as an intraspecies extension of the concept (Workman & Reader 2014, 161).

One of the most seminal applications of LH theory to *Homo sapiens* is the study of father absence in family, conducted by Patricia Draper and Henry Harpending (1982). Their study indicates that children growing with father absence or without *male parental investment* (MPI) show developmental and behavioral differences over lifetime in contrast to children with fathers living with them: sons are more oriented towards interpersonal social skills and overaccentuate 'masculine' traits such as aggression, callous behavior, and tend to form unstable pair-bonds; daughters show sexual precocity and activity, adopt negative attitudes to males, and akin to boys have more short-lived pair-bonds (Draper & Harpending 1982, 257–59; 263). Draper and Harpending (1982, 260) suggest that father's presence is some sort of psychological switch-mechanism, an environmental cue triggered by family structure.

For my thesis, girls' maturation variability is of significant interest. Father absence is a signal that MPI is unnecessary for daughters' IF, thence girls try to restrict the time not devoted to procreative efforts as early as possible. In the case of high MPI, courtship procedures are elongated and more intricate, resembling K-oriented IF strategy although marriage does not necessarily correlate with father presence (Draper & Harpending 1982, 262). Moreover, Draper and Harpending (1982, 264) discovered that the effects of father absence on girls correlate only with father not being present in their lives and not with widowed households wherein daughters are, they suggest, even more prudent to male presence than if father is in household. In Draper and Belsky's (1990, 154–55) research, daughters of absent father homes are predisposed to have earlier menarche, marriage thus reproduction, and severe conflict with mother is more frequent. At any rate, Draper and Harpending (1990, 149) suggest that there might be a sensitive period in a child's psychological development for acquiring the most advantageous reproductive strategy, influenced by mother's pair-bond status. Therefore, LHS could be a link connecting nurture and nature.

Draper and Harpending (1982, 268) conclude that this kind of behavioral and mental plasticity is peculiar to humans and the exceptionally long period of immaturity in human life cycle might serve this adaptivity. Furthermore, they underscore that both strategies are found in every society, dependent on socioeconomic factors (Draper & Harpending 1982, 270); for

example, it can be argued that in communities where means of subsistence are very laborious, abundant MPI is almost a necessity for offspring vitality (Draper & Harpending 1982, 269).

Despite humans being considered as K-selected species with double parental investment regarded as essential, cultural variation detached from the environmental cues has its input in IF strategies (Draper & Belsky 1990, 145). When the object of evolutionary and ecological study is *Homo sapiens*, matters can become incredibly complicated and these primary evolutionary theories I have explicated are often inadequate as forthright explanations of human behavior. My next section explores evolutionary psychology, an evolutionary science focusing specifically on human species.

2.2 Evolutionary Psychology

In the previous section more fundamental evolutionary notions were introduced with a view to construct a base on which more specific evolutionary theories can be integrated to it. In this part of my theoretical foundation, I expound on evolution-minded theories of human psychological constitution and behavior, and I already touched upon it in the ideas of inclusive fitness and life history theory. Here I introduce the sexual strategies theory (Buss & Schmitt 1993) and research on the evolution of emotions (Tooby & Cosmides 1990; Nesse 1990). In literature, themes of mating, relationships, and emotions of characters are essential and that is why I explore these from the evolutionary perspective instead of, for instance, nutritional preferences, warfare, or medicine.

Some important caveats are warranted: the term *adaptation* demands an explication. In Workman and Reader (2014, 29), a paraphrase of Theodosius Dobzhansky's *Genetics of the Evolutionary Process* (1970) defines adaptation as a process in which a trait is modulated by natural selection's reproductive success to be more beneficial to its carriers in their current environment. Some cases of adaptive traits are very patent, such as fish's fins or wings of bird, but there are instances where the categorization between an adaptation, non-adaptive trait, or a by-product of adaptations is indeterminate (Workman & Reader 2014, 30). Creating art could be a side-effect of other sapient adaptations such as habitat selection (Workman & Reader 2014, 30; see Dutton 2009). Thence, whether a feature is an adaptation or not is often under contestation.

A major criticism levelled at evolutionary psychology has been the misattribution of *genetic determinism* (Lewontin, Rose & Kamin 1984; Workman & Reader 2014, 30). Genetic

determinism asserts that everything humans are, do, and think is dictated by the DNA; evolutionists' counterargument is that genes is only one part of the picture including environment and culture (Workman & Reader 2014, 30). The issue of genetic influence on the human mind is of *predispositions* rather than of absolute precipitants (ibid.). My own allegory would be that drinking from a stranger's water flask may sound disgusting at first (predisposition), but the individual can dismiss this repulsion by one's volition. The environment of upbringing also affects contextual behavior, by way of life history strategy and the parent–offspring conflict. Another recurrent phenomenon in the discourse on EP is the use of *naturalistic fallacy* (Workman & Reader 2014, 32). Naturalistic fallacy is an argumentative principle according to which anything natural is morally desirable and conversely everything unnatural morally repugnant. For example, if heterosexual men are genetically predisposed to copulate with as many women as they can to maximize their IF, or if for some of them rape is the only viable means to pass on their genes, it does not entail that these are morally sanctioned; in philosophy the domains of facticity and morality are separated. These prior caveats having been explained, I begin with evolutionary theories of human mating.

2.2.1 Human Mating and Sexual Strategies Theory

A theory of human mating behavior, the *sexual strategies theory*, credited to David M. Buss and David P. Schmitt (1993) is one of the most influential in the field of evolutionary psychology. In their theory Darwin's sexual selection and Trivers's concept of parental investment are major components, leading to specific psychological adaptations in seeking mates. First of all, they argue that strict monogamy has not been the sole mode of pair-bonding in human history albeit it can be adaptive in certain environments and that the most defining aspect of human mating is whether it is for *long-term* or *short-term* (Buss & Schmitt 1993, 204). This means that for both sexes the preferred traits of mating partner vary between these two temporal contexts. However, it needs to be stressed that conventional compatibility of partners is paramount and that people adopt strategies non-consciously (Buss & Schmitt 1993, 205).

I begin with men's mate preferences for both mating contexts. Because men and women are different in reproductive biology, one producing practically unlimited numbers of low-cost sperm and the other a limited number of ova over lifetime, men make a distinction between two properties: *fertility* and *reproductive value* (RV) (Buss & Schmitt 1993, 208). Fertility

refers to woman's current ability to conceive offspring while reproductive value consists of the overall lifetime reproductive potential; to demonstrate this, a 23-year-old woman is more fertile than a pre-pubescent girl, but the latter's RV is greater due to more prospective fecund years ahead (ibid.). Therefore, they argue that age, particularly youthfulness and good health indicated by physical cues such as "smooth skin, lustrous hair, and symmetry", observable behavioral cues like "youthful gait and activity levels" and social information related by others about woman's age and health figure heavily in heteromales' evolved mate preferences for fertility cues (Buss & Schmitt 1993, 209). RV receives more value in long-term mating (Buss & Schmitt 1993, 208). However, culture has influence on these preferences for female fertility and RV (Buss & Schmitt 1993, 216). What men are predisposed to look for in a long-term partner besides high future reproductive value are high mate value via the mentioned traits to ensure genetic quality of progeny and monopolization of the woman's reproductive capability (Buss & Schmitt 1993, 214).

Buss and Schmitt theorize that monogamous pair-bonding could have resulted in from a peculiarity of the human females' procreative functions which is largely absent in primate relatives of humans: *concealed ovulation* (ibid.). Concealed ovulation excludes outward signs of women's ovulation thus generating another complication, known as *paternity issue* or *uncertain paternity* for men; this obscures men's certainty that their sperm have inseminated the woman's egg in lieu of other men's (ibid.). Thus, they suggest that this phenomenon could be a driving force for monogamy which for men incurs IF costs by investing time and energy in their mate and not seeking other copulatory chances; concealed ovulation could have engendered psychological adaptations in women too (ibid.). Buss and Schmitt's (1993, 216) theory also explains the emotion of jealousy as a fear of alien insemination that might lead to bestowing MPI on other man's children, their paper including a study showing sexual infidelity to be far more alarming to men whereas emotional infidelity weighs more on women. Sexual fidelity seems to be very important for men in long-term relationships (Buss & Schmitt 1993, 217) and sexually active women incur social costs by being of low-mate value in long-term mating but not in short-term mating (Buss & Schmitt 1993, 218).

To recapitulate, men's long-term mating incentives and preferences include exclusivity of women's RV, acquiring more desirable mates, increased paternity certainty, and fulfilling many women's prerequisites such as signs of commitment (Buss & Schmitt 1993, 216). However, it usually means preclusion of copulation with other women for IF maximization.

Men's short-term mating preferences, interestingly, bear significant differences in contrast to the long-term mating.

Buss and Schmitt's (1993, 214) sexual strategies theory propounds a notion that short-term mating is more significant in men's reproductive behavior than in women's due to the nature of their gametes and lesser PI, and thereby evolution has selected preferences for more numerable short-term mates, readiness to have intercourse sooner, and less strict partner criteria save for the established physical attractiveness. In addition to these, other studies in their publication discovered that for the pursuit of short-term mating strategy the valuable cues are hints of sexual willingness (such as wantonness, sex appeal, and experience in sex [Buss & Schmitt 1993, 213]), avoidance of signs of sexual disinterest, striving for minimal commitment, and the cues of fertility over RV as opposed to long-term mating (*ibid.*). Of course, men's short-term mating strategies have drawbacks: sexually transmitted diseases on account of multiple partners, social reputational costs when searching for a high-quality long-term mate, violence caused by jealous partners if the woman is in an existing relationship, and if women with whom they have mated produce offspring and the mother has to care for them by herself, the probabilities of their survival and maturation are attenuated (Buss & Schmitt 1993, 207). As we can see, both long-term and short-term mating strategies have their strengths and flaws; environment determines their adaptiveness. I now move on to explore women's long-term and short-term mating strategies in this theory.

When considering not exclusively lesbian women's mating strategies in Buss and Schmitt's theory, women's IF benefits by the number of mating partners is limited because after copulation and their ovum possibly inseminated, it is reproductively inutile to directly seek another mate. Furthermore, on account of male procreative biology, cues of physical attractiveness in forms of youthfulness and good health are not as crucial for women's mate selection (Buss and Schmitt 1993, 209). Besides, consenting easily to intercourse carries more risks due to more serious consequences of successful insemination (Buss & Schmitt 1993, 215). One can argue that women place a premium on offspring quality instead of quantity, and extraction of resources from male partners is more pronounced for their IF.

Buss and Schmitt (1993, 222) suggest that the primary incentive for long-term mating for women is to obtain access to men's resources with which they can provide females with MPI. These resources can be itemized into nourishment for her and her children, secure habitats for safe living, and protection especially during pregnancy and lactation (*ibid.*); besides these

men can also teach, convey knowledge, transfer status or resources and assist progeny in gaining social capital (Buss 1989b; Buss & Schmitt 1993, 222). Hence access to male's parental investment can confer woman's children with distinctive reproductive benefits compared with no additional provider and the evolved psychological mate preferences predispose women to seek out cues for copious MPI, which is not as important in their short-term strategies (ibid.). Such cues outlined by Buss and Schmitt's (1993, 223), studies are asserted to be the resources a man has because men, in most societies, control said resources, behavioral cues like ambition, sedulity, status, generosity, and in the modern environment earning potential and professional degrees (Buss & Schmitt 1993, 226). Conversely, repellent cues for women's long-term mate preferences are indigence, lack of ambition and education (ibid.). Nevertheless, they add that these adapted psychological preferences are open to culturally specific input (ibid.); I explore this at the end of this sub-section. In comparison with the long-term mating strategies, women's short-term strategies differ in a noticeable manner.

The sexual strategies theory proposes that there are several advantages of women's short-term mating: express availability of man's resources, to gauge prospective mate's long-term potential, protection, and, hypothetically, better genes (Buss & Schmitt 1993, 226). Buss and Schmitt provide empirical support for these purported benefits: according to judgments of other women, women pursuing short-term strategies are attracted to men who expend money and gifts on them early on in relationship (ibid.). On the other hand, an undesired cue in men as short-term mates is frugality with resources (ibid.); the authors' research also imply that physical qualities are more esteemed in short-term mating than in the long-term (ibid.). As for assessing a short-term partner's long-term suitability, it seems to be more common among women than among men; things such as being libertine and having a pre-existing relationship are rated highly unwanted by women looking for short-term partners (Buss & Schmitt 1993, 227). The researchers, however, stress that the empirical evidence is quite tentative and more research is required for evaluative features for both sexes' short-term mating (ibid.).

Buss and Schmitt (1993, 227) suggest that subsequent research could scrutinize few other hypotheses about women's other plausible benefits of short-term mating such as replacement of undesirable mates, delineate one's preferences, deterrence for current long-term mate's infidelity and increase his commitment, and availing of mate's social networks. At any rate, the conclusion is that short-term mating is less prominent in women's mating strategies due to

higher standards for prospective mates, stricter age parameters, time requirements before consenting to intercourse, and general disinclination for numerous mates (*ibid.*). Nonetheless, in both sexes these strategies and evolved mate preferences are not the entire story.

As a final note for the sexual strategies theory, cultural timbres have their influence on these selected and evolved mate preferences for both mating strategy types. Physical attractiveness and the association of RV in women is one of these variables: there is a continuum between body structure, tone of complexion, and variable import on certain physical features, for instance, eyes, ears, or genitals (Buss & Schmitt 1993, 216; Ford & Beach 1951). Referring to Donald Symons (1979), Buss and Schmitt (1993, 216) note that culturally defined links with status may also affect parameters for attractiveness. Moreover, praxis in following these adaptive preferences is not straightforward: they often do not translate into actual mating behavior by way of intrasexual obstruction (interference by the members of the same sex), other people or *conspicifcs*, mores of culture, and local jurisprudence (Buss & Schmitt 1993, 227; 229). Disregard for affectionate and cooperative traits of a mate, such as kindness and affability is inadvisable as well (Buss 1989a; Buss & Schmitt 1993, 228). Finally, Buss and Schmitt (1993, 229) acknowledge that individual factors too have relevance in mating strategy adoption.

As I have laid out one of the most eminent evolutionary theories of human mating, I shift my attention on the evolutionary theories of emotion.

2.2.2 The Evolutionary Psychology of Emotions

According to John Tooby and Leda Cosmides (1990, 410), emotions could be considered as psychological adaptations to recurrent adaptive problems of survival and reproduction, creating “organized modes of operation” for preparing various mental and cognitive mechanisms to those challenges. As already mentioned, they resemble decisional algorithms triggered by environmental cues. The meaning of organized mode of operation is that an emotional state engages different cognitive domains from perception to memory; for example, fear calibrates to search certain perceptual cues and memory recounts prior fear experiences (Tooby & Cosmides 1990, 412). In the realm of emotions, Tooby and Cosmides (1990, 417) suggest that humans are objective-oriented EEA cue maximizers, and the system of affect is a collection of selected functional mechanisms; this means that emotions are activated as if their

primary environmental precipitants were true in the present environment because in the EEA they often were (Tooby & Cosmides 1990, 419).

A study conducted by Paul Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen (1971, 128) manages to give indication of sapient universality in facial expressions of emotions, offering hypotheses based on evolution, neural programming of the brain, or general experiential learning in development. That being said, the recognition of some emotive expressions indicating fear and surprise may imbricate with each other (*ibid.*). Cultural factors are not discounted either: these ubiquitous affective projections vary in their contexts, consequences, and display rules (what aligns with conventional proprieties in given circumstances) (Ekman & Friesen 1969; 1971, 129). Randolph Nesse is also accentuating cultural, individual, and environmental factors in emotion expression and their triggering cues owing to the humans' high adaptability to different environments thus a fixed evolved response model would not be adaptive (Nesse 1990, 280; Livesey 1986). Before I explore evolutionary origins of various emotions, it is important to emphasize that no emotion is neutral in effect. This is on account of emotions being selected for contexts involving either threats or opportunities and negative emotions are more prominent because threats have loomed larger than opportunities engendering positive affects (Averill 1980; Nesse 1990, 280). Nesse (*ibid.*) also proposes that negative emotions may be more intense and lingering than positive ones, happiness being an ever-elusive goal instead of a state, in order to maximize one's IF. First, I examine the evolutionary inception of negative emotions and then the positive spectrum.

According to Nesse (1990, 281), negative emotions evolved as defense systems against threats for individual's inclusive fitness and they provide adaptive responses to those threats. His discussion of negative emotions brings into forefront an important feature of affective reaction: false alarms are significantly more tolerable than dismissing a real danger (Nesse 1990, 283). To exemplify this, reacting to sounds in darkness even if they are induced by non-threats costs less than not reacting to an apex predator's pounce. This mental mechanism, however, could develop into over-responsiveness (*ibid.*); because the contemporary environment is drastically dissimilar to the EEA, these responses can be unnecessarily robust (Nesse 1990, 281). Though they may seem irrational at first glance, Nesse (1990, 284) entertains a possibility that they could be adaptive if cognition cannot quell them.

Nesse (1990, 262) propounds that depression and anxiety could be pathologically amplified versions of sadness and fear. Their occurrence could be attributed to abnormal regulation

mechanisms of the individual and/or the environmental mismatch (Nesse 1990, 281). Tooby and Cosmides (1990, 415) put forth an idea that one of the adaptive functions of sadness and depression could be to reassess the local environment and one's own actions. Grief could be, curiously, a side-effect of the affective algorithms adapting into new states of affairs (Tooby & Cosmides 1990, 416). Anxiety could have evolved as an incentive for cooperation albeit the individual might also feel refractory to do it for selfish benefits and guilt may be related to the evolution of conscience (Nesse 1990, 278). Nesse (1990, 415) suggests that social fears like discrimination, ridicule, and ostracism figure strongly in human species because the domain of IF competition has been the social world. Anger is hypothesized as a reaction to preserve, challenge, and reinforce relationships and reciprocal relations (Nesse 1990, 277). As I mentioned in the strategies of human mating, jealousy is a powerful emotion against mate infidelity, especially male sexual jealousy. Another aspect in the emphasis on negative emotions is, according to Felicia Pratto and Oliver P. John (1991, 388), that evolution has shaped humans to be unconsciously vigilant of sense stimuli indicating threats: EEA predators and other stimuli in the modern environment. However, these cues are bare signals than descriptors of the threats, coalescing with the false alarm phenomenon (*ibid.*).

So-called positive emotions have had less import over the course of human evolutionary history due to multitudinous threats to IF. They are posited to be fewer and less specialized than negative ones (Fredrickson 1998; Workman & Reader 2014, 350). Barbara L. Fredrickson (2001; 2006, 57) endorses a view that positive emotions expand our mental vistas in terms of array of thoughts, actions, and attention; they also drive us to manage resources wisely for contingencies. Of them, joy could be related to playfulness, and play is an important activity for physical and psychological development; it is also a method to survey strengths and weaknesses of the members of one's group (Fagen 1981; Workman & Reader 2014, 351). Traditionally pigeonholed as a neutral affect, interest, according to Fredrickson, contains an urge that leads to a positive mindset and it has enduring effects on the intellect thus broadening the mindscape (Fredrickson 1998; Workman & Reader 2014, 351). Love may have most adaptive significance; it consists of various emotional states involving attachment to another person, and Fredrickson sees it as a device for the consolidation of individual's social resources (*ibid.*). Therefore, love might be part of the evolution of altruism between non-kin (Workman & Reader 2014, 352). Trivers (1985; see Workman & Reader 2014, 352) considers forms of love to aid the IF: between spouses directly, amongst family and kin more indirectly. Generally, positive emotions are considered to have developed for giving aid to

immediate family and kin carrying the same genes (ibid.). It is even speculated that positive emotions are presently more valued owing to ever safer environment (ibid.).

I have explored theories and for the evolution of emotions and human mating behavior. In my reckoning these subjects of evolutionary psychology provide the substratum for my Darwinian literary critical method for reading *Lolita* in my thesis. In the next section I introduce facets of Literary Darwinism.

2.3 Literary Darwinism

In the final section of my background theory, I examine Darwinian literary criticism. The itemization order is as follows: first, the basic premises of the literary theory based on Joseph Carroll's (2010; 2011) texts, critical evaluations of Literary Darwinism (Enderwitz 2014; Amigoni 2006; Dubreuil 2009) and finally few analyses of literary works in the Darwinian spirit (Saunders 2007; 2012; Kruger, Fisher & Jobling 2003; Amjad, Marandi & Asli 2018).

2.3.1 The Basic Ideas of Literary Darwinism

Among LD scholars, Joseph Carroll is one of the most prominent advocates of this theoretical position for literary interpretation. He argues that there has been an imbroglio in humanist literary studies owing to popular post-structuralist and postmodern readings of literary works (Carroll 2010, 53). In the wake of evolutionary psychology, LD had its inception in 1995 but it has been shunned from literary studies by way of ideological aversion of biology and worship of social constructivism (Carroll, 2010 54); he dubs it as “pathological metaphysical pluralism” (Carroll 2010, 58). In his article “Three Scenarios for Literary Darwinism”, he proposes three options for LD: remaining as a peripheral strain of literary theory, establishing itself among others, or transcending above others as the hegemonic theory (Carroll 2010, 53). The prognosis is that LD is incorporated into the canon of literary theory (Carroll 2010, 57).

How is Darwinian literary criticism applied to texts? First, it employs theories and concepts from the evolutionary sciences such as reproductive success or inclusive fitness for character motivations, family and social dynamics, or just survival (Carroll 2010, 54). The reigning principles of evolutionary literary interpretation are immediate forces of biological life: survival, procreation, kinship, social life, dominance, and imagination (Carroll 2011, 30). Carroll (2011, 27) argues that cultural aspects cooperate with human species' evolved dispositions or “human nature”. LD also acknowledges that literary works are created in

different ecological and cultural environments and they are assemblages of readers, authors, and characters' viewpoints; analysis of the form besides just the content is as relevant (ibid.). Storytelling simulates experience and provides behavioral guidance (Carroll 2011, 25); literary Darwinists consider literature reflective in terms of the naturally selected and evolved minds of humans (Carroll 2010, 59). This evolved human nature is a foundational building block in various cultural environments, social organizations, belief systems, and in individual experiences, thus, every one of us are "emergent complexities". According to Carroll (2010, 60), there is a tension between the identities of individuals, the universal evolved disposition, and the creative innovation of individual artists. In any event, functionality of literary works is connected to broader adaptive actions such as passing on one's genes to offspring (ibid.).

The following lengthy quote from Carroll (2010, 61) undermines arguments of biological determinism:

It *is* the case, though, that there is nothing in life outside of evolution. That means both less and more than it might seem to mean. It does not mean that the forms of literary development – genres and traditions – exactly parallel the macrostructures of evolutionary development. It does not mean that all human experience is driven in a simple and direct way by the biblical injunction [*sic*] go forth and multiply. It does not mean that all literary characters exemplify average or species-typical forms of behavior. It certainly does not mean that all authors, even ancient, medieval, Renaissance, and neoclassical authors, are crypto-Darwinists. What it does mean is that all humans past and present have evolved under the massively constraining force of adaptation by means of natural selection. It thus means that the species as a whole has a characteristic structure of "life history."²⁶ That life history entails a species-typical set of motive dispositions and emotional responses, and along with them a species-typical range of personality characteristics. Individuals can and often do vary from the species-typical, but the species typical [*sic*] provides a common frame of reference. Individual differences, in specific cultures and specific individual persons, vary from that base line in ways that have systemic effects on the motivational and emotional characteristics of the whole system. Individuals can mate with members of their own families, prefer sexual partners of their own sex, murder their parents or children, live celibate lives in religious orders, consign themselves to perpetual hermitage in deserts, starve themselves to death, throw themselves on hand grenades, blow themselves up in crowded market squares, devote their lives to charitable purposes, sacrifice worldly ambition for the sake of art, or write books declaring that reality is purely a social construct. All of these forms of behavior can be traced to the only possible source of all behavior: the interaction between genetically transmitted dispositions and specific environmental conditions.

In other words, Carroll endorses the idea that all behavior is “natural” and the driving forces residing in people emanate from the adaptive evolutionary apparatus named human nature; common intuitions of these forces comprise folk psychology (*ibid.*).

How would the LD theory transform literary studies? Carroll (2010, 63–64) elaborates a conceivable scenario:

When undergraduate English majors write papers on Shakespeare or Virginia Woolf, Chaucer or Charlotte Brontë, they will in some ways do what they have always done – talk about characterization, personal and social identity in the characters and in the author, style, point of view, tone, the organization of narrative, and cultural contexts and literary traditions. But in other ways, all this will be different. In writing of personal and social identity, they will not have recourse to obsolete and misleading ideas from Freud, Marx, and their progeny. They will have recourse instead to empirically grounded findings in the evolutionary human sciences. In speaking of tone and point of view, they will make use of cognitive and affective neuroscience. They will consider local affects in relation to the actual brain structures and neurochemical circuits that regulate emotions, to “mirror neurons”, Theory of mind, and “perspective taking.” In assessing style and the formal organization of narrative or verse, they will take account of underlying cognitive structures that derive from folk physics, folk biology, and folk psychology.²⁹ They will still bring all their intuitive sensitivity to bear, registering the affective qualities that distinguish one work from another, communing in spirit with the author, or holding off skeptically from authors with whom intimacy for them is repugnant. They will not regard their own subjective responses as wholly arbitrary nor as somehow incommensurate with the brain structures that regulate behavior, thought, and feeling in ordinary life. When they locate literary works in relation to cultural context, they will have recourse to new forms of history, both forms that use brain science to create an ecological and psychopharmacological profile of a given era,³⁰ and also forms that delineate large-scale laws of social organization deriving from elementary processes of intergroup conflict and intragroup organization.³¹ They will draw on knowledge both of the actual social and political situation and of the deep evolutionary background for that situation. We already see works of literary scholarship that answer to this description.³²

This passage illustrates a shift towards the utilization of empirical neurophysiological sciences in literary analysis and theory, as opposed to denaturalized ideological frameworks of Marxism, psychoanalysis, or postmodernism. Notwithstanding this sentiment, these other literary theories could have their place as heuristic devices for the higher-level, emergent structures of the evolved psychology (Carroll 2010, 61). Although the probable lot of LD is to be one of many, Carroll gives an impression of the wish of final subsumption which may remain distant when considering some of the critique of LD has received. The next subsection scrutinizes this critical reception.

2.3.2 Criticism of Darwinian Literary Theory

Akin to evolutionary psychology, the Darwinian framework for literary analysis stirs up views pointing to its shortcomings. These require examination if Carroll's vision of LD's ambitions are to be realized.

Just as I mentioned in the introduction of my thesis, Darwinian literary analyses can be quite reductive, condensing literary intricacies to pertaining only to mating, IF, social dynamics and so on. Anne Enderwitz (2014, 260) argues that this agenda ignores elements such as play of signification, ambiguity of language, and other narrative techniques realized by technical compositions of texts. Enderwitz exemplifies this by a Darwinian interpretation of Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915): the story displays the evolutionary theme of human mating but outside of the microscope of the Darwinian lens, there are post-structuralist and postmodern features of diegetic and linguistic ambiguity, losing semblance of reality and so on (ibid.). She also has a counterargument for the excoriation of post-structuralism as celebration of uninhibited subjectivity, rebutting that post-structuralism's aim is not that but to question pre-existing structures (Enderwitz 2014, 257). Such a reading of *The Good Soldier* would be an instance of what in my introduction Carroll calls a "vulgar" Darwinian reading which omits higher level analysis related to work's formal properties and emergent discursive and social practices surrounding it. What I have learnt while doing my research is that literature could be a portal to unimaginable individual inventiveness and perversion of the evolved mental mechanisms of humans, as advocated by David Amigoni (2006, 184).

The main narrator character Humbert in *Lolita* states: "[I]t is not the artistic aptitudes that are secondary sexual characters as some shams and shamans have said; it is the other way around: sex is but the ancilla of art" (Nabokov [1955] 2021, 156; henceforth abbreviated as *L*). When discussing the adaptive benefits of creating art or whether it is an adaptation on its own, disagreement is expected. It has been suggested that creating and telling stories might be an adaptation or a by-product, for example, language; as a further extension literature as a psychological adaptation seems implausible (Dubreuil 2009, 5). Dubreuil (2009, 6) puts forth an idea that literature depends on language, having dissimilar cognitive functions.

Hypothetical benefits of literature in terms of IF for both authors and readers are speculative in nature and empirical studies are scarce. At any rate, Dubreuil (2009, 9) asserts that creativity is adaptively beneficial but restricts narrative competence to further narrative

production. All of this pertains to Carroll's formal analysis of literary works which is, frankly, on firmer ground than simply construing character motivations and relationships.

Dubreuil (2009, 5) contests the Darwinian concept of human nature as essentialist. But as I have explored Carroll's view, human nature is an incredibly plastic amalgamation of genetically inherited predispositions and facultative factors of natural and social environment; individual variance is guaranteed. Dubreuil (2009, 4; 17), in my mind, is justified in saying that in studying arts and literature's potential adaptive functions, interdisciplinary collaborations of research are welcomed and that, for example, neuroscientific studies on reading literature could be a potential future avenue.

2.3.3 Examples of Darwinian Literary Analyses

Many Darwinian readings of literature could be characterized as Carroll's "vulgar" Literary Darwinism. The literary studies I present adhere to that kind of "biosocial investigation" (Saunders 2007, 311) but I hazard they could serve as substrates to more extensive interpretations.

Judith Saunders's (2007) study on Sherwood Anderson's "The Untold Lie" (1919), is rather unsubtle with its Darwinian themes. Anderson's story focuses on two men at different stages of life and the interactions between them; one is a middle-aged and the other is in his twenties (Saunders 2007, 311). The former has been married for a long time, sired many children, works as a farm hand, and makes a meager living; the younger one, on the other hand, is different as to dominant demeanor, higher social class, attractive physical features, and projecting more prototypical masculine traits such as concupiscence (Saunders 2007, 311–12). The driving plot point in the story is when the younger man asks the older man for advice for having impregnated a woman and whether he ought to commit to a long-term relationship with her (Saunders 2007, 314). Saunders (2007, 315) argues that the story exemplifies the choice between men's long-term and short-term mating strategies, in Buss and Schmitt's sense. The story can also demonstrate women's procreative behavior: brief liaison with a high status, handsome man may lead to offspring of good genetic quality but no subsequent MPI extraction from the man (Saunders 2007, 316). As for the elder family man, Saunders (2007, 317–318) interprets him as introspecting on and weighing the merits and demerits of his selected strategy and other ones, in terms of positive results and precluded choices. She

concludes that adaptations are not designed to bring happiness and that humans can recognize and bargain with the evolutionary forces mentally and behaviorally (Saunders 2007, 320–21).

In another LD analysis Saunders (2012) focuses on infidelity and female mate guarding in D. H. Lawrence's "Wintry Peacock" (1921). In the narrative a jealous wife essays to gather information about her husband's infidelity and places him under watchful eye(s), to dissuade him from extra-conjugal mating (Saunders 2012, 70). The McGuffin of Lawrence's story is a letter to the husband from the husband's paramour which the wife surreptitiously reads prior to his homecoming; in the epistle the mistress tries to persuade him to invest in her and their mutual offspring in the long-term fashion (Saunders 2012, 71). The wife utilizes the letter's contents in order to avert the husband's future philandering (ibid.). A conspicuous motif of the wife's mate guarding efforts is her pet peacock symbolically surveilling her husband and Saunders draws parallels from a Greek myth via the peacock (Saunders 2012, 74). In Darwinian interpretation, she considers that the husband's infidelity might be attributable to their childless marriage, impelling him to copulate extramaritally for IF maximization; for men a mixed mating strategy could be very productive (Saunders 2012, 72). In her analysis mythology reflects the evolved psychological predispositions and the perpetual struggle between the sexes' mating strategies (Saunders 2012, 76). For my reading of *Lolita*, IF maximization and mate guarding are prevalent Darwinian themes.

Shifting from the intricacies of reproduction, a Darwinian reading by Fazel Asadi Amjad et al. (2018) analyzes Darwinian ethics in Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love* (1997). The story begins with a hot air balloon accident in which a young boy is about to uncontrollably soar into the sky; the narrator male character and few other men run toward the balloon basket and try to hold it in place by ropes (Amjad, Marandi & Asli 2018, 158). However, all except one man relinquishes his grip on the ropes, desperately trying to save the child but his strength depletes and falls into his demise (ibid.). Afterwards the story explores the event from multiple perspectives and the morality of the actions taken (ibid.). The ethical concern of this evolutionary-minded examination is whether letting go of the ropes for one's own survival or trying to save the boy, supposedly non-kin to everyone involved, with the danger of death is a more judicious choice in terms of IF (ibid.). Their study suggests that what is ethically "good" is defined by what is fostering IF, which in this case would be to release the ropes (Amjad, Marandi & Asli 2018, 157). Amjad, Marandi & Asli (2018, 160; 163) assert that cooperation

is a vehicle for selfish IF benefits, and what is deemed ethically sane or insane is tied to procreative success.

My final example of LD analyses departs in method from the previous ones: Daniel J. Kruger, Maryanne Fisher and Ian Jobling (2003) present an empirical study on female readers' reactions to different male character types in British Romantic literature of the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. This kind of study is what Dubreuil advocates for LD. Long-term and short-term mating strategies of men are also known as *dad* and *cad* strategies (Kruger, Fisher & Jobling 2003, 306); in this study, two major male literary character types of the era, the proper hero and the dark hero, are translated into dad and cad types respectively (Kruger, Fisher & Jobling 2003, 309). Dark heroes are usually characterized as dominant, confident, rebellious, and having transient liaisons with women (*ibid.*). A proper hero resembles a traditional hero who aspires to a happy long-term monogamous relationship at the end of story and has motives for altruism, but is generally weak, emotional, and passive in diegesis (Kruger, Fisher & Jobling 2003, 310). Kruger, Fisher & Jobling's (2003, 311) study involved over 200 female undergraduate participants reading descriptions of dad and cad characters from the British Romantic novels while answering questions regarding what sort of relationships they could have with those characters. The results imply that women preferred proper hero dads for long-term relationship and dark hero cads for shorter intimate encounters (Kruger, Fisher & Jobling 2003, 313). They argue that the most important finding of the study is that women find dad/cad categories intuitive and calculated mating decisions can be made on cursory character descriptions and they propose that the study be replicated in other cultural environments (Kruger, Fisher & Jobling 2003, 314).

Now that I have explored the extensive theoretical background of my thesis, I introduce my materials, *Lolita*, and related research literature in the next chapter.

3 Materials

In this section of my thesis, I introduce my primary material, Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955). My version is an e-book publication from 2021. In addition, I consider some of the research literature on *Lolita* (Goldman 2004; Meek 2017; Wepler 2011). First, I provide a synopsis of Nabokov's novel, then discuss some of its features, and conclude with related research literature.

3.1 Synopsis of *Lolita* and Additional Remarks

The structure of the narrative in *Lolita* follows a kind diary form, revolving around the main focalized narrator character named Humbert Humbert. Antecedent to the proper beginning, there is a foreword by a fictive Ph.D. John Ray Jr. who is appointed to edit the story's manuscript after the fact, and he is privy to extra information about the characters involved (*L* 3–4). Ray lauds Humbert's text as artistic masterpiece, saying that art ought to shock its consumers but refrains from defending Humbert's actions or opinions (*ibid.*).

The narrative begins at the very beginning of Humbert's life. His mother dies when he very young and he admires his wealthy father's status and sexual escapades (*L* 5–6). In his adolescent years, Humbert's first love is Annabel but the blooming romance ends abruptly (*L* 7). In his youth he explores his sexuality until Humbert marries his first wife but her infidelity causes them to part ways (*L* 17). Humbert then moves to America, wandering from place to place (*L* 19). Eventually he ends up in Ramsdale wherein he becomes a lodger at Charlotte Haze's house and there he meets her daughter Dolores, Lolita or Lo, for the first time, becoming deeply infatuated with her (*L* 23).

During his tenancy at the Haze's household, Humbert follows Lo's everyday life, basking and reveling in any direct contact with her (*L* 35). Soon she leaves for a summer camp and when she is absent her mother Charlotte confesses her feelings for him but Humbert is only interested in Lo (*L* 42). When Charlotte loses her life tragically (*L* 59), Humbert goes to pick up Lo from the camp, driving to a hotel where they engage in sexual activities (*L* 85). After revealing her mother's death, Humbert and Lo set on a long cross-country road trip (*L* 87).

On their road trip Humbert, more or less consensually, engages in sexual activities with Lo (*L* 88); however, their relationship degrades over the time on the road (*L* 91). After a year or so of traveling, they settle in in order for Lo to attend to school but eventually she wants to go on

another long road trip (*L* 124). This time they are stalked and tailed by someone and when Lo is admitted to hospital due to illness, she disappears with someone from there while HH is away (*L* 149). For three years HH lives his life without her, searching for her (*L* 153). One day he receives a letter from Lo, writing that she is married and pregnant (*L* 160). HH finds her and asks her the name of the kidnapper (*L* 164). She refuses to come with him because he “merely broke her life” (*L* 169). Now his goal is to find the person responsible for Lo’s disappearance and kill him (*L* 170). At the end of the novel HH speculates on his punishment for his deeds, has a request that the story be published when both Lolita and him are dead, and wishes for her to have a happy life (*L* 186).

As I have already alluded, my evolutionary reading of Nabokov’s magnum opus has a reductive quality to it. This means that, for instance, features such as the play of signification and intertextuality of the narrative composition are accorded less prominence than in a (post)-structuralist or postmodern study. A fine example of this is provided in the first page of the novel: “Lo-lee-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta” (*L* 5). This excerpt shows a phonetic deconstruction of the name, interweaving oral and orthographic modalities of language for transformative reading.

Various forms of word play are abundant in the novel:

Guilty of killing Quilty. Oh, my Lolita, I have only words to play with! (19)

I left my betters the task of analyzing glacial drifts, drumlins, and gremlins, and kremlins (20)

[T]he enigmatic nymphet I would coach in French and fondle in Humbertish. (21)

Worth addressing would also be the French expressions interspersed in the narration, such as: “[W]hen I would still be dans la force de l’âge (*L* 104), and: “*Je m’imagine cela*. They spent their honeymoon at Petersburg, Fla.” (*L* 25). Such elements would furnish a base for other kinds of literary theoretical readings of *Lolita* and could be of import in my Darwinian reading, but, nevertheless, fall outside the scope of the thesis. Before I begin my analysis, I examine some research literature on *Lolita*.

3.2 Perspectives on *Lolita*

Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* has garnered a raft of attention, both from the general public and literary academics. Those academics have scrutinized such themes as sexual deviance (Goldman 2004) and feminist versus aesthetic vantage points (Meek 2017).

Eric Goldman (2004) explores sexual norms in *Lolita*. He argues that common sexual awakening of girls is confounded with supposedly “deviant” sexual behavior thus justifying sexual exploitation of them (Goldman 2004, 87). Fascinatingly, Goldman (2004, 89) argues that Humbert's mythologization of women and espousal of biblical Edenic mindscape of seeing Dolly as a temptress is competing against Nabokov's modern knowledge of sexology; in other words, Humbert sanctifies his molestation because in his mind Lo's sexuality is deviant, Eve fallen from Eden although such behavior is within normal sexual development of girls (Goldman 2004, 89–91). A major contributor to HH's thought process could be his own distorted sexual maturation due to his experiences with Annabel and prostitutes, eventually equating Lo's demeanor with prostitutes (Goldman 2004, 92). Further amplification of this delusion is granted by Lo's precocious sexuality and her taking initiative with him at their first sexual act; the narrative does impart that she knows children of her age have also engaged in early sexual activities (Goldman 2004, 93–95). Overall, Goldman (2004, 88; 100) champions the idea that the author Nabokov tries to expose HH's mistaken notions of Lo's sexual conduct and that the novel is palpably misogynistic.

A feminist reading is provided by Michele Meek (2017). According to her, feminist criticism of the novel focuses on the opposition between pure literary aesthetic revelry and ethics, in which ethical considerations circumscribe unrestricted linguistic expression (Meek 2017, 153). There have been feminist rewritings of the novel in which Lo's character is focalized but, as Goldman argues as well, HH's phenomenal solipsism is subtly contested within the narrative (Meek 2017, 154). Nonetheless, Meek (2017, 161) propounds that the aesthetic features of the narration should conform to an ethical framework where Lo would have more agency and credibility as a prepubescent girl character hence not being a mere object of desire. In my mind, authors as artists can write whatever they wish granted that they eschew direct instigation of dangerous actions; we readers can choose what we read.

Finally, Ryan Wepler (2011) explores Vladimir Nabokov's peculiar humor in his oeuvre including *Lolita*. Nabokov himself as a nomadic writer had a peculiar literary humor (Wepler

2011, 77–78). What he appreciated more than anything was “individual sovereignty” which American democracy enabled and HH’s character evinces this (Wepler 2011, 80). Wepler (2011, 81; 83) names this type of humor as “incongruity-ambiguity humor”; this is exhibited in HH’s phrases, such as: “There was no Lo to behold” (*L* 134), in singular expressions like the mentioned “Humbertish”, and in cultivation of Q and similar letters and phonemes: “Quilty”, “Q”, “cue”, “Camp Q”, “Queue”, “guilty”, “Quebec”, “IQ” (Wepler 2011, 85–86). Nabokov’s humor also includes subversion of narrative reliability; Humbert reads an address but immediately afterwards denies every part of it: “I have camouflaged everything, my love” (*L* 161) (Wepler 2011, 88). I attest to this aspect of *Lolita* in my analysis section. Furthermore, Wepler (2011, 90) points out that the story has rather timely, orchestrated coincidences such as events leading to lodging at the Haze’s, and Charlotte’s death: “[N]ow look what happens when the operator himself plans a perfect removal” (*L* 51). Therefore, one could say that the novel is ‘self-aware’ of its being a literary story.

These studies are representative of the scope of literary research on *Lolita*. For my own evolutionary-inspired analysis, Goldman’s article shows connection with life history theory in terms of Dolly’s sexual development and Meek’s argument intertwines with the concept of active IF maximizer. My primary material being introduced, I begin my actual Darwinian analysis of *Lolita* in the next chapter.

4 Analysis and Discussion

Because the object of my study is to analyze Humbert Humbert's obsession with Dolores Haze from the literary Darwinist perspective, I primarily focus on his character as the focalized narrator. The narrative structure is autobiographical so a chronological approach is appropriate, starting from Humbert's childhood. Besides just him, Lolita's character and her circumstances deserve supplementary Darwinian attention in relation to HH's behavior steered by evolution. I commence with HH's formative years.

4.1 Early Years, Annabel, and the Myth of Nymphet

As a young boy Humbert admired his father's conduct with women which may have influenced his own outlook and attitudes towards sexuality:

I adored and respected him and felt glad for him whenever I overheard the servants discuss his various lady-friends, beautiful and kind beings who made much of me and cooed and shed precious tears over my cheerful motherlessness.
(L 6)

Here little Humbert construes via the servants chats his father's successful implementation of mating strategies for inclusive fitness maximization. We do not, however, know whether the father's apparent short-term "cad" strategy was espoused after the death of Humbert's mother or if he had been unfaithful antecedent to the passing. Male parental investment teaches offspring of beneficial survival, social and mating skills, so Humbert's father could be interpreted as incognizantly demonstrating necessary skills to increase IF and such skills are cues to high status and resources. The assumed servant ladies' demeanor toward the protagonist, considering the phrase "cheerful motherlessness", could reflect a goal to fill the marital vacuum left by the mother and to partake in the father's implied plentiful MPI to maximize their own IF. But the supposed cad strategy of the father is also a gamble for these women because they may not receive any substantial long-term commitment with resources.

Of course, the Darwinian reading of the passage depends on the assumptions that the master of the household engages in sexual interaction with his female friends; the servants are assumedly women and not, for example, feminine men (what determines a trait as being "feminine" or "masculine" concerns its relative occurrence among men or women). My interpretation follows the most intuitive inference. *Lolita's* narration, after all, has known to

be infamously unreliable, demonstrated by this passage of Charlotte Haze's and Humbert's prior acquaintance:

[A] little photograph of Charlotte [...]. It had been taken in April 1934 [...]. While on a business visit to the States I had had occasion to spend several months in Pisky. We met – and had a mad love affair. I was married, alas, and she was engaged to Haze, but after I returned to Europe, we corresponded through a friend, now dead. (*L* 60)

This extract contradicts the assumption that they have never met before when he began his lodging at the house. As an extrapolation of this information, one implication is that HH may be Lo's actual father thus further complicating my analysis but as there is no specific indication of that, it is not considered further.

Resuming to the formative years, Humbert's father adhered to fatherly obligations by imparting direct guidance to Humbert about matters pertaining to sex: "Later, in his delightful debonair manner, my father gave me all the information he thought I needed about sex; this was just before sending me, in the autumn of 1923, to a lycée in Lyon" (*L* 6). *Lycée* is a French equivalent of high school (OED) and high school students are usually between 16 and 18 years old. Teenage years are a period of life when competition over mates, status, and resources intensifies and various necessary skills are needed as to be successful in it. The adjective 'debonair', meaning "confident, stylish, and charming (typically used of a man)" (OED) has a strong association with the proposed short-term mating strategy the father has been practicing. In this excerpt it is very probable that he relates to Humbert knowledge regarding the implementation of a cad strategy, implied by "the information he thought I needed about sex", but the information overlaps with the long-term approaches as well. The sentence after the semi-colon, however, bears Darwinian relevance. I restate that MPI includes teaching social skills to progeny for navigating in the world, succeeding in sexual selection, gathering adequate resources, gaining status, and most importantly maximizing their IF by passing on inherited genes. Darwinian reading of this example is perspicuous.

In his youth, Humbert's first love Annabel plays a tremendous part in his sexual development and she is compared many times with Lo like in this revealing paragraph:

I remember her features far less distinctly today than I did a few years ago, before I knew Lolita. There are two kinds of visual memory: one when you skillfully recreate an image in the laboratory of your mind, with your eyes open (and then I see Annabel in such general terms as: "honey-colored skin," "think [*sic*] arms," "brown bobbed hair," "long lashes," "big bright mouth"); and the other when you

instantly evoke, with shut eyes, on the dark inner side of your eyelids, the objective, absolutely optical replica of a beloved face, a little ghost in natural colors (and this is how I see Lolita). (*L 6*)

The memories of Annabel and Lo are assigned to different types of memory system of cognition: Annabel requires a modicum of mental reconstruction by objective adjectives whereas visions of Lolita are akin to fundamentally etched cognitive and emotional experiences reconstructed from void, steering adaptive behavior. Because humans incessantly search for more resources, status promotions, and, I posit, higher quality mates, more attractive options eclipse the previous ones and this seems to have happened to HH's memories of Annabel after meeting Lo. HH applies the descriptors of Annabel also to Lolita further in the story, implying that such traits to him are cues of youthfulness and reproductive value. Incidentally, the seemingly misspelled expression "think arms" could be read cursorily as "thick arms"; "think arms" could, however, allude to the more explicit memory reconstruction process.

A defining feature of HH's relationship with Annabel was an inability to bring their mutual love into a full consummation:

[T]hat frenzy of mutual possession might have been assuaged only by our actually imbibing and assimilating every particle of each other's soul and flesh; but there we were, unable even to mate as slum children would have so easily found an opportunity to do. [...] [T]hese incomplete contacts drove our healthy and inexperienced young bodies to such a state of exasperation. (*L 7*)

This preclusion of libidinal climax could lead to a fetish cultivation around relationships, or fantasies of incomplete love, thus personal sexual experiences and associations fuse with the mental mechanisms shaped by evolution to create unique adaptive patterns of action.

Humbert and Annabel's watershed romance occurred during what HH refers to as "our fatal summer", containing another unsuccessful melding of bodies, "our second and final attempt to thwart fate" (*L 7*). What renders the summer fateful or "fatal" is manifested in two ways: first, a future with her became impossible as "four months later she died of typhus in Corfu" (*L 7*) and that their relationship, in HH's retrospective contemplation, influenced his later obsession with Lolita:

[A]nd keep asking myself, was it then, in the glitter of that remote summer, that the rift in my life began; or was my excessive desire for that child only the first evidence of an inherent singularity? [...] I am convinced, however, that in a certain magic and fateful way Lolita began with Annabel. (*L 7-8*)

As is depicted, HH's predilection of Lo could have been a quiescent mental mechanism awaiting to be triggered or the experience with Annabel might have refined or distorted his Darwinian mate preference algorithms for IF maximization, conducive to a "unique emergent complexity" in Carroll's terms.

The remembrance of the cynosure of his youth concludes with sensual impressions left by one of the two's unfulfilled trysts:

But that mimosa grove – the haze of stars, the tingle, the flame, the honey-dew, and the ache remained with me, 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. (L 8)

First, the expression "the haze of stars" is uncannily foreshadowing of the Haze family who Humbert will meet 24 years later. The word "honey-dew" invokes an association with the physical attribute of "honey-colored skin", possibly demonstrating a mate preference cue because honey as caramel brown substance resembles tanned complexion and tan is often associated with health and youth in contrast to pallor. "Seaside" is a recurrent expression in the narration, referring to sexually incomplete act of passion between Annabel and him at a beach, which left a strong imprint on HH's mindscape. Interestingly, the sentiment of the anomaly of Lo is somewhat refuted by the last sentence where Annabel figures as being resurrected in Lo, illustrating the lingering psychological effects of the first intimate experiences on subsequent romantic relationships.

Before I go further in my LD exploration of Humbert's obsession with Lolita herself, his mythical conceit of *nymphet* – Nabokov's neologism – is crucial in the novel and in his sexual mindset. HH expounds on the notion as follows:

Now I wish to introduce the following idea. Between the age limits of nine and fourteen there occur maidens who, to certain bewitched travelers, twice or many times older than they, reveal their true nature which is not human, but nymphic (that is, demoniac); and these chosen creatures I propose to designate as "nymphets". (L 9)

Examining from the Darwinian perspective, it becomes apparent that girls between nine and fourteen possess the highest RV as mating partners in comparison with, for instance, the age group of women between 24 and 32 although the latter cohort has higher fertility. In OED the word "nymphet" is defined as "a sexually attractive girl or young woman" thus not being a nonce expression of H. It is a variant of *nymph* which among other things means a maturation

phase of insects. A fascinating part in this passage is that to be able to recognize them one needs to be a significantly older “bewitched traveler”, supposedly a man with non-homosexual orientation. Perhaps this reflects an empirical finding that as men age, divorce, and remarry, they prefer significantly younger women as mates (Buss 1989b; Buss & Schmitt 1993, 227); preferring prepubescent girls would be the extreme end of this mate preference. Additionally, being “bewitched” could be related to the activation of this mechanism. What is also demonstrated is a kind of mythological dehumanization of nymphet girls. Their Darwinian desirability is so immense that they transform into something non-human, creatures of “demoniac” origin, which might form a pretext in the minds of these men for sexual exploitation. The myth is a cultural disguise of the evolved mate preference.

Furthermore, Humbert elaborates the notion extensively in the following lengthy quotation:

Between those age limits, are all girl-children nymphets? Of course not. Otherwise, we who are in the know, we lone voyagers, we nympholepts, would have long gone insane. Neither are good looks any criterion; and vulgarity [...] does not necessarily impair certain mysterious characteristics, the [...] insidious charm that separates the nymphet from such coevals of hers as are incomparably more dependent on the spatial world of synchronous phenomena than on that intangible island of entranced time where Lolita plays with her likes. Within the same age limits the number of true nymphets is trickingly [*sic*] inferior to that of provisionally plain, or just nice, or “cute,” or even “sweet” and “attractive,” ordinary, plumpish, formless, cold-skinned, essentially human little girls, with tummies and pigtails, who may or may not turn into adults of great beauty [...]. A normal man given a group photograph of school girls [...] and asked to point out the comeliest one will not necessarily choose the nymphet among them. You have to be an artist and a madman, a creature of infinite melancholy, with a bubble of hot poison in your loins [...], in order to discern at once, by ineffable signs – the slightly feline outline of a cheekbone, the slenderness of a downy limb, and other indices [...] – the little deadly demon among the wholesome children; *she* stands unrecognized by them and unconscious herself of her fantastic power. (*L* 9–10)

The assumption would be that every prepubescent girl between ages nine and fourteen would be equally attractive in terms of RV but nymphets seem to be anomalous exceptions if even signs of physical attractiveness as an established preference holds no importance.

Again, these girls appear to be something other-worldly, intuited only by men of idiosyncratic psyche: “lone voyagers”, “an artist and a madman”, “a creature of infinite melancholy.” Possibly there is a psychological trade-off: in exchange for the ability to discern attractive nymphet girls of high RV, these men are endowed with volatile mental constitution by *pleiotropy* (Workman & Reader 2014, 365). Pleiotropy labels a genetic phenomenon when

genes with deleterious effects are beneficial for inclusive fitness in combination with certain other genes; in some individuals' genomes the latter are absent thus the negative effects, such as psychiatric disorders, are prone to be manifested (ibid.). Kay Redfield Jamison (2011, 351) has reviewed studies wherein people with bipolar disorders are shown to have high representation in creative fields and this affects the first-degree relatives, too. Evolution does not aspire to perfection but to optimalization of IF.

However, the elaboration begets aporia by first informing reader of "ineffable signs" followed by a listing of few physical cues for nymphet recognition; the traits fail to give the impression that only nymphets would display them thus corroborating the sense that their nature as inexplicably supernatural. As for describing "provisionally plain" non-nymphet girls, a few of the adjectives like "cute", "sweet", and "attractive" are exactly traits what men generally desire in women at least as long-term mates. Even more equivocation is generated by the sequence of "plumpish, formless, cold-skinned", conceding at the end that they "may or may not" become "adults of great beauty" which, in my interpretation, stresses the desirability of the age of early adolescence and high RV of nymphets instead of mature fertility. At the end of the sample the mythologization is maintained by calling a nymphet "a little deadly demon" who is unrecognizable by other children and unaware of her "fantastic power".

Age difference between a "nympholept" man and a nymphet is crucial factor in HH's myth. He specifies it thus:

[S]ince the idea of time plays such a magic part in the matter [...] 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 latter to come under a nymphet's spell. It is a question of focal adjustment, of a certain distance that the inner eye thrills to surmount, and a certain contrast that the mind perceives with a gasp of perverse delight. (*L* 10)

Buss and Schmitt present a discovery that men tend to prefer women younger than they are and the preferred age difference increases whenever they end and start new relationships. The evolutionary explanation is very straightforward: at the biological level man can produce sperm until the end of his life but the eggs of woman are finite in quantity and past certain age they cannot be produced anymore (barring preservation methods). From the vantage point of IF, it is futile for a 60-year-old man to mate with women of the same age because they cannot successfully conceive, but a woman in her twenties, late teens, or, a prepubescent girl of high RV is a valuable resource for spreading the genes he carries.

In actual mating behavior, couples, for example, of an 80-year-old man and a 25-year-old woman are quite rare; as women are gravitated towards status and resource cues in men in the Darwinian framework, older men possessing greater access to them have better chances in courting younger fertile women than men of similar age lacking in those respects. Moreover, contrasted with younger members of their sex, older men simply due to longer lifespan have generally obtained more resources and higher status. An implication of the text extract is that men who are closer at their age to nymphet's age, "less than ten", are unable to recognize the RV of those girls unlike the more senior men. The common stance would be that men at any age could detect RV and fertility cues in women but the matter could be tied to the observed tendency of men desiring younger women for remating. A peculiar mental calibration in the recognition of RV cues during aging could be the case, veneered mystically as "a nymphet's spell". The final clause – "a certain contrast that the mind perceives with a gasp of perverse delight" – might refer to an improbable, but in the evolutionary terms major, success of an elder man attracting a prepubescent "little demon" as his procreative asset.

In retrospect, Humbert realizes that Annabel was a nymphet too:

When I was a child and she was a child, my little Annabel was no nymphet to me; I was her equal, a faunlet in my own right [...]; but today, in September 1952, after twenty-nine years have elapsed, I think I can distinguish in her the initial fateful elf in my life. (*L* 10)

HH introduces a sort of male counterpart of nymphet, *faunlet* – another of Nabokov's coinages. Faunlet has the diminutive suffix 'let' and the stem 'faun'. In Roman mythology faun was "one of a class of lustful rural gods, represented as a man with a goat's horns, ears, legs, and tail" (OED). In LD terms, a faunlet could refer to a boy with cues of high potential for status and resource acquisition. In the preceding excerpt, the recognition of the reproductive value of nymphets requires psychological sensitivity that boys and young men lack; HH as a prepubescent boy himself was unaware of Annabel's mystic aura but almost 30 years later, when the age disparity between him and the deceased Annabel is felicitous in accordance with his theory, the "spell" was cast upon him. Instead of describing her as a demon, HH calls her "the initial fateful elf", reflecting HH's first contact with nymphets as something mystical, his subsequent impression turning into something impish and demonical.

The "nymphet's spell" has become, maybe perniciously, integral to Humbert's condition as in "the poison was in the wound [...]" and soon I found myself maturing amid a civilization which allows a man of twenty-five to court a girl of sixteen but not a girl of twelve" and "My

world was split. I was aware of not one but two sexes, neither of which was mine; both would be termed female by the anatomist” (L 10). “Poison” could be interpreted as early experiential configurations in the network of mental algorithms and the “two sexes” of female could imply the more-mate-value dichotomy between ordinary girls and nymphets. Humbert as a young adult had internal conflict with the matter: “[I]n my twenties and early thirties, I did not understand my throes quite so clearly. While my body knew what it craved for, my mind rejected my body’s every plea” (L 10). This illustrates that evolved psychological predispositions compete with individual factors and sociocultural inputs within people, “body” being a biological entity. Moreover, to justify the validity of his singular obsession, he appeals to historical practices of marrying prepubescent girls and their importance for historical figures: “[M]arriage and cohabitation before the age of puberty are still not uncommon in certain East Indian provinces. Lepcha old men of eighty copulate with girls of eight, and nobody minds. After all, Dante fell madly in love with Beatrice when she was nine” (L 11). Humans are eager to find justifications for their decisions.

Hitherto I have established Humbert’s roots for his predilection for prepubescent nymphet girls in *Lolita*. In the next section, I analyze how *Lolita* fits into this nymphet model.

4.2 Lolita as a Quintessential Nymphet

Born in Paris, Humbert had spent quite some time in North America prior to his lodging at the Haze household (his tenancy at their house is actually rather serendipitous). When meeting Charlotte Haze (for the first time?), *Lolita*’s single parent mother, he describes her features:

The poor lady was in her middle thirties, she had a shiny forehead, plucked eyebrows and quite simple but not unattractive features of a type that may be defined as a weak solution of Marlene Dietrich. (L 22)

Now, there might be an evolutionary logic why single parent women would strive for maintaining and displaying traits men consider attractive. As an extrapolation of the sexual strategies theory, if a provider of male parental investment is absent for a mother with a child, the offspring has decreased chances of reaching maturity, thence inclusive fitness maximization is compromised for both the mother and the child. Therefore, by preserving signs of youth and health a single parent mother would try to attract a mate, perhaps imposing less stringent criteria, to avail of more resources for rearing her progeny. Charlotte’s “shiny forehead” could imply youthful complexion, “plucked eyebrows” an effort to emulate women of high status in her culture, and “simple but not unattractive features” facial symmetry

considered desirable in mates. Reasonably, the emulation of people with seemingly higher status as to improve one's IF is another major factor in human life, hinted by the phrase "a weak solution of Marlene Dietrich" (Workman & Reader 2014, 458).

Humbert has an inkling of Charlotte's ulterior Darwinian motives for tenant procurement:

I was perfectly aware that if by any wild chance I became her lodger, she would methodically proceed to in regard to me what taking a lodger probably meant to her all along, I would again be enmeshed in one of those tedious affairs I knew so well. (*L* 22)

By "one of those tedious affairs I knew so well" HH refers most likely to his previous marital life with his ex-wife in France before departing for the US. As the reader knows, HH lacks attraction towards adult females. This evolutionary view on taking a lodger could be a misconception because Charlotte could be searching for any kind of cohabiter to gain extra revenue via rent and help with chores. This interpretation is, however, improbable because she has a black maid Louise and later in the story Charlotte develops romantic feelings towards Humbert, marrying him for a brief period before her fatal death. She is a crucial factor when I scrutinize Dolly's sexual maturation from the evolutionary perspective.

After some chatting, she gives a tour of the house and Humbert encounters Lolita for the first time:

[W]ithout the least warning, a blue sea-wave swelled under my heart and [...] 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. A polka-dotted black kerchief tied around her chest hid from my aging ape eyes, but not from the gaze of young memory, the juvenile breasts I had fondled one immortal day. (*L* 23)

Comparisons with Annabel are very overtly expressed. Words such as "blue sea-wave" and "Riviera" evoke the attempted sexual act with her on the beach; saliently, the sentence listing the identical traits with his erstwhile lover, a nymphet in hindsight, undermines the notion that Lolita is a singularity detached from the influence of Annabel. Recognition of a 'conspecific' is an apt reading albeit nymphets are supposedly almost indistinguishable from 'ordinary' prepubescent girls. For HH, the physical traits of "honey-hued" skin and "silky supple bare back" work as precedent features of nymphets predicated on the model of Annabel. For instance, if human ancestors had foraged something edible with certain properties and then later located other objects with exactly or mostly similar properties, the latter is assumed to be

palatable nutrition, too. The expressions “my aging ape eyes” and “the gaze of young memory” are testaments to the vigor of early experiences in the configuration of psychological mechanisms even though conduits of sensory data may senesce, “ape eyes” referring to the humans’ common ancestry with apes, which affects contemporary human behavior.

Despite having Annabel as the “template” nymphet, HH regards Lolita as an ‘evolved’ version of her:

I find it most difficult to express [...] that impact of passionate recognition. [...] [T]he vacuum of my soul managed to suck in every detail of her bright beauty, and these I checked against the features of my dead bride. A little later [...] this Lolita, my Lolita, was to eclipse completely her prototype. All I want to stress is that my discovery of her was a fatal consequence of that “princedom by the sea” in my tortured past. Everything between the two events was but a series of gropings [*sic*] and blunders [...]. Everything they shared made one of them. (L 23)

The idea of Annabel’s precedence is very much corroborated. However, Lolita is to supplant her as the new “prototype” of Humbert’s ideal mating partner. Intriguingly, Annabel being referred to as “my dead bride” implies that if that “fateful summer” had not intervened, he would have lived his life in contentment with her thus never meeting Lolita. Nonetheless, I argue that encountering Lolita is coincidental in contrast to “a fatal consequence”, considering the reliability of the narration. The final sentence supports my argument of similarity derived by shared properties.

Thenceforth the Hazes and Humbert live together, the narration constructed via HH’s diary entries: “I know it is madness to keep this journal but it gives me a strange thrill to do so; only a loving wife could decipher my microscopic script” (L 24). Many of the daily entries describe Lo’s activities while HH tries furtively to find internal gratification by watching her:

There my beauty lay down on her stomach, showing me [...] her slightly raised shoulder blades, and the bloom along the incurvation of her spine, and the swellings of her tense narrow nates clothed in black, and the seaside of her schoolgirl thighs. Silently, the seventh-grader enjoyed her green-red-blue comics. [...] As I looked on, [...] focusing my lust and rocking slightly under my newspaper, [...] I planned to have this pitiful attainment coincide with the various girlish movements she made now and then as she read. (L 25)

Youthful appearance as an evolved mate preference is indicated by the bloom of spinal incurvation and by “tense narrow nates”. “Seaside” has a sexual meaning in Humbert’s mind and emerges as a recurring symbolic expression of the sexual experience with Annabel.

Besides such entries, others discuss female pubescence, interactions with the mother, or an event when Lo sits on his lap and excites him: “[W]ith the deep hot sweetness thus established and well on its way to the ultimate convulsion” (*L* 36); HH justifies his gratification by inaction: “[T]he child knew nothing. I had done nothing to her” (*L* 37).

When Charlotte suggests that Lo ought to go to a summer camp for the remaining summer, HH realizes the evanescence of her “nymphage”:

I also knew she would not be forever Lolita. She would thirteen on January 1. In two years or so she would cease being a nymphet and would turn into a “young girl”, and then, into a “college girl” – that horror of horrors. [...] So how could I afford not to see her for two months [...]? Two whole months out of the two years of her remaining nymphage! (*L* 39)

Apparently, the time of being a nymphet, just like prepubescence, is limited. Human females as procreative assets have “expiration dates” due to the works of biology. In this sense nymphage is grounded in the reality of evolutionary biology instead of the mythical. HH, assumed as one of those “artistic madmen” privy to knowledge of nymphets, abhors adult women, and even the “college girl”, to whom ordinary men feel attraction.

As Lolita departs for the camp, many events transpire during her absence: Charlotte confesses her love to Humbert, they marry each other, there are her plans concerning her daughter, and her abrupt death. Shocked, HH decides to drive to the camp to pick up Lo and contemplates on her guardianship (*L* 64). At the camp he notices some physical changes in her of which he had been afraid: “[S]he was thinner and taller, [...] her cheeks looked hollowed and too much lentigo camouflaged her rosy rustic features” (*L* 67). From the camp they drive to a hotel where HH had booked a room and en route Lolita’s demeanor is rather suggestive when she asks if he has been missing her: “[Y]ou haven’t kissed me yet, have you?” (*L* 68). HH ascribes the words to childish play (*L* 68), but she further teases him: “[B]ut we are lovers, aren’t we?” (*L* 69). Lolita’s behavior receives Darwinian interpretation later in my thesis.

At the hotel, Humbert devises a plan to have an opportunity to finally indulge in physical intimacy with Dolores, for “le grand moment” (*L* 75). Now in this situation, different forces of his psyche are in a convocation: “the moralist”, “[t]he child therapist”, and “the sensualist” (*L* 75). The moralist could be his conscience whereas the sensualist could be personification of biological drives which has “no objection to some depravity in his prey” (*L* 76). When the moment is upon him, HH thinks that “lust is never quite sure [...] that some rival devil or

influential god may still not abolish one's prepared triumph" (*L 75*). This reflects the value of mating opportunities; squandering such a chance impairs maximizing one's IF. Surprisingly, the narration says that Lo takes the initiative: "[B]y six she was wide awake, and by six fifteen we were technically lovers. I am going to tell you something very strange: it was she who seduced me" (*L 80*). The account's credibility is contestable but her seducing Humbert would befit the concept of nymphet. Furthermore, she reveals that she had sexual experiences at the camp; this arouses Darwinian interest in her (*L 81*). HH and the nymphet Lo engage in sexual intimacy (*L 81*). As they leave the hotel, HH divulges her mother's death, saying that they need to stay together, and then they go on a long road trip across the country (*L 87*).

On their trip the pair engages in venereal sessions wherever they stay (*L 87*). Humbert blackmails her into being reticent about their relationship (*L 89*). In their study Margo I. Wilson, Martin Daly and Suzanne J. Weghorst. (1980; Daly & Wilson 2005, 507) discovered that child abuse is far more prevalent with stepparents than with biological progenitors, naming the phenomenon as "the Cinderella effect". HH acts like a (step)father to Lo, addressing the matter: "[Q]uery: is the stepfather of a gaspingly adorable pubescent pet, a stepfather of only one month's standing, [...] is he to be considered a relative, and thus a natural guardian?" (*L 103*).

Whenever Lo interacts with other people, Humbert's reaction of jealousy is activated: "[S]he radiated, despite her very childish appearance, some special languorous glow which threw garage fellows, hotel pages, [...] into fits of concupiscence which might have tickled my pride, had it not incensed my jealousy" (*L 95*). As I have explained, the emotion of jealousy could have evolved as corollary of mate guarding efforts and to secure paternal certainty; sometimes the emotion is triggered unnecessarily akin to a false alarm but that is evolutionarily more tolerable than ignoring a real threat. HH experiences many similar fits of jealousy during their trip (*L 96; 98*). Interestingly, he is keen to recognize other nymphets but he thinks Lo is nonpareil in attractiveness: "[C]ompare Lolita to whatever other nymphets parsimonious chance collected around her for my anthological delectation and judgement; [...] I really do not think that any of them ever surpassed her in desirability" (*L 97*). Founded on my theory, it is safe to assume that their interests in each other is asymmetrical.

After their nomadic year, they decide to settle in small town so that Lolita could attend to school (*L 102*). Evidently, Lo is a growing child whose physical changes Humbert cannot ignore: "[H]er bi-iliac garland still as brief as a lad's although she had added two inches to her

stature and eight pounds to her weight” (*L* 105). In their new residence they continue venereal acts but for her those acts have transformed into tedious obligations (*L* 110). He strives to control her contacts with boys of her age, now fourteen, grabbing with his “jagged claw” of jealousy (*L* 112). After having settled, HH is awaiting to meet Lo’s new girlfriends, hoping to find other nymphets (*L* 113). Because the inclusive fitness of males depends on the number of copulation partners, HH could increase his IF by mating with as many reproductively valuable nymphet girls as possible. One of them, Eva, seems to fit the standards:

[A] good example of a not strikingly beautiful child revealing to the perspicacious amateur some of the basic elements of nymphet charm, such as a perfect pubescent figure and lingering eyes and high cheekbones. Her glossy copper hair had Lolita’s silkiness, and the features of her delicate milky – white face with pink lips and silverfish eyelashes were less foxy than those of her likes. (*L* 114)

Recalling Humbert’s theoretical explication of nymphets, particular features of prepubescent girls are not indicative of nymphage but conversely few traits like high cheekbones are mentioned. Because Lolita is his new nymphet “template”, Eva’s nymphic nature could be postulated on corresponding characteristics. HH’s preference for honey-hued complexion surfaces again as Eva’s “white face with pink lips” reduces her attractiveness to him, “less foxy” (*L* 114); an informal meaning of the adjective “foxy”, “sexually attractive (typically used of a woman)”, fits the context (OED). Humbert addresses his desire to compare and contrast: “[T]he reader knows what importance I attached to having a bevy of page girls, consolation prize nymphets, around my Lolita” (*ibid.*). Here, a star shines brighter amid stars.

The staff at her school consult Humbert about Lo, “Mr. Haze. What on earth is wrong with that child?” (*L* 117), and he cannot help but perceive further physiological changes in the now 14-year-old girl:

Her complexion was now that of any vulgar untidy highschool girl [...]. Its smooth tender bloom had been so lovely in former days [...]. A coarse flush had now replaced that innocent fluorescence [...] – how polished and muscular her legs had grown! [...] Everything about her was of the same exasperating impenetrable order [...], her wenchy smell. (*L* 122)

Lolita is on the cusp of reaching her fertile years and her features develop into more mature forms. The phrase “wenchy smell” strongly implies association with a short-term mating strategy of the sexual strategies theory.

Eventually Lo yearns for another journey, thereby they leave the town (*L* 125). Humbert imposes standards on her physical features: “[T]he tour of your thigh [...] should not exceed seventeen and half inches” (*L* 126). Humbert’s statement can be construed on the basis that superfluous adiposity runs counter to healthiness and youthfulness in women’s attractiveness as mating partners; people, not just women, tend to gain adipose tissue as they age therefore senile age indicates impaired fertility and low RV for women. Just like during their first adventure, HH is alerted to Lolita’s signs of infidelity whenever she socializes with people (*L* 129). He describes her playing tennis:

Despite her advanced age, she was more of a nymphet than ever, with her apricot-colored limbs, [...] the slender waist, the apricot midriff, [...] leaving bare her gaspingly young and adorable apricot shoulder blades with that pubescence and those lovely gentle bones, and the smooth, downward-tapering back. (*L* 139)

A contradiction emerges: if nymphage is a transient, age-bound state, how can Lolita be even more of a nymphet when past the putative age? Perhaps she represents true singularity in his mind of evolved mental mechanisms, an X factor refining those mechanisms. Anyhow, the hue of apricot resembles honey’s, the often-used expression for describing Lo’s complexion and light brown, smooth skin is a well-established mating preference cue for men; the slenderness of waist and the downward-tapering back also imply health and young age.

Occasionally Humbert would think of Lo as “the vile and beloved slut” when seeking attention from other males (*L* 143). Extrapair flirting is usually a sign of disloyalty and a threat to paternity certainty, and derogation of woman’s conduct could be a manifestation of mate guarding. Her demeanor activates emotional and attentional sets of algorithms in HH for swift intervention. To reiterate my point, a false alarm is evolutionarily less costly than to ignore a real threat. Despite this, HH adores her being past the nymphet age, counter to the initial Darwinian logic, constituting his own “emergent complexity” as an individual person.

Their nomadic enterprise ends abruptly when Lo becomes ill and is admitted to hospital, at the age of “practically sixteen” (*L* 145). Being by himself, Lo vanishes soon from the hospital with a stranger (*L* 149). HH spends the next three years trying to find her, occasionally reacting to nymphet girls around him:

[M]y sullen and stealthy eye, against my will, still sought out the flash of a nymphet’s limbs, the sly tokens of Lolita’s handmaids and rosegirls. But one essential vision in me had withered: never did I dwell now on possibilities of bliss

with a little maiden, [...] never did my fancy sink its fangs into Lolita's sisters [...]. That was all over, for the time being at least. (*L* 155)

A Darwinian explanation for the emotion of love could be in a sense of long-term commitment to one's mate while still unconsciously registering cues of attraction in others. This further corroborates the idea of Lo's unique essence; her absence dims the lights of her 'conspecifics'. However, he adds that "habits of lust" developed over the previous two years with Lo would be unleashed if a "chance temptation" appeared, demonstrating the unremitting battle between the evolved biological forces and the individual human factor (*L* 155).

One day Humbert receives a letter from Lolita, saying that she is married and pregnant (*L* 160). Therefore, he sets on the road and finds her:

Couple of inches taller [...]. She was frankly and hugely pregnant. Her head looked smaller [...] and her pale-freckled cheeks were hollowed, and her bare shins and arms had lost all their tan, so that the little hairs showed. (*L* 162)

Evidently, the head is less pronounced as the rest of the body grows, matures, and in Lo's case, physically changes due to pregnancy. The signs of reproductive healthiness and youthfulness are reduced with the hollow cheeks, indicating undernutrition or illness; for such reasons pale skin is a familiar non-preference cue. Nevertheless, she is successfully contributing to her inclusive fitness directly: though she displays unfavorable traits, she has managed to attract a mate; Buss and Schmitt argue that men generally have less stringent criteria for mating partners than women do. Men *can* procreate with unhealthy, old, and disagreeable women but they risk siring less viable offspring compared with copulating with women exhibiting the preferences which spread in the minds of a population over time by way of natural selection.

Humbert cannot help but recognize post-pubescent traits in her, "hopelessly worn at seventeen" (*L* 167). Still, his love for her is steadfast albeit she is no longer a nymphet: "I loved her more than anything I had ever seen or imagined on earth [...]. She was only the faint violet whiff and dead leaf echo of the nymphet I had rolled myself upon with such cries in the past" (*L* 168). Love, a surface structure of mate commitment and IF maximization, coalesces with his idiosyncratic predispositional preference for prepubescent nymphet girls. He has an overtly Darwinian thought about her attractiveness: "[S]o beautiful, so endearing that one found it hard to reduce such sweetness to but a magic gene" (*L* 172). After reuniting

with and voluntarily leaving her, Lolita exits the story, centering on Humbert's later actions and at the end of the novel he wishes for her to lead a happy life with her family (*L* 187).

Thus far I have been exploring the ambit of Humbert Humbert's predilection for Lolita within the Darwinian framework I have adopted in my thesis. Before the concluding remarks, I provide subsidiary examination whether Lolita's character, from the evolutionary perspective has been amenable to HH's sexual exploitation of her.

4.3 Lolita's Life History Directed Her to Humbert's Embrace

One of the background theories I have introduced is life history theory and the effects of father absence. When the Haze household is first introduced, only Charlotte and Lolita are narrated as inhabiting the house. The story, as we know, has conflicting information of her father. In accordance with the theory, this aspect may have affected Lo's sexual behavior and maturation, possibly paving way to Humbert's molestation of her.

Mark V. Flinn (1988) researched various parent–offspring relationships in a Caribbean village. Two important findings emerged: conflicts between parent and child are more strained intrasexually than intersexually and interactions between mother and a prepubescent or early adolescent daughter are more truculent when a stepfather lives in the household (Flinn 1988, 357–58). In *Lolita*, Humbert frequently describes Lo's agonistic relations to her mother Charlotte: “I heard a great banging of doors and other sounds coming from quaking caverns where the two rivals were having a ripping row” (*L* 28). Now, “two rivals” is very telling: due to his (alleged) non-relatedness, HH is deemed as a prospective mate for both Charlotte and Lo. From the man's viewpoint the mother is more fertile but lower in reproductive value whereas the daughter surpasses in RV but lacks in current fertility. In Trivers's theory of parent–offspring conflict, Lolita as the offspring has reached an age wherein her own direct procreation starts figuring in her overall inclusive fitness strategy but still fecund Charlotte's efforts to maximize her own IF would prefer to intercede Lo in mating with HH instead of letting her daughter to be involved with him. HH's remark adds evidence to my reading: “[S]he had been annoyed by Lo's liking me” (*L* 50). However, this is complicated by the mother saying Lo is undesired: “[I]t is intolerable [...] that a child should be so ill-mannered. And so very persevering. When she knows she is unwanted. And needs a bath” (*L* 30). Charlotte's IF would be suboptimal were Lo not there as direct progeny. Of course, offspring of inferior quality can be a detriment rather than fitness-enhancing asset.

Incidentally, toward the end of the novel Humbert mulls over his time with Lolita: “[E]ven the most miserable of family lives was better than the parody of incest, which, in the long run, was the best I could offer the waif” (*L* 173).

The life history theory propounds that girls living in father absence (mother is the usual single guardian) receive no male parental investment and are thus inclined to adopt a ‘fast’ IF strategy of early reproduction via numerous short-lived pair-bonds oriented to express resource extraction. Lo fits into this strategy: her father is absent and she has no contact with him, therefore leaving Charlotte, and a maid, to look after her. Humbert’s arrival at the house stirs her life history ‘program’, inciting rivalry with her mother. Moreover, negative attitudes towards men are manifested in her later dislike of HH and one 13-year-old Charlie with whom she had sex at the summer camp: “Lolita, I am glad to say, held Charlie’s mind and manners in the greatest contempt. Nor had her temperament been roused by that filthy fiend” (*L* 83). Lo describes her husband Dick at the end of the novel, via HH’s narration, in a mildly condescending manner: “What about Dick? Oh, Dick was a lamb, they were quite happy together” (*L* 164). Lo’s ‘chosen’ LHS is also supported by her teen pregnancy at the age of seventeen even when Dick’s current expendable resources are meager but probably higher in the future: “[W]e don’t have enough to pay our debts and get out of here. Dick is promised a big job in Alaska [...], it’s really grand” (*L* 160). Despite his present resources for MPI, the prospect of gaining more as a cue of female mate preferences may be why Lo is with Dick.

As mentioned, Lolita had sex with Charlie at the summer camp prior to Humbert’s arrival to pick her up. That event is worth elaboration regarding her LHS; the boy seems to be only part of her early sexual experiences: “[H]er kiss [...] had some rather comical refinements of flutter and probe which made me conclude she had been coached at an early age by a little Lesbian. No Charlie boy could have taught her that” (*L* 81). According to the theoretical postulate, in order to increase her IF from early on, she is expected to be attracted to the members of the opposite sex who could inseminate and lavish her with resources but this excerpt allows a fascinating implicature that Lo had dallied with other girls. One interpretation of mine is that intimate contacts with both sexes accumulates more social capital hence more viable channels to resources for her own offspring and IF. Another one is related to an abnormal vigor of her libido, her sexual desire overflowing on the member of her own sex; this could be an experientially induced individual factor in collaboration with the evolved mental mechanisms. Lolita would be placed at extreme end of trait distribution curve

(Workman and Reader 2014, 366). Arguments for bisexuality and lesbianism are also plausible, contributing to her complex emergent being but my thesis omits evolutionary thinking of non-binary sexuality because it would over-expand my scope of study.

The erotic camp escapade's description is as follows:

Barbara Burke, a sturdy blond, two years older than Lo [...] had a very special canoe which she shared with Lo [...]. Through July, every morning [...] Barbara and Lo would be helped to carry the boat [...] by Charlie Holmes, the camp mistress' son, aged thirteen [...], and at one point, among the luxuriant undergrowth, Lo would be left as sentinel, while Barbara and the boy copulated behind the bush.

At first, Lo had refused "to try what it was like," but curiosity and camaraderie prevailed, and soon she and Barbara were doing it by turns with the silent, coarse and surly but indefatigable Charlie, who had as much sex appeal as a raw carrot but sported a fascinating collection of contraceptives. (*L* 83)

This recount's veracity is questionable due to the narrative style but here I deem it to be reliable. 14-year-old Barbara's actions can be interpreted in terms of sexual precocity, hinting at her own fatherless childhood and espousal of an LHS similar to Lo. Barbara and Lo would, then, take advantage of Charlie, the lone male in their immediate environment, in the name of IF increase. However, what is slightly intriguing is that Lolita had initially shown reluctance for intercourse; perhaps Charlie did not fulfill preference requisites as a potential mating partner, his sexual attractiveness resembling "a raw carrot" but him being the son of the camp's warden, indicating access to status and resources, might have overcome her initial refusal. Humans can act against the psychological predispositions of adaptive behavior and engage in coitus with physically unattractive people who fulfill other mate preferences. Lo's curiosity was probably aided by Charlie's contraceptives minimizing the costs of hetero sex for females against the benefits he offered; my LHS reading is that Lo would extract resources from the boy and then copulate with a mate of high genetic quality.

The experience of fun in sexual intercourse could be a selected evolved affective trait for IF purposes because people who enjoy sex tend to reproduce more in a population than the individuals who do not enjoy it. Additionally, Charlie's 'stamina' reflects the evolved male preference for multiple copulation partners for maximizing his IF albeit his modern paraphernalia avert evolution's original goals.

In the hotel room where Lolita and Humbert have sex for the first time, she is seemingly mesmerized by his prepubescent inexperience:

“You mean,” she persisted, now kneeling above me, “you never did it when you were a kid?”

“Never,” I answered quite truthfully.

“Okay,” said Lolita, “here is where we start.” (*L 81*)

This exchange strongly suggests Lo’s venereal precocity, fitting the life history strategy reading. On his part, HH’s reply aligns with what readers know about his childhood and his relationship with Annabel. The interaction also vitiates feminist interpretations in which she is represented as a helpless victim of Humbert’s sexual predation.

On their road trips Lolita is eager to socialize with people other than Humbert. One such instance is when she roams around their accommodation’s surroundings with two other children, only to return with two older boys:

Lo would come back an hour late, with barefoot Mary trailing far behind, and the little boy metamorphosed into two, gangling, golden-haired high school uglies, all muscles and gonorrhea [...] she would ask me if she could go with Carl and Al here to the roller-skating rink. (*L 96*)

In view of her LHS, Lo would engage in short-term mating with temporary partners to increase her IF. The strategy could be aided by a sociable and gregarious disposition. “[H]igh school uglies” could imply virile and vigorous boys for successful mating; “all muscles and gonorrhea” hint cues for good genes, resource and status potential, and prior sexual experience to validation by other females as ‘approved’ mating partners. In women’s short-term mating preferences attractive physical appearance is more pronounced than in long-term mating; in fact, the phase of ovulatory cycle can exert an effect on women’s short-term mating preferences, accentuating genetic quality in forms of physical masculinity, dominant demeanor, and symmetrical face and deeper voice in man on the days of higher fecundity (Gildersleeve et al. 2014, 1251). Lolita, at the age of twelve, a nymphet girl of high RV, with her LHS of precocious sexual maturation and active ovulation cycles is attractive to high school boys. She ought not miss an opportunity to pass on her genes to posterity.

This strategy subtly emerges when Humbert converses with one of her teachers:

“Dolly Haze,” she said, “is a lovely child but the onset of sexual maturing seems to give her trouble.” [...] “She is still shuttling [...] between the anal and genital zones of development [...]. All I mean is that biologic drives [...] are not fused in Dolly” (*L 116*)

For her upbringing in an MPI-absent environment, Lo would undergo little trouble in her sexual maturation; rather it is predicted to be expediated. On one hand, this is where HH’s

molestation could have distorted her development, creating idiosyncrasies in Lo's sexuality. On the other hand, the teacher's evaluation may concern the LHS itself, as opposed to the more conventionally 'acceptable' trajectory with father presence in American culture. The "anal and genital zones of development", alluding to Sigmund Freud's theories, could be construed as folk interpretation of more fundamental biological-evolutionary theories.

The teacher continues the review:

[W]e all wonder if anybody in the family has instructed Dolly in the process of mammalian reproduction. The general impression is that fifteen-year-old Dolly remains morbidly uninterested in sexual matters, or to be exact, represses her curiosity in order to save her ignorance and self-dignity. [...] Dolly is obsessed by sexual thoughts for which she finds no outlet, and will tease and martyrize other girls. (*L* 117)

This passage lends an impression that Lo is hiding her 'erudition' owing to the norms of the social environment; I interpret "curiosity" as pertaining to the domain of precocity. Further support for my Darwinian LHS reading is provided by the obsession with sexual thoughts and tormenting her schoolmates in sexual matters. However, imputing her behavior solely to her formative environment is inexhaustive because it is compounded by her individual features and the psychological effects of HH's venereal exploitation, creating unique and aberrant (mal)adaptive behavior.

In my Darwinian literary analysis of Nabokov's *Lolita*, the main agenda has been to examine the evolutionary foundation of Humbert Humbert's obsession with the prepubescent girl Lolita. In the core of this is his entertained myth of nymphet, a mystic set of qualities manifested by some prepubescent girls of which Lolita is a "template". A Darwinian interpretation of this conceit is that such girls have very high reproductive value. In Lolita's case Humbert's profound desire for her develops into something that renegotiates the evolutionarily supported mythos he cherishes, modifying the inherited evolved mating preferences by contingent individual experiences and circumstances. Besides the study of Humbert's Darwinian psychology, my analysis provides a subsidiary discovery that Lolita by evolutionary intricacies of her rearing environment and behavior partially led her to Humbert's loving and twisted embrace.

5 Concluding Remarks

The literary theoretical study in my thesis is a literary Darwinian reading of Vladimir Nabokov's magnum opus *Lolita* (1955). The main research question pivots on exploring the narrator-protagonist Humbert Humbert's obsession on a pubescent girl named Lolita from an evolutionary perspective, complemented by an enquiry into the girl's character within the same framework. The scrutiny produced results according to which HH's idiosyncratic predilection has a core shaped by the evolution of human mate choice: male preference of women of high reproductive value as long-term mating partners is, however, veiled in his surface thought structure of the mythical notion of nymphet. For him Lolita is a perfect instance of this conceit, influenced by memories of Annabel. Her nymphic perfection is so psychologically pervasive to HH that the foundational evolved mental mechanism to seek nymphets for inclusive fitness maximization is eclipsed by a mechanism of deep commitment expressed as the emotion of love and that love transcends effacement of the original attractive pre-pubescent traits as she matures into adulthood over the novel's course. On Lo's part, the circumstances she had lived in programmed, or predisposed, her to be sexually exploited by HH for her own unconscious IF goals.

One of the most pre-eminent scholars of Darwinian literary criticism, Joseph Carroll, on whose scholarship my thesis relies on, argues for a distinction between "vulgar" literary Darwinian reading in which narrative events, actions and motives of characters, are viewed through the microscope of evolutionary forces and more multifaceted readings where the literary works' formal properties besides just the content function in larger social practices for promoting fitness-enhancing adaptive behavior in readers. Frankly, opting for the more comprehensive Darwinian reading would have exceeded appropriate thesis strictures or omission of important content. Should I had had different disquisitional parameters, I could have considered doing that in addition to my 'vulgar' reading of the Darwinian motives of *Lolita's* characters; to be honest, Nabokov's works has more than sufficient material for a 'vulgar' perusal. Many literary Darwinist analyses are ascribed to the first category, reducing elaborate stories to biological verities of passing on genes and acquiring resources and power, but as LD establishes itself, more multi-dimensional scholarship could emerge. I do suggest that empirical evolution-minded studies of reader reaction, in the vein of Kruger et al. (2003), on *Lolita* may generate fascinating data for both literary theory and LD. We are living with

evolved psychological and behavioral propensities genetically inherited from our forebears but individual aspects remain in us to disrupt them.

The reading of *Lolita* my thesis offers an interpretation of the work. The novel by its literary complexity purveys a diverse range of readings from varied theoretical positions, for example, (post-)structuralism and postmodernism for ambiguity of meaning and play of signification in Humbert's narration, feminism in examining Lolita's character and her interaction with him, class identity within the Marxist framework, Humbert's mother relationship from Freudian and Lacanian perspectives, queer theory applied to Lo's sexual forays and so on.

The notorious reputation of Nabokov's novel can deter some people from reading the book. However, the molestation is only one facet of the work; there are many parts where Lolita's character is absent, or 'offstage', thus more narrative focus placed on HH and other characters. The book is saturated with technique and style for literary theorists, dismissal of which imparts a sense of prejudice. If one be adequately unbothered by it, *Lolita* has potential to be a unique literary 'expedition'.

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Appendix 1: Finnish Summary

Tässä tutkielmassa tutkimuskysymyksenä on selvittää, onko Vladimir Nabokovin *Lolita*-romaanin (1955) päähenkilön Humbert Humbertin esimurrosikäiseen tyttöön nimeltä Lolita kohdistamalla seksuaalisromanttisella pakkomielleellä ja hyväksikäytöllä kirjallisuusdarwinistisesta teoriasta johdettavissa oleva evoluutiopsykologinen selitysmalli. Tämän lisäksi selvitän myös, miten kirjallisuusdarwinismin evoluutiopsykologiset teoriat mahdollisesti selittävät Lolitan lapsuuden olosuhteista johdettujen käyttäytymismallien mahdollistaneen häneen kohdistuvan seksuaalisen hyväksikäytön. Tämäntyyppinen kirjallisuusdarwinistinen tulkinta kirjan päähahmoista on niin kutsuttu ”vulgaarinen” analyysi, jossa keskityn ainoastaan tarinan hahmojen keskinäisiin suhteisiin, vuorovaikutustilanteisiin sekä käyttäytymiseen evolutiivisesta näkökulmasta ottamatta huomioon Nabokovin teoksen merkitystä laajemmissa diskursiivisissa ja sosiaalisissa toimintatavoissa, esimerkiksi kirjailijan sekä lukijoiden mahdolliset evolutiiviset kelpoisuus (*fitness*) -hyödyt teoksen kirjoittamisesta ja lukemisesta. *Lolita* teoksena soveltuu monenlaiseen kirjallisuusteoreettiseen tarkasteluun, joissa teoreettinen painotus voi kohdistua kielellisiin ilmaisuihin narratiivissa, tarinankerronnan rakenteisiin, kertojanäkökulmaan ominaisuuksiin ja moneen muuhun, joten valitsemani kirjallisuusdarwinistinen lukutapa on teoreettisesti valikoiva ja siksi suosittelen tutustumaan muunlaisiin kirjallisuustulkintoihin Nabokovin teoksesta.

Tutkielmani pohjateoria alkaa muutamalla perusteellisemmalla evoluutioteorian käsitteellä ja teorialla: seksuaalivalinta, inkluusiivinen kelpoisuus- teoria, vanhemman investointi (*parental investment*) - sekä vanhemman ja jälkikasvun konflikti (*parent-offspring*) - teoria ja ”elämänhistoria” (*life history*) -teoria. Charles Darwinin muotoilema käsite seksuaalivalinta viittaa yksilön ominaisuuksiin, joilla se voi houkuttaa itselleen tai ”tulla valituksi” lisääntymiskumppanina ja näin siirtää omaa geneettistä perimäänsä jälkikasvulle. Nämä lisääntymiskumppaneita houkuttelevat valinnanalaiset ominaisuudet voivat olla ristiriidassa luonnonvalinnan valitsemien selviytymistä parantavien ominaisuuksien kanssa, esimerkiksi riikinkukkokoiraan koristeellinen pyrstö houkuttelee enemmän saalistajia verrattuna toisenlaiseen pyrstöön. Seksuaalivalinnan luomalle selviytymistä haittaavalle kehityskululle on kehitetty erilaisia teorioita, esimerkiksi haitta-hypoteesi (*handicap hypothesis*). William Hamiltonin inkluusiivinen kelpoisuus- teoria laajentaa käsitystä yksilön kelpoisuudesta kattamaan kaikki yksilöt, joilla on geneettinen sukulaisuussuhde eli omaavat samaa perimää

yksilön kanssa. Teoriassa yksilön oma lisääntyminen kelpoisuuden parantamiseksi on ensisijaista, mutta jos se on hankaloitunut tai mahdotonta, geneettisten sukulaisten auttaminen ja tukeminen heidän kelpoisuutensa parantamiseksi nostaa samalla omaa kelpoisuutta. Mitä pienempi sukulaisuusaste, sen suurempi täytyy olla auttamisesta saatava hyöty kohdeyksilölle.

Robert Triversin vanhemman investointi- teoria kertoo, että se vanhempi ja sukupuoli, joka vastaa synnytyksestä ja pääasiallisesta jälkikasvun hoidosta (naaras), evoluutio on ohjannut heidät valitsemaan lisääntymiskumppanin hyvin valikoivasti. Koska naarasiin kohdistuu valtava vastuu ja vaiva perimän siirrossa, he haluavat paritella hyvän kelpoisuuden omaavan uroksen kanssa. Teoriaa tukee eri sukupuolien biologiset erot suvun jatkamisessa.

Vanhemman ja jälkikasvun konflikti- teoriassa vanhemmalla ja jälkikasvulla ovat eriävät inkluusiivinen kelpoisuus- strategiat. Vanhemmalle olisi edullista omalle kelpoisuudelle pidättäytyä antamasta liikaa investointia yhdelle jälkikasvulle, jotta sen voisi sijoittaa jatkolisääntymiseen ja muun jälkikasvun hoivaamiseen. Toisaalta jälkikasvun oma kelpoisuus hyötyisi vanhemman ylimääräisestä investoinnista ja siksi evoluutio molempien välillä on luonut kilpailun, jossa vanhempi arvioi tarkkaan investoinnin tarpeen, kun taas jälkikasvu on kehittänyt keinoja saadakseen enemmän kuin todellisuudessa tarvitsee. Ihmisten kohdalla tämä konflikti voisi näkyä sisarusten välisenä kilpailuna ja vanhempien opetuksina tasa-arvosta ja altruismista. Lopuksi elämäntehoria- teoria kertoo, että lapsi valitsee lisääntymisstrategian oman inkluusiivisen kelpoisuuden maksimoimiseksi kasvuympäristönsä ominaisuuksien perusteella, erityisesti isän investoinnin (*male parental investment*) läsnäolo tai poissaolo vaikuttaa strategian valitsemiseen. Tutkielmani kannalta ilman isää kasvavien tyttöjen lisääntymisstrategia herättää kiinnostusta: he ovat usein seksuaalisesti varhaiskypsiä, omaavat kielteisiä asenteita vastakkaiseen sukupuoleen ja heidän parisuhteensa ovat monesti lyhytaikaisia. Selitys voisi olla, etteivät he pidä isällistä panostusta tärkeänä jälkikasvun hoidossa ja ympäristö on epävakaa, joten nopea lisääntyminen on paras tapa maksimoida inkluusiivinen kelpoisuus. Kulttuuri vaikuttaa näiden strategioiden valintaan ja esiintyvyyteen. Olen valinnut nämä teoriat tutkielmaani sen vuoksi, että lisääntyminen, pariutuminen, vanhemman ja lapsen suhde sekä lapsen kasvuympäristö ovat tärkeitä teemoja Nabokovin *Lolitassa*.

Seuraava osa teoreettista näkökulmaani on evoluutiopsykologia, jonka tutkimusaihe on ihmismielen rakenne ja toiminta evolutiivisten prosessien seurauksena. Ihmislajin

menneisyyden esi-isien kelpoisuusvalinnat heijastuvat nykyihmisen mielen toiminnassa. Kuitenkin psykologisten sopeutumien (*adaptation*) todentaminen voi olla hyvin haasteellista. Evoluutiopsykologia ei tue ajatusta, että nämä evoluution muokkaamat mielen toiminnot olisivat absoluuttisen ehdottomia käyttäytymisessä vaan kyse on taipumuksista, joihin vaikuttaa ympäristö, kulttuuri ja yksilön ominaisuudet. Tutkimusala ei myöskään tue naturalistista virhepäätelmää (*naturalistic fallacy*), jonka mukaan, jos jokin asia on luonnollinen se olisi moraalisesti hyvää ja epäluonnollinen asia taas moraalisesti paha.

Tärkeä evoluutiopsykologinen teoria, joka teemallisesti sopii tutkielmani kaunokirjalliseen teokseen, on Bussin ja Schmittin seksuaaliset strategiat- teoria (*sexual strategies theory*) ihmisten pariutumistavoista. Teorian mukaan ihmisten pariutuminen jakautuu pitkäaikaiseen sekä lyhytaikaiseen pariutumiskontekstiin, jolloin erilaisten ominaisuuksien suosiminen (*preference*) mahdollisessa kumppanissa saavat erilaisen painoarvon. Evoluution seurauksena miehet suosivat pitkäaikaisessa pariutumisessa tiettyjä ominaisuuksia naisissa: terveys, fyysinen kauneus, nuoruus (viittaa korkeaan lisääntymisarvoon (*reproductive value*) eli kuinka monta jälkeläistä nainen voi vielä synnyttää elämänsä aikana), seksuaalinen uskollisuus, empaattisuus, ja hyvät vanhemman ominaisuudet. Merkittävänä haittapuolena on sitoutuminen yhteen kumppaniin, rajoittaen inklusiivisen kelpoisuuden maksimointia. Miesten lyhytaikaisessa pariutumisessa puolestaan korostuu naisen fyysinen viehättävyys, hedelmällisyys lisääntymisarvon sijasta, seksuaalinen avoimuus ja kokemus sekä vähäinen sitoutuminen. Seksitaudit, sosiaalisen maineen tahrautuminen, väkivallan uhka naisen varsinaiselta kumppanilta sekä mahdollisen jälkikasvun alentunut selviytyminen ovat miesten lyhytaikaisen pariutumisen sivuvaikutuksia. Naisten pitkäaikaisen pariutumisen suosittuja ominaisuuksia miehessä ovat muun muassa varakkuus, korkea sosiaalinen asema, avokätisyys, emotionaalinen uskollisuus ja empaattisuus. Vastapainona näitä ominaisuuksia omaava mies ei välttämättä ole fyysisesti viehättävä tai omaa laadukasta perimää, jotka puolestaan ovat enemmän merkityksellisiä naisten lyhytaikaisessa pariutumisessa. Muita naisten lyhytaikaisen pariutumisen houkuttimia ovat miehen resurssien välitön saatavuus, arviointi pitkäaikaisena kumppanina, pitkäaikaisen kumppanin manipulointi ja kumppanin tarjoama suojelu. Toisaalta vakituisen tukea antavan kumppanin puute alentaa naisen jälkeläisten kelpoisuutta. Näiden kehittyneiden lisääntymisstrategioiden toteutuminen ei välttämättä näy varsinaisessa lisääntymiskäyttäytymisessä ja kulttuurilla, ja yksilön ominaisuuksilla on myös vaikutusta.

Lolitassa hahmojen tunteet ja tunneilmaisut ovat merkittävässä roolissa, joten tarkastelen myös niitä evolutiivisesta näkökulmasta. John Toobyn ja Leda Cosmidexen mukaan tunteet ovat psykologisia, funktionaalisia mekanismeja, jotka vaikuttavat kokonaisvaltaisesti muihin kognitiivisiin toimintoihin, esimerkiksi pelko ja ahdistus kallistavat havaitsemaan ympäristön mahdollisia uhkia ja tietynlaisia ärsykeitä. Nykyajan ympäristössä tunteet aktivoituvat, vaikka alkuperäisiä adaptiivisia ärsykeitä ei olisi, koska ne olivat yleisiä siinä ympäristössä. Jotkut tutkimukset antavat osviittaa, että tietyt tunneilmaisut olisivat jossain määrin yleismaailmallisia ihmislajille, mutta kulttuurilla ja ympäristöllä on vaikutuksensa. Negatiiviset tunteet ovat olleet tärkeämpiä kuin positiiviset tunteet selviytymisen ja kelpoisuuden kannalta: esihistoriallisessa ympäristössä oli enemmän uhkia kuin mahdollisuuksia. Randolph Nessen mukaan väärä hälytys- säännön mukaan on kelpoisuuden kannalta vähemmän haitallisempaa reagoida aiheettomaan vaaraan kuin jättäisi huomiotta todellisen vaaran. Tämän vuoksi tunteet kuten pelko ja ahdistus voivat kehittyä yliherkiksi ja olla epäadaptiivisia ihmisen nyky-ympäristössä. Mustasukkaisuus on toiminut reaktiona kumppanin uskottomuuteen. Positiiviset tunteet puolestaan laajentavat ajatteluumme, rakentavat sosiaalista pääomaa sekä ehostavat perheen inklusiivista kelpoisuutta esimerkiksi rakkauden ja ilon avulla.

Kirjallisuusdarwinistiseen lukutapaan sisältyy evoluutiopsykologian teorioiden soveltaminen kirjallisuuden tekstien tarinoihin ja hahmoihin. Joseph Carrollin mukaan kirjallisuustieteissä on pitkään laiminlyöty biologisia selitysmalleja. Teoksissa tulee ilmi, kuinka evoluution muokkaama ihmismielen perusta vaikuttaa yhdessä kulttuurin ja ympäristötekijöiden kanssa. Carroll arvioi, että kirjallisuudella on kelpoisuutta parantava adaptiivinen funktio. Kirjallisuusdarwinismi on saanut kritiikkiä siitä, että teoreettinen menetelmä jättää ilman huomiota esimerkiksi tekstien kielen ja narratiiviset rakenteet. Myös kirjallisuus itse psykologisena sopeutumana ja sen kelpoisuusvaikutukset ovat hyvin spekulatiivisella pohjalla, joten empiirisiä tutkimukset ovat tarpeen. Tutkielmani sisältää esimerkkisovellutuksia kirjallisuusdarwinistisesta tulkintakehyksestä.

Analyysini ensimmäisessä osassa tutustun *Lolitan* narratiivisen päähenkilön Humbert Humbertin lapsuuteen, hänen ensirakkauteensa Annabeliin sekä hänen luomaansa *nymphet-myyttiin*. Lapsena hän todisti isänsä olevan taitava naisten kanssa oman inklusiivisen kelpoisuuden parantamisessa lyhytaikaisen lisääntymisstrategian avulla samalle opettaen hänelle taitoja sukupuolisesta kanssakäymisestä todisteena isällisestä investoinnista. Annabel

puolestaan on tärkeä Humbertin seksuaalisille mieltymyksille: Annabel toimii tietynlaisena Lolitan esikuvana, mutta jälkimmäinen voi myös olla oma itsenäinen henkinen konstruktio. Muistikuvat Annabelistä vaikuttavat siihen, että miten hän myöhemmin suhtautuu Lolitaan. Hänen ja Annabelin rakkaus ei saanut seksuaalista täyttymystä, mikä on voinut antaa yksilöllisen vaikutteen Humbertin evolutiivisiin mielen mekanismien toimintoihin lisääntymiskäyttäytymisessä. Nymphet- myytti sopii hyvin kirjallisuusdarwinistiseen tulkintakehykseen, koska nymphetillä Humbert tarkoittaa esimurrosikäistä tyttöä, joka on mystisesti paljon viehättävämpi ilman määriteltyjä ulkonäöllisiä ominaisuuksia kuin muut samanikäiset tytöt ja hän vertaa heitä ”pikkupaholaisiin” lapsien joukossa.

Evoluutiopsykologisesta näkökulmasta nämä esimurrosikäiset nymphet-tytöt omaavat poikkeuksellisen korkean lisääntymisarvon ja näin ollen ovat arvokkaita lisääntymisresursseja miehelle kelpoisuuden maksimoimisessa. Hänen mukaansa ainoastaan poikkeavalla mielenlaadulla varustetut miehet, joilla on tietynsuuruinen ikäero kyseisiin tyttöihin voivat tunnistaa heidät lapsien joukosta, mikä voi viitata mielenhäiriöiden ja suurempien kelpoisuushyötyjen yhteyteen. Lisäksi evoluutiopsykologisissa tutkimuksissa on havaittu, että miehillä on tapana suosia sitä nuorempia kumppaneita, mitä vanhemmiksi he tulevat, mikä voisi liittyä nymphet- myyttiin. Humbert toteaa vasta tarpeeksi vanhana, että Annabel oli nymphet ja hänen pakkomielteensä hänen kaltaisiinsa tyttöihin kamppailee tietoisesti omatuntonsa kanssa todistaen evoluution muokkaamien mielen toimintojen ristiriitaisuutta yksilön vapaan tahdon kanssa.

Kun Humbert saapuu Hazen perheen luokse, Lolitan yksinhuoltajaäiti Charlotte antaa itsestään vaikutelman, että Humbert voisi kiinnostua hänestä kumppanina ja näin saada häneltä tukea ja resursseja tyttärensä inklusiivisen kelpoisuuden parantamiseksi. Yksin jälkeläisistä huolehtiva nainen usein panostaa ulkonäköönsä ja alentaa kumppanivaatimuksia, koska mahdollisen kumppanin taloudelliselle tuelle on akuutti tarve. Humbert tiedostaa tämän. Lolitan kohdatessaan Humbertin muistot Annabelistä heräävät ja hän tunnistaa 12-vuotiaassa Lolitassa täydellisen nymphet-tytön ilmentymän varustettuna korkealla lisääntymisarvolla. Tytöllä on ominaisuuksia, jotka viittaavat haluttuihin kumppaniominaisuuksiin naisissa kuten hyvään terveyteen ja nuoruuteen nymphet-ominaisuuden lisäksi. Erilaisten juonenkäänteiden seurauksena Humbert ja Lolita ovat seksuaalisessa yhteydessä, elävät pitkään kaksistaan ja Humbert on monesti mustasukkainen, kun Lolita on muiden ihmisten kanssa tekemisissä. Mustasukkaisuus tunteena on puolustuskeino kumppanin epäuskollisuutta vastaan sekä vierasta hedelmöitystä vastaan.

Toisaalta Humbert tietoisesti tunnistaa ympäristönsä muita nymphet-tyttöjä ja haluaa Lolitan ystäväystyvänsä heidän kanssansa, mikä puolestaan kertoo evoluution kehittämästä halusta paritella mahdollisimman monen sellaisen tytön kanssa oman kelpoisuuden parantamiseksi. Tänä aikana Lolita kasvaa murrosikäiseksi, jolloin hänen nymphet-ominaisuutensa katoaa vähitellen, mikä voi viitata lisääntymisarvon alentumiseen tytön kypsyessä naiseksi. Tästä huolimatta Humbertin kiintymys, ja rakkaus, Lolitaa kohtaan on niin suuri, että hänen alkuperäinen nymphet-pakkomielle ei enää ohjaa hänen käyttäytymistään vaan Hazen tyttö on hänelle viehättävä iästä ja terveydestä riippumatta. Tämä antaa lisätukea sille ajatukselle, että evoluution muokkaamat mielen mekanismit ovat vain oletuksellisia taipumuksia, jotka eivät hallitse käyttäytymistä ja yksilölliset ja kulttuuriset tekijät voivat vaimentaa niiden vaikutuksen.

Analyysini viimeisessä osassa keskiössä on itse Lolitan hahmo. Sovellan häneen elämänhistoria-teoriaa: hän on elänyt isättömässä lapsuuden ympäristössä, joten hän on tiedostamattomasti valinnut sellaisen lisääntymisstrategian inklusiivisen kelpoisuuden maksimointiin, joka suosii mahdollisimman nopeaa lisääntymistä seksuaalisen varhaiskypsytymisen kautta. Lolitan ja hänen äitinsä Charlotten välit ovat kylmät ja Humbertin saapuminen heidän kotiinsa luo heidän välillensä kilpailutilanteen, että kumpi ”pääsee” lisääntyä hänen kanssaan. Ennen ensimmäistä seksikertaa Humbertin kanssa Lolita oli ollut kesäleirillä seksuaalisessa kontaktissa saman ikäisen pojan kanssa, viitaten varhaiskypsyyteen seksuaalisissa asioissa. Hän on myös aloitteellinen Humbertin kanssa. Lolita hakeutuu muiden miespuolisten ihmisten seuraan, kun hän ei ole Humbertin seurassa ja toteuttaa omaa lisääntymisstrategiaansa, jossa hän pääsee nopeasti käsiksi monen kumppanin resursseihin samalla tavoin kuin naisten lyhytaikaisessa parittelussa. Lopuksi ulkopuoliset ihmiset huomaavat tytön erikoisen seksuaalisen käytöksen, mikä voi viittaa Lolitan elämänhistoriallisen lisääntymisstrategian olevan poikkeava, koska sen ajan amerikkalaisessa kulttuurissa yleinen isän läsnäolo perheessä ja sitä kautta isällinen investointi suosivat toisenlaista elämänhistoriallista lisääntymisstrategiaa jälkeläisissä, joilla seksuaalinen kypsyminen on hitaampaa sekä heillä on tiukemmat ominaisuusehdot kumppaniehdokkaille.