

Tribhuvan University

Women as Victim of Male Violence in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* and Azar Nafisi's  
*Reading Lolita in Tehran*

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
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**Letter of Recommendation**

Muna Bam has completed her thesis entitled “Women as Victim of Male Violence in Nabokov’s *Lolita* and Nafisi’s *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*” under my supervision. She carried out her research from June 2015 to September 2015. I hereby recommend her thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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September 2015

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**Letter of Approval**

This thesis entitled “Women as Victim of Male Violence in Nabokov’s *Lolita* and Nafisi’s *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Muna Bam has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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## **Abstract**

The autobiography *Reading Lolita in Tehran* written by Iranian female writer Azar Nafisi is discussion on the novel *Lolita* by American male writer Vladimir Nabokov projects the society and the female issues at the core. While discussing the American text in Iranian society, Nafisi makes several criticism. The politics behind such criticism is to expose the feelings of victimized females according to the stereotypical beliefs of the patriarchy. These patriarchy beliefs are negative because Nafisi as a member of patriarchal society, cannot escape from the hangover of the ideology of patriarchy. Therefore, Nafisi seems opposite in practice of patriarchal beliefs in Iranian society. But, the presentation made by Vladimir Nabokov is somehow justifiable. He doesn't portray any negative aspects of the patriarchal society; rather he vividly exposes women as victim of male violence.

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Muna Bam

## **Women as Victim of Male Violence in *Lolita* and *Reading Lolita in Tehran***

The primary goal of this research is to focus on female issues and to seek Vladimir Nabokov and Azar Nafisi's attitude to the abuse of women in their respective societies. It tries to make the point that though Nafisi, like Nabokov, highlights the abuse of an adolescent woman in *Lolita*; the Iranian female writer's dramatization of similar kind of women's abuse is far more politicized and feministic. *Lolita and Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* shows the realistic pictures of women and their painful experience and suffering in the patriarchal society. So far as the female characters in these both texts are concerned, both writers have glorified particularly the female characters, who are victim of male violence in their respective society.

These both texts primarily focus on the female characters and their situation in the patriarchal society of America and Iran. In both societies, women are shown as sufferers and are treated as non-human being. This study also seeks the acceptance and reaction against male violence by taking feminist posture.

*Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov was published in 1955 in Paris, it was soon banned for its controversial content. Yet as an underground readership grew, the novel gained international attention, and as a result, the bans were lifted. Many critics condemned it as a pornographic trash, citing its "obscene" description of a pedophile's activities. The novel has now, however, gained almost universal approval. Readers find middle-aged narrator and protagonist Humbert Humbert to be both perpetrator and victim of his disastrous obsession with the young Lolita. In his record of his relationship with her, Humbert becomes a complex mixture of mad lecher who "breaks" the life of a young girl and wild romantic who suffers in his book Vladimir Nabokov argues that what makes *Lolita* something more than either a case study of

sexual perversion or pornographic titillation is the truly shocking fact that Humbert Humbert is a genius who, through the power of his memoir is a love story. Nabokov's technical brilliance and beautiful, evocative language help to bring this tragic character to life.

Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* deals with woman's issue. In this novel, Nabokov has shown the situation of women in patriarchal society. Nabokov's fiction mostly portrays the physical and psychological violence in relation between men and women. This novel portrays the realistic pictures of women and their subordinate experiences and sufferings in patriarchal society. Though, the protagonist of novel is Humbert, a male has not got agency and sympathy from the readers as a side protagonist Lolita, a female has got. Hence, Humbert tries to get sympathy from Vladimir Nabokov.

*Lolita* chronicles the life of its narrator and protagonist, Humbert Humbert, focusing on his disastrous love affair with a young girl. In his dark, comic novel, Nabokov paints a complex portrait of obsession that reveals Humbert to be both a middle aged monster and a wild romantic who fails to attain his ideal.

In the same line, Lolita's mother (Charlotte Haze) appears as both victimizer and victim. Humbert rents room from her and eventually marries her so that he can be close to Lolita. Charlotte is a type of middle-aged woman who is misused by Humbert for his personal will. She turns into a touching helpless creature with Humbert, at least until she discovers his true feelings about her and Lolita. At last, she removes herself from Humbert's life when she is hit by car. Similarly, Valeria Humbert, Humbert's first wife – whom Humbert marries in an effort to control his desire for young girls. But, when she falls in love with another man, Humbert leaves for America. Later, he finds out that she died in childbirth.

Lolita, Charlotte and Valeria in this novel are victim of male violence one

after another. Specially, Lolita faces more physical and mental violence than other two female characters in novel. Though, novel revolves around female's violence, the novelist has highlighted Humbert as "victim as victimizer."

Azar Nafisi resigned from AllamehTabatabai in 1995 and soon began the weekly home-based classes discussed in her autobiography, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (2003). The success of the memoir led to many public appearances for Nafisi as she became a popular speaker. She also began contributing to the newspapers and magazines such as the *New York Times* and the *New Republic*, as well as appearing on radio and television programs. As of 2006, she is a foreign policy Institute visiting fellow at Johns Hopkins. She lives in the Washington, D.C. area with her family.

Azar Nafisi's autobiography, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (2003), describes her experience living in Iran from 1979 to 1997. Nafisi, a native of Iran whom had received much of her education in Europe and the United States, found nearly every aspect of her life was constrained by the social, cultural and political conditions under which she lived. Though she was demoralized by the restrictions placed on her as a university professor, Nafisi never lost her love and appreciation on literature. In *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, Nafisi intertwines her group-based discussions and own interpretations of novels such as Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, F.Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Henry James's *Daisy Miller* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Nafisi emphasizes the way literature relates to daily life in Iran and the indignities its citizens, especially women and academics, face. *Reading Lolita in Tehran : A Memoir in Books* made the *New York Times* best seller list for at least twenty eight weeks, won the 2003 Frederic W. Ness Book Award and was eventually translated into no less than ten languages. The

autobiography was brought in from other countries and read in Iran, despite being officially banned there. It generally received positive reviews, with many critics commending its complexities and depiction of life in Iran.

Essentially, *Reading Lolita Tehran: A memoir in Books* is the author's exchanges with her seven female students embedded in anecdotes that occur in weekly reading sessions. The young women are Manna, Mahshid, Nassrin, Yassi, Azin, Mitra and Sanaz, all in their late teens or early twenties. The main writers read and discussed in the group are Vladimir Nabokov, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Henry James, and Jane Austen. The autobiography devotes a part to each one of them. Part I focus is in *Lolita*, with the seduced girl child presented to us as a metaphor forces. Part II contains discussions of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* while at the same time touching on social events such as the purging of certain "antirevolutionary" faculty from the universities. Part III focus is on Henry James's *Daisy Miller*. Like the rest of the book, this part makes many allusions to the misfortunes of the local population, including a female leftist student named Razieh who is executed and an unnamed male student who burns himself to death. Part IV, is centered on female characters from Jane Austen's novels and their rebellion against conventions. The last part winds down with Nafisi's personal thoughts about leaving Iran. Finally, a brief epilogue brings us up-to-date with the author's current life in the United States.

In both novels, women are victim of male violence. Especially, they are sexually abused. Lolita, Charlotte Haze, Valeria Humbert in *Lolita*, are victims of male violence, especially Lolita face mental and physical abuse. In *Lolita*, voice of Lolita is toned down though she is sexually exploited by Humbert, where as Humbert is depicted as the victimizer as a victim too. Nabokov's support is towards Humbert because he himself is male. So, he has focused male perspectives towards female.

When Iran becomes the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1981, women are forced to wear headscarves all the time in public. But Nafisi rejected it and she was fired from her post at the University.

Though women are active participants in the Islamic Revolution in Iran, their rights are significantly restricted after Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution party take power. Women are legally regarded as inferior to men, and can be married off at the age of nine. Men can have as many as four wives and are in charge of making decisions for the family. Men controlled where their wives and daughters can go. Women cannot be in the company of a man who is not her husband or a relative. A husband has to give his written permission for a woman to travel or obtain a passport. Men also have custody of their children. All women have to follow a public dress code-the *hejab*- which included completely covering of one's hair and body while outside the home. Makeup was forbidden. Anyone ignoring these rules can face corporal punishment or imprisonment.

Women's education, work and sporting opportunities are also limited. On the college and university level, women can only pursue restricted studies. Women are also limited in the kinds of jobs they can take. Women cannot be judges that presided over trials or issued verdicts, for example; they can only work with permission of their husbands. Recreationally, women cannot play sports if there is a chance they can be seen by males. Women cannot also watch men participate in sports in which their legs can be seen.

Many women in Iran tried to resist these restrictions. Nafisi outlined many such examples in *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*. In the late 1990s, women pressed for more custody rights over their children as well as equal inheritance rights. Women also try to press the limits of the hejab, but more laws are

passed in 1998 called for gender segregation in hospitals and clinics wherever possible, often resulting in inferior health care for women.

In *Lolita and Reading Lolita in Tehran: A memoir in Books* females are victimized by their co-partners. Moreover, females were sexually abused. The depiction of Lolita's sexual abuse in Nabokov's *Lolita* is toned down but the victimization of the female character's (Lolita's surrogate) in Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* is highly politicized. Though Nabokov's sympathy is not so politicized. This is because of his masculinist attitude (limited feminism). Being a male, Nabokov cannot give justice to Lolita who is sexually abused but tries to hide Humbert's violence upon Lolita, it is because of masculinist mentality. Therefore, a male can be a feminist but he cannot feel and express female experience. But on the other hand, Nafisi's criticism of the sexual abuse of females (Lolita's surrogate) in *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* has high feminist-political edge.

Vladimir Nabokov and Azar Nafisi have examined women's as victim of male violence in *Lolita* and *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*. Gillian Whitlock in his essay "Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit" addresses "throughout the memoir, the chador functions symbolically to illustrate the oppressive and traumatic intrusion of the Islamic Republic into the women's intimate lives and onto their bodies" (Whitlock 164). Likewise, freedom is represented as the pleasure of disrobing upon entering the narrator's living room, wearing forbidden red nail polish and fashionable shoes, and developing their own sense of style, "self-image" (38,57,75), "self-confidence"(38), "self-esteem"(47), and "self-respect"(225). These buzzwords of pop psychology and self-help culture construct the narrator's girls as potential global citizens and consumers who deserve the freedom to choose (how to dress,

whom to marry, what to read).

As Inderpal Grewal points out “human rights have worked as a regulative apparatus to produce feminist and free subjects” (138), as well as essentializes population of “women” who share the bonds of victimhood and vulnerability. In this sense *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* participates in constructing feminist epistemologies of harm what Wendy Brown would call “logics of pain” (390) and “These feminist logics of pain and trauma, exemplified in *Lolita*, are contrasted with logics of freedom and choice available to James’s and Austen’s heroines presents; It is a truth universally acknowledge that a Muslim man, regardless of his fortune, must be in want of nine year-old virgin wife”(257).

Similarly, Page Stegner’s *Escape Into Iesthetics: The Art of Vladimir Nabokov* shows, “Lolita’s reality a rather common, unwashed little girl whose interest are entirely plebian, though, in certain respects, precocious” (Stegner 114-15). Stegner’s cool view of the state of artistic affairs in the novel is given an image to complete it: Lolita is “rough glass” transformed by Humbert into “sparkling crystal”(114).

More extreme in its expression of both of these tendencies are the writings of Nabokov critic Sarah Herbold. Of the scene early in the novel where Humbert is furtively masturbating against Lolita’s legs, she wrote in 1998: “Humbert does not seem to be the only person who is enjoying himself here. Lolita may be not only having an orgasm but also orchestrating their mutual stimulation”(82). Herbold finds it eminently possible that it is instead she who is “orchestrating their mutual stimulation”(82).

In her *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* Azar Nafisi is discouraging a simplified understanding of her title, “she writes: I want to emphasize . . . that we were not Lolita, the Ayatollah was not Humbert and this republic was not

what Humbert called his principedom by the sea”(Nafisi 35). Instead, she compellingly describes “how Tehran helped redefine Nabokov’s novel turning it into this Lolita our Lolita”(6). Moreover, Nafisi calls Lolita “a double victim”: “not only her life but also her life story is taken from her”(41).

Feminism is the theory that advocates an idea, men and women should be equal politically, economically and socially. This is the core of all feminist theories. One who believes in that men and women should equal politically, economically and socially as defined is feminist. The main aim of the feminist is to establish women’s original status and self-identity in the society by rejecting the male superiority and cultural domination, which helps them to dismiss the misrepresentation of woman in the society. Feminism aims to provide woman’s equal status, identity, education, employment, as well as free expression of woman’s experience. It endeavours to break male domination, suppression and discrimination on the basis of age, class, gender, language and tries to keep balance of power between male and female.

The research paper devotes to study of the female violence and binary oppositions in the society of twenty first century on the part of the major character through the theoretical modality of feminism. If we observe the theoretical development of twentieth century, we come to know that feminism as a sociopolitical criticism, cultural movement and moral philosophy emerged in the late 1960s with the intention of defining women as autonomous human being. It also intends to challenge the hierarchy based on male ideology. As a political discourse, it advocates for the rights of women and for their political, social and economic equality both in theory and practice. The goal of feminism in the sense to make aware what they deserve and make them conscious about their existence as an independent human beings.

It is disgusting to say that due to the lack of equality between males and

females, females are compelled to revolt against patriarchy. The age long position of females is that of inferior sex or second sex. Under the pressure of male dominated society, females are restricted to put forward their ideas, opinions, emotions and thoughts. In the context, the objective of feminism is to redefine women's activities and goals from their own perspective. At the sametime feminism rejects male chauvinism and superiority which has reduced women as submissive other. They think patriarchy as abstract in their path of freedom.

Feminist theory thus began with immediate need to end women's oppression. Anyway it is a political theory and practice of free all the social bondage of patriarchy. John Wallach Scott has following view regarding feminism:

Feminism as politics appeal to the woman (. . .) to mobilize them into a coherent political movement, the history of feminism thus has been the history of the project of reducing diversities of class, race, sexuality, politics, religion and socio-economic status among females to a common identity of women (usually in opposition to patriarchy, a system of male domination. (4)

Feminists are united by the idea that women's position in society is unequal to that of men and that society is structured in such a way as to benefit men to the political, social and economic detriment of women. However feminists have used various theories to explain their inequalities and have advocated different ways of readdressing inequalities and there are marked geographic and historical variation in the nature of feminism. In classical times and early Christian era women were excluded from public and were made subordinate to man.

Among the many traits of *Lolita* and *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, female characters are victimized by male violence which Nabokov's and Nafisi's have described in their texts. In the first line of *Lolita*, Humbert characterizes Lolita as "light of my life, fire of my lions. My sin, My soul"(9). Readers see her from Humbert's point of view, which presents and often idealized but sometimes realistic image of this young girl, with whom he had an incestuous relationship for several years. Initially, he defines Lolita as a nymphet, "a category of young girls between the age of nine, and fourteen"(16) who exhibit "fey grace, the elusive, shifty soul-shattering insidious charm" (17) and a certain demonic nature. He admits:

What drives me insane is the two fold mature of this nymphet of every nymphet, perhaps; this mixture in my Lolita of tender dreamy childishness and a kind of eerie vulgarity, steaming from the blurry pinkness of adolescent maid servants in the old country; and from the very young harlots disguised as children in provincial brothels. (44)

Yet, almost against his will, Humbert recognizes that "Dolores Haze had been deprived of her childhood by a maniac" (283). After Lolita leaves Humbert, she lives for a time with Clare Quilty. He throws her out after she refuses to allow him to put her in a pornographic film.

Charlotte Haze, Lolita's mother from whom Humbert rents a room and eventually marries so he can be close to Lolita. She is physically and psychologically victimized by Humbert which can be expressed through these lines:

Throughout most of July I had been experimenting with various sleeping powders, trying them to out in Charlotte, a great taker of pills. The last dose I had given her (she thought it was a tablet of mild bromides to anoint her nerves) had knocked her out for four solid

hours. I had put the radio at full blast. I had blazed in her face an olisbos-like flashing. I has pushed her, pinched her, prodder her and nothing had disturbed the rhythm of her calm and powerful breathing.

(94)

Charlotte resents Lolita's affection for Humbert and so packs her off to camp. Therefore, Humbert asserts: "I had in fact begun my campaign earlier, before Charlotte made the cruel decision of her" (94). Yet Charlotte turns into a touching helpless creature with Humbert, at least until she discovers his true feelings about her and Lolita. Mcfate conveniently removes her from Humbert's life when she is hit by a car. Valeria is Humbert's first wife. He marries her in an effort to control his desire for young girls. Humbert admits he feel for "the imitation she gave of a little girl" (25). But soon Humbert discovers she is at least in her late twenties. Initially, his naiveté prevents him from seeing that he "had on his hands a large, puffy short –legged, big-breasted and practically brainless baba . . . Here only asset was a muted nature which did help to produce in odd sense of comfort in [their] small squalid flat" (26). This reason makes Humbert to leave Valeria.

Azar Nafisi is the author, narrator, and primary character in *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*. Every experience and idea in this text is filtered through her perception. Most of the action in the memoir takes place when she returns to Iran with her second husband and teaches literature classes at various universities in Tehran. In Iran which she left was quite different from the one she returns to as a revolution is in process. As the Ayatollah Khomeini takes power and the government places more restrictions on citizens, Nafisi grows uncomfortable with the new regulations and the limitations on women's rights. The constant violence and harassment as well as the loss of her sense of self, trouble her deeply. While Nafisi

enjoys teaching, she finds the restrictions at the universities too much to bear. In the mid-1990s, she quits her last university teaching post in Iran and decides to hold a small class for women in her home choosing her best pupils for the class, Nafisi and her students discuss literature and their lives under the oppressive regime. Nafisi uses ideas from the books they discuss to underscore her impressions of life in the total Iranian society. In class, her books, and her writings give her purpose underlying circumstances. Nafisi eventually, convinces her husband to move their family back to the United States because she herself has to be victim of male violence in Iranian society. She explains:

In the taxi, I felt confused and angry and a little repentant. I am going to leave, I told myself. I can't live like this anymore. Every time something like this happened, I, like many others, would think of leaving of going to a place where everyday life was not such a battleground. Recently, the thought of leaving Iran had become more than a defense mechanism and incidents like this were slowly tipping the scales. (205)

Azin is a student who participates in Nafisi's home based literature class; she has been married three times. She is physically abused by her current husband, a rich merchant, and wants to divorce him at times, but does not want to lose custody of her young daughter. This situation of Azin forces Nafisi feeling pathetic. So she asserts:

We talked about different instances in which the physical and mental abuse of women had been considered insufficient grounds for divorce by the ruling judge. We discussed cases in which the judge not only refused the wife's request for divorce but tried to blame her for her

husband's beating, ordering her to reflect on the wrongs she had committed to bring on his displeasure. (177)

Mahshid is a student who takes part in Nafisi's home based literature class and is sensitive and sometimes defensive; she is also the most conservative of the student and devout Muslim. She has been affiliated with a religious organization deemed dissident and came out of the experience with an injured kidney. At last, she knows reality of religion and argues:

She wrote about how at work her male superiors never look in the eye, about how in movies even a six year old girl must wear a scarf and cannot play with boys. Although she wrote the evil, she described the pain of being required to wear it, calling it a mask behind which women were forced to hide. (215)

Nassrin, student of Nafisi, audits one of the professor's literature classes at the University of Tehran when she is a young teen. Her neighbor Mahtab (a male) introduces her to Nafisi for the first time. After serving three years in prison, Nassrin resumes her academic career and again becomes a student of Nafisi at AllamehTabatabai University. She has to like by her father to be able to come to the class at Nafisi's home. Sanaz, one of the students of Nafisi is often driven to class by her younger brother, who tries to assert authority over her. So, Nafisi asserts:

There were two very important men dominating Sanaz's life at the time. The first was her brother. He had taken to proving his masculinity by spying on her . . . listening to her phone conversations, driving her car around and monitoring her actions. The other was her childhood sweetheart, a boy she had known since she was eleven. Their parents were best friends and their families spent most of their

time and vacations together. Sanaz and Ali seemed to have been in love forever. (10)

Manna, Yassi and Mitra are also the participant of Nafisi's home based literature. With the reference to *Reading Lolita in Tehan: A Memoir in Books*, men are cruel and heartless to their female relatives, which has something to do with their religious convictions. Sanaz's brother is one such man. He has made it his business to make her life miserable by interfering in everything she does. Nassrin's father is another. His relatives wear the Chador and his daughter used to lie to him about going to the reading group. She tells him she is working on a translation project. Mashid and Azin are also in contact with abusive males. Mahshid's boss bothers her at work and Azin's husband abuses her at home. That is all we know about these two men. Physical and psychological abuse and violence of male upon female are pervasive around the world. Iran is no exception. Reforms such as establishing shelters for abuses and victimized women and providing women with better work opportunities and greater economic independence are needed. *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* concerns over the physical and psychological abuse and violence of women is justified. However, it blames Iranian men for events that happened everywhere and are considered ordinary for instance, Sanaz's fiancé, who lives in Europe, has doubts about his own readiness for marriage. He calls apologetically and breaks the engagement "pleading" that "he would always love her" (278). The author's comment about the young man is short and clear: bloody coward. Even men who do not break engagements are not any better, Yassi tells the members of the reading group that she had a suitor. As they walk in the park to get acquainted, she teases him by starting to walk fast all of a sudden. Nassrin, Azin and Sanaz use the same tone when they talk about their respective father, husband and brother. They tell us that these men

physically "abuse" (48), "dictate" (54). Their will, "forbid" (17) learning and "confiscate" (15) the women's possession, among other things. Since, in any other context in *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, they remain faceless and menacing force.

In her essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" Helen Cixous, a French feminist, post-structuralist feminist and writer, rallies women to do one thing that will liberate their voices, their bodies and their sexuality. Similarly, this famous post-structuralist French feminist text seeks to bring women to writing through a reconnection to their bodies, creating the potentiality for large scale soviet change. Cixous writes of women

she must write herself because this is the invention of a new insurgent. Writing which, when the moment of her liberation has come, will allow her to carry out the indispensable rupture and transformations in her history. (880)

Cixous deconstructs the traditional concept of females as meek, docile, submissive and so on. But, she argues that females must define themselves. They must be self-conscious, self-aware. They must challenge patriarchal stereotypes, must be self-expressive, must be like Medusa figure to threaten the males. They must deserve the power to transfer the males into stone as Medusa does. They should deconstruct the patriarchal ideology.

Cixous sees language itself as an active creator of women's oppression and invites women to writing, reimagining masculine language into what she calls *écriture féminine*: a feminine mode of writing. Cixous insists that there is a feminine way of writing which can be accessed through a rediscovery of the lived female body and that can lead to a breakdown of pervasive phallogocentrism and thus lead to new ways of

thinking and living. Because Cixous lactates the female body is an access point for feminine writing she has been interpreted as and criticized for relying on essentialism.

The task of working in the feminine mode can be accomplished through a reconnection to the lived experience of the female body. Breaking the phallogocentric mind/body dualism that privilege and locates creativity, intellect and subjectivity in the mind, Cixous suggests that the “écriture feminine” can be unleashed only through the body. To write in the feminine mode “Women must write through their bodies, they must invent impregnable language” (886). When reconnected to her body, Cixous writes that women experience it as a “body without end, without appendage, without principal parts” (889). A woman can experience herself as “capable of losing a part of herself without losing her integrity” (888). This continuity of the female bodily experience, that perceives itself as whole and continuous, that does not create division within the self or experience boundary between the self and others, contrast starkly with the masculine bodily experience that “gravitates around the penis, engendering that centralized ... under the dictatorship” (889). The phallic economy of division and hierarchy is definitive of the masculine mode of writing. The feminine mode, accessible through the material experience of the female body, is fluid and continuous without clear boundaries.

In patriarchal society, a woman is taken as an instrument for man's pleasure as well as the strong social shackles of their upbringing and prevalent ideas of the womanhood, they might not be able to revolt against the situation directly but they try to resist the subordination in their own ways, some of which are implicit and some are in explicit revolt. But some female cannot resist male domination because of physical and psychological obstacles. The major female character in *Lolita* surrender to domination imposed upon her. Lolita, a twelve years girl of the novel does conform as

docile and submissive female. Her acceptance to male violence is through her actions. Humbert controls the money and Lolita's freedom and he often repeats that Lolita has nowhere to go if she leaves him. This shows the discourse which is constructed in patriarchal society that a girl is under the control of her parents when she is unmarried and is under the control of her husband after marriage, respectively. The same thing happen to Lolita. Humbert is her so called father. After the death of her mother, Lolita is responsibility of Humbert. Moreover, Lolita escapes from the claws of Humbert and accept Clare Quilty. But at last she surrenders herself in front of Humbert because she accept male domination and asking help for her she wrote a letter to Humbert:

DEAR DAD:

How's everything? I'm married. I'm going to have a baby. I guess he's going to be a big one. I guess he'll come right for Christmas. This is a hard letter to write. I'm going nuts because we don't have enough to pay our debts and get out of here. Dick is promised a big job in Alaska in his very specialized corner of the mechanical field, that's all I know about but it's really grand. Pardon me for withholding our home address but you may still be mad at me, and Dick must not know. This town is something. You can't see the motion for the smog please do send us a check, Dad We could manage with three or four hundred or even less, anything is welcome, you might sell my old things, because once we get there the dough will just start rolling in. Write, please. I have gone through much sadness and hardship.

Yours Expecting,

DOLLY (MRS. RICHAD F. SCHILLER). (266)

According to this letter, condition of Lolita is so pathetic even she is asking for fulfillment of basic needs from Humbert. Because she herself cannot manage her basic need. Even to live a daily life, women have to beg from males.

In her last two years in Tehran, Nafisi finds her greatest satisfaction as a teacher in the class; she decides to hold at her home. Each Thursday morning, seven female students whom she has carefully selected meet to discuss great literature and its relationship to their realities. While Nafisi's autobiography focuses on the discussion and the books, she also emphasizes the community that developed among the women. Her students are from diverse backgrounds, and different political beliefs, and varied in age, marital status and personality. There is often conflict between them over the books, opinions, and life choices. Yet the women can be discussed themselves in that classroom in ways they cannot in general Iranian society. They took off their robes, veils, and chadors, and revealed who they are to each other and the professor. Each woman finds acceptance and belonging and is allowed to grow and develop intellectually and socially. Transcending the books, and the class, the women sometimes offered support to each other when they faced difficulties, such as when Sanaz's fiancé breaks off their engagement. Nafisi's family also become close to all of them, with her mother and her housekeepers. Some students like Yassi, even stay overnight at Nafisi's home on a regular basis. This community is especially important to Nafisi, who essentially dropped out of Iranian academic after the end of her last post. The community and camaraderie kept her going when she feels she has no place in Iranian society. Nafisi's opinions upon the acceptance of male domination: "We, four generations of women my grandmother, my mother, myself and my daughter – lived in the present but also in the past, we were experiencing two different time zones simultaneously" (170).

Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* tells the story of a twelve year old girl, raised by a widowed mother who accept male domination. But, Charlotte Haze, Lolita's mother does not accept the domination and violence against her and her daughter. So, she resist against it. When she finds Humbert's diary and, after learning that he hates her but loves her daughter, Charlotte asks Humbert Humbert about reality but he denies everything. Therefore, Charlotte decides to leave Humbert. When Charlotte is leaving storms is out of the house. At that moment, a car hits her and she dies instantly. Though, Charlotte cannot rescue her daughter Lolita, she tires her best to resist to Humbert's action that he wants to do. When Charlotte asks Humbert about diary, his answer is:

You are running my life and yours, I said quietly. Let us be civilized people. It is all your hallucination. You are crazy, Charlotte. The notes you found were fragments of novel. Your name and hers were put in by mere chance. Just because they came hardly. Think it over. I shall bring you a drink. (96)

Similarly in *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, Nafisi continually tries to resist restrictions of the Iranian government and the university place on her as a woman and as a professor. While teaching at the University of Tehran, she fights being forced to wear a veil while in the classroom. Both the University administration and a student's who supports the revolution, Mr. Bahri, try to convince her to wear the veil and remain in her post. Nafisi would rather resign her position there than submit to such restrictions. It is a principle she will not compromise. Though Nafisi resists as many societal and governmental restrictions as she can, she does submit when she feels she has to. When the law states that women, in public, first must wear veil, and later be covered in robes as well as a veil or a chador, Nafisi does the necessary

garments. She even wears what is necessary to be able to teach at Allameh Tabatabai University. Yet Nafisi continues to resist other things. Ignoring laws forbidding a woman to appear in public with men they are not related to, she walks and takes with her mentor, magician, among others. Nafisi also refuse to compromise over what and how she will teach in her classrooms. She writes,

There, in that living room, we rediscovered that we were also living, breathing human beings; and no matter how repressive the state became, no matter how intimidated and frightened we were, like Lolita we tried to escape and to create our own little pockets of freedom. And like Lolita, we took every opportunity of flaunt our insubordination: by showing a little hair from under over scarves, insinuating a little color into the drab uniformity of our appearances, growing our nails, falling in love and listening to forbidden music. (17)

When she feels too restricted again, Nafisi decides to drop out a university life and teach on her own terms at home, a decision that leads to her Thursday morning literature class, Nafisi added: "Some of my girls are more radical than I am in their resentment of men. All of them want to be independent. They think they cannot find men equal to them" (25).

In identifying the ways that women have suffered since 1979, Nafisi describes her students facing inspectors who enforce dress codes on the way to class, crackdowns on mixed-gender parties, bans on appearing in public with male friends or boyfriends, young women forced to undergo virginity checks by authorities, limited dating options, unfair divorce and custody laws, stoning of women (including Nafisi's former principal) and even rape and executions in jail. She also details her efforts to avoid being compelled to veil which eventually leads to expulsion from her

teaching post Nafisi shows her students to be particularly vulnerable victims of the Islamic regime. Unlike women her age, she contends younger women have no storehouse of memories of free days to call on, making their circumscribed lives more bleak. Channeling her student's perspectives, Nafisi speculates about what one of the young members of her book club, Sanaz, is thinking as she walks the streets of Tehran, passing a poster of a woman warning a chador captioned, "My sister, guard your veil, my brother, guard your eyes" (27). Nafisi writes: "She (Sanaz) angry that the women of her mother's generation could walk the streets freely, enjoy the company of the opposite sex, join the police force, become pilots, lives under laws that were among the progressive in the world regarding women?" (27).

Being feminist, Simone de Beauvoir has some opinion towards acceptance and resistance. In her book *Second Sex*, she argues that:

Humanity is male and man defines women not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being. The body of man makes sense in itself quite apart from that of women, whereas the latter seems wanting insignificance by itself. Man can think of himself without woman; she can't think herself without men; And she is simply what man decrees; thus she is called the sex; by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him, she is a sex-absolute sex no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject; he is the absolute—she is the other. (282)

The emergence of the feminist theories in 1960s and its chronological evaluation as counter discourse to the existing discourse, create an environment of feminist

resistance against patriarchal society that restricted female's freedom and blocked their individual development. The deeply rooted patriarchal cultural foundations of the society are systematically questioned with the birth of feminism. Before 1960s, the concept of masculinity used to be taken is privileged over the feminists and feminism. But after 1960s the margin has been redrawn through the emergence of methodologies which brought crisis in the traditional concept of masculinity. Because of many causes and consequences that are developed in the post-war period. Such as capitalism, radical feminism, practice of homosexuality and decolonization strike the normative masculinity into the state of crisis.

Paternalism regards women as 'other.' They treat women as weaker sex or second sex. So, othering the female patriarchy expects devotion from female and makes her subordination. The female is always an 'other' and 'second sex'; it is a denial of selfhood or subjectivity of a female. So, as an 'other' she is supposed to devote herself to male to empower the self of male. This 'other' is dependent, secondary and margin. For patriarchy the female as 'other' is necessary only to serve the self of a male, to identify the male. Patriarchal notion expects women to be 'other' and 'object'. Beauvoir argues that male is considered as 'self' and 'subject' but female is treated as 'other' and 'object'. Male is considered as subject who is assumed to represent humanity in general.

Similarly, in *Lolita* and *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* all females characters such as Lolita, Charlotte Haze, Valeria Humbert, Nassrin, Mahshid, Manna, Mitra, Sanaz, Yassi and Nafisi (author) are regarded as weaker or second sex. But, many of them resist against male violence and domination. At the same time, the male characters such as Humbert, Quilty, Bahri, and Ghomi are presented as they know everything. Similarly, all males are in power. Therefore, they

are defined as superior, mr.know all and they all are in the central part of novel. Though, these all male dominate female characters in novel directly and indirectly, they present themselves as they havenot done anything wrong. There is binary opposition between male and female characters in both novels. Here, males are considered as robust, brave, convenient, rational, scholaistic persons, leaders and females are considered as docile, frazile, meek, emotional, passionate, lusty, and weak. This happens because of binary opposition.

In *Lolita*, Humbert is described as a name invented by the author/narrator of "Lolita, or the confession of a White Widow Male" (3). Humbert is a witty, cultured European with a destructive obsession for young girls. For several years he lives with Lolita, his step daughter, whom he coerces into granting him sexual favors. In his recreation of his life with Lolita, he calls himself an artist and a madman. He tries to convince readers that:

Frigid gentlewomen of the jury! I had thought that months, perhaps years, would elapse before I dared to reveal myself to Dolores haze; but by six she was wide awake, and by six fifteen we were technically lovers. I am going to tell you something, verystrange: it was she who seduced me. (132)

Yet, at other point, Humbert admits that his pathetic obsession with Lolita breaks her life. In the foreword, the narrator suggests that Humbert writes of himself and Lolita with a desperate honesty and comments on how magically his singing violin can conjure up a tenderness, a compassion for Lolita that makes us entranced with the book while abhorring its author. Humbert dies of heart disease in prison, while awaiting his trial for the murder of Lolita's lover, Clare Quilty. Lolita runs off with Clare Quilty during her second cross-country trip with Humbert, who drops clues

throughout the text that Quilty is projection of an extreme version of himself. Nevertheless, he constructs a history for him. He is the mysterious man who sits in the shadows at the enchanted Hunter and quizzed Humbert about Lolita. Intrigued by their relationship, he follows the pair to the beach, where he writes and produces a play for Lolita, who considered him "a genius" a "great guy" and "fully of fun" (275). This "great guy", however, encourages Lolita to engage in group sex and to participate in pornographic films.

In the same line, male characters of *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* are similar to male characters of *Lolita*. Mr. Bahri is a student in the first class Nafisi teaches at the University of Tehran. She often sees him at the many meetings held while she is a professor there. While he is a politically active radical whose power grows during her tenure at the university, he enjoys her class, attends regularly, and works behind the scenes in support of her teaching despite her vocal disagreement with many of his political and personal views. After particularly engrossing discussion with Nafisi early in her tenure, Mr. Bahri withdraws his hands when she tries to touch him in a gesture of friendship. Similarly, Mr. Ghomi is Nafisi's student in at least two classes at Allameh Tabatabai University, as well as a friend of Mr. Nahvi. Mr. Ghomi serves in the militia and is often absent from class. He often objects to what Nafisi says in class and dislikes Henry James and his work. He speaks out in particular against the little character in *Daisy Miller*. Nafisi brings some terms; "moppet" "little monster" (26), "comupt" (26), "shallow" (26), "brat" (26) to assign Lolita by her critics.

An important figure in the rise of modern feminism is Simone de Beauvoir who wrote the well-known book *The Second Sex* in 1949. In this book, she reads the whole human history which has done injustice to women because women have been relegated

to secondary position to male. A mark of otherness is one's instability to shape one's psychological, social and cultural identity; Beauvoir analyses men's depiction of women in biology and psychoanalysis literature. Opposing the statement in the *Old Testament* woman is created of man's rib. Beauvoir makes a point that:

One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents on society. It is the civilization as a whole that produces this creature; intermediate between male and enuch which describes as feminine. (301)

In *The Second Sex* Beauvoir raises the voice against men-women dichotomy as the male ideology makes woman the second sex. Women are made inferior which is just artificially made. She further says that women are not born, but made. The human culture has given supremacy to the sex that haunts and kills, and not the one that gives birth, to masters of nature and not to the natural functions. Feminism is a doctrine redefining woman's activities and goals from women centered point of view of refusing to accept the cult of masculine chauvinism and superiority that reduces women to sex object, a second sex, a submissive and 'other'. In Simone de Beauvoir's view:

The woman is not always powerless and does not always need to dependent in a male- female relationship. Prostitution allows woman an avenue of escape from dependency on men. In a way that does not leave them victims, but empowered women. (88)

Simone de Beauvoir criticizes the male made beliefs about woman that beliefs is just a mirage which is not reacted with reality at all. She further criticizes the cultural identification of woman is merely negative objective or 'other' to man. The notion of

otherness of 'she' affects in the social ideology. Thus Simone de Beauvoir requests the feminist to break the patriarchal norms and values and establish female ideology which is necessary for women's self-identity and autonomy.

Nabokov and Nafisi present the life of women and insist on their repressed desire to be free and their revolt against male/patriarchal domination. They want to appeal the feminists to be aware for their rights, freedom to choose their individually to be free from all bondages which blocks their way to walk forward or to develop their potentialities. The woman should conform their own way of living, their way of judging each and every idea about their life. Nafisi's major female character attempt to revolt against male domination and its norms and values but Nabokov's major female character remains passive.

Women are able to possess everything they need. They are in the age of twenty first century who believes in their own act. The sense of existence, the knowledge of self-empowerment and the consciousness of women's life can be observed easily. The sense of challenging and the deterministic view of women's life which not only makes them inactive or passive but some kind of productive and unflinching personality which is able to develop the vision and attitude of self discipline, reason and foresightedness. It helps to be open toward pragmatic problems and to solve them. The broad mind to realize and to share problems is also kind of resisting against male domination. Self independence, self awareness adds the power of self expression and advancement in their personality by knowing their own inner-feelings and ideas, and expressing to them, they place them as important parts of society, which can mould succeed in constructing a newer psychological framework that aware them of their position in the society. They assumed male domination can be eradicated if women become aware of their life and their self-status in society.

Throughout the text of *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, Nafisi often describes her world through gender roles, primarily of using on women in Iranian society. Returning to Iran from life in the West with her second husband, Bijan, in the late 1970s, Nafisi is very aware of the change in women's status in her native country. For much of the twentieth century, women cannot marry before the age of eighteen, but by the mid 1980s, after the revolution, age of marriage ability was lowered to only nine, women faced many more new restrictions, including the requirement that they be veiled in public. Women who committed adultery or prostitution were stoned to death. They only had half the legal value of men. They could only be seen in public with men who were family members. In Nafisi's opinion, women had become irrelevant in Iran, and she thought of herself as such on several occasions. What made the situation worse was that she could remember when Iranian women had more freedom. For example, Nafisi knows that her mother was one of the first women elected to parliament in 1960s. The female students in her home-based literature class had no such freedoms in their past to remember. The setting is important to understanding *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*. The autobiography is set in Tehran, Iran, from the late 1970s to the late 1990s. The period of time marked extreme changes in Iranian society as the monarchy, headed by the Shah of Iran, was overthrown in favor of a revolutionary government that put its interpretation of Islamic law at the center of society. The experiences that Nafisi has are a direct result of the autobiography's setting.

Humbert and Lolita twice travel across the United States, stopping frequently along the way at roadside motels, attractions, and restaurants, where the holy spirit of Huncan Dines had descended upon the cute paper napkins and cottage cheese-crested salads. The trip serves as a metaphor of juxtaposition between old world culture and

Middle American's unsophisticated, brash materialism. Middle-aged European Humbert appreciates the natural beauty of the landscape while modern American Lolita prefers movie magazines, candy, and gift shop trinkets. The enchanted Hunters Hotel is a witty allusion to Humbert's enchanted state as he hunts Lolita. Humbert calls his manuscript a 'confession' which it partly is. He frequently addresses the ladies and gentlemen of the jury during breaks in his account of his relationship with Lolita in an obvious attempt to gain their sympathy. The novel contains elements of parody especially at the beginning and at the end.

To sum up, after a comprehensive exploration of the issues regarding women as victim of male violence in both text, *Lolita* and *Reading Lolita in Tehran; A Memoir in Books*, this research concludes that even in twenty first century women are victim of male violence because of patriarchal society and binary opposition. Women themselves cannot raise their voice to having no power and no agency of speaking in patriarchal society. The so called patriarchal society is unity of males. As women themselves cannot raise their voice they need support of feminist intellectuals so that they could be heard and be spoken in the main stream. But, contrarily, violence upon them is never stopped.

Vladimir Nabokov is an American male writer so he definitely speaks for the males. But as a male he carries some traces of his blind adherence to patriarchy. Being female Azar Nafisi has empathy towards female because she herself is also victim of patriarchy. For instance most of the female characters have been abused and victimized by the male characters in both text, *Lolita* and *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*. Lolita is physically and psychologically abused by her step-father, later on by her so called husband Quilty who wants Lolita to play a role in pornographic film. Charlotte Haze, Valeria have been abused and betrayed by

Humbert Humbert. Similarly, Sanaz, Azin, Mashid, Nassrin have been badly treated by the male of the Iranian male which is dominated by Muslim society. But as a male writer Nabokov seems justifiable when he makes a decision that: "I wish this memoir to be published only when Lolita is no longer alive" (309). Here, through the mouth of Humbert, Nabokov gives somehow respect towards females. In the same way, Nabokov's criticism of male violence is not as politicized as Nafisi's criticism. It is because of his masculinist attitude. In both text, male and female are defined from the masculinist's point of view (binary opposition). In *Lolita*, Nabokov presents Lolita, Charlotte Haze, Valeria and other female characters as meek, docile, submissive, obedient but male characters as robust, brave and intellectual's. Humbert is presented as a clever guy who can easily use and misuse females according to his choice. He is presented as center of attraction that female they are attracted with him. But, in reality he is unhappy man who is in search of happiness. Therefore, he himself is attracted with females especially nymphet; a girl age of nine to fourteen. Similarly, in *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, female characters are protected by males Sanaz's brother, Nassrin's father, and Azin's husband are those male who think themselves as almighty as God for their sister, daughter and wife. But, these all male are performing patriarchal rules and regulation that they are savior of females. Though, Lolita is main character of *Lolita*, she is not being presented as powerful character as Humbert is. In the same line, none of the female characters in *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*. In *Lolita* and *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* most of the female characters like Lolita, Charlotte, Sanaz, Nassrin, Azin, whose all decisions are made by male characters. Women are not only what males think, they are economically, politically and socially powerful. That is why it is Nafisi's politics to exclude the abuse so that they could live their life without rules and

restrictions of the patriarchal society. The politics of the feminism is to be heard in the main stream but as they lack power they are always what the patriarchy shapes. That is why the representation seems guided by the feminist mentality of the director so she is blame worthy for being an feminist whereas Nabokovian presentation is somehow is the favor of the females.

At last there is immersed difference between the representation of Nafisi and Nabokov. The main cause behind the difference between these two scholars is their cultural, historical, economical, and social background. Nafisi being a female writer she has empathy towards female so she is in practice of writing those texts which are in support of females and can expose the dark reality of women's situation in male dominated society. Very contrarily, Nabokov seems fair in his writing about male violence. However, equality is never possible until the males are powerful and in main stream in all respect.

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