

Chapter One

Introduction: Nabokov's Literary World

Nabokov's Representation of Exiled Life

Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov (1899-1977) chooses exiles as his characters. Bolshevik Revolution of Russia in 1917 forced his family out of its homeland, and he had to live as an exile throughout his life since. For this reason experiences as an exile traverse his works throughout his career. He began his career with a piece of poem, and continued it with some translations of French and English works into Russian. He began writing novels in 1920s, and earned his name with the genre. Short stories, plays, critical works, and some miscellaneous scientific papers also constitute his bulk of works. In all these works and genres, we can find traces of exiled life and experiences as an exile. *Mary* (1926), *Glory* (1932), and *The Gift* (1938) from his earlier stage to *Lolita* (1955), *Pnin* (1957), and *Pale Fire* (1962) from later stage all feature exiled characters.

Nabokov becomes artist of memory as soon as his career begins. 'An exile's withstanding in an alien place' is the theme of his novels, short stories, and poetry. An exile means to "live in at least two spaces . . . constantly negotiating his homeland and hostland" (Soroka 1). Thus memory becomes the source, and memoir the structure of his works. As a result, his novels and stories are full of personal memory and a lyrical, almost hallucinatory resurgence of images from the past.

Nabokov's art of memory reveals problems of exiled life. He portrays the average day of an émigré scholar in his novels. In *Pnin*, the actual life that Pnin lives makes an image of human loneliness and exile, of the brevity in time and isolation in space of all life. Alice Jedlickova describes Nabokov's depiction of exiles with an imagery of "an émigré visiting dozens of authorities and offices where hardly anyone will listen!" (11). The

housing problems, the different accent, alienation, and the struggle to adapt into the alien world are the problems of an exile emphasized in Nabokov's works.

Nabokov uses revenge motif to illustrate the exile's frustration. He depicts such fictional worlds, where the exiles attempt to regain what they have lost, and vent their hatred against their homeland-destroyers. The exiles hate the revolutionaries who have destroyed their homeland, and try to take revenge against them. "Govoriat Po-russki" ("Russian spoken here", 1923) and "Britva" ("Razor", 1926) are stories of émigré revenge against agents of the Soviet secret police.

The exiles in Nabokov's works are the wanderers in the alien world. Humbert Humbert in *Lolita* wanders in Europe before he moves to America, where he wanders again from motel to motel. When he is forced out of Russia, Pnin's Timofey Pnin wanders in Europe, and finally reaches America. Such wanderer is the adaptation of the legend of the Wandering Jew according to Alfred Appel. Talking about *Agaspber* (1923), a verse drama by Nabokov, Appel writes, "Tormented by 'dreams of earthly beauty'", Nabokov's wanderer exclaims, "I shall catch you/ catch you Maria my inexpressible dream/ from age to age" (Introduction, LIII). The exiled wanderer searches for something he himself can not visualize.

Nabokov's works discuss linguistic exile. Émigré life suffers geographical and cultural loss. Whenever a person is forced to leave his land, he takes his language and culture into a new land. But pressure to adapt to alien world does not allow him to speak the old language. He can retain only the accents. Nabokov's émigré characters adapt English but they always feel that they can express better in native language. The narrator of *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* says, "I know Sebastian's Russian was better and more natural to him than English . . . had he started to write in Russian, those particular linguistic throes

would have . . . spared him” (82-83). These lines suggest the exile’s attitude toward his native and adopted languages.

Nabokov undergoes nostalgia in his fictions of exiles. Exile is a correlative for all human loss, and Nabokov records the constrictions the heart must suffer. Nabokov’s poem “An Evening of Russian Poetry” presents an exile who remembers, “Beyond the seas where I have lost a scepter/ I hear the neighing of my dappled nouns” (qtd. in Appel, Introduction XXII). Memory of beautiful past always haunts, disturbs, and saddens Nabokov’s émigrés. In fact, Nabokov himself, as an émigré, can not help remembering his perfect past in the form of his autobiography *Speak Memory* (1966).

Modernism and Post-Modernism Exhibited by Nabokov

Nabokov’s career spans from European Modernist Movement to the Post-Modernist Movement. This may be the reason his early works are modern, and later ones are post-modern. However, there is a huge debate about how to label Nabokov a modern or a post-modern writer. Difficulty to decide which Nabokov’s works are modern and which are post-modern, or whether Nabokov’s single work carries both modern and post-modern elements always created disagreement among the critics.

Nabokov was very young when Russian and European modernism was in practice. He began his career under the influence of Russian modernists like Anton Chekhov, Ivan Bunin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Pushkin. Proust, Kafka, Joyce and Flaubert are the European modernists to show him the path of modernism. Maurice Couturier says:

. . . he [Nabokov] wrote, nostalgically and in Russian, about his motherland, which he often associated with his first love (Tamara in *Speak, Memory*), as for example in *Mary, Glory, and The Gift*. The latter is truly a modernist novel, like Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, or

Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. Fyodor has been deprived of his homeland that he hopes to regain, some day. (257)

However, Nabokov was ambivalent to his modernist influencers. Talking about Nabokov's ambivalence, John Burt Foster, Jr. writes, "As an adolescent during the heroic years of modern art, Nabokov started writing with the advantage of hindsight on its many new initiatives, and as he emulated, rejected, revised, or synthesized the elements of this legacy, he was superbly well equipped to respond cross-culturally" (3). Nabokov learns modernist techniques from the modern writers, and utilizes them in his works with a distortion. This habit of distortion takes him to postmodernism.

The demarcation between modernism and post-modernism itself is blurry. More blurry it becomes in Nabokov's works. Brian McHale makes philosophical distinction between modernism and post-modernism. For him modernism is epistemological. He writes, ". . . the dominant of modernist fiction is epistemological. That is, modernist fiction deploys strategies . . . and . . . questions such as . . . : 'How can I interpret this world of which I am a part? And what am I in it?' . . . What is there to be known? . . . with what degree of certainty? . . . with what degree of reliability?" (9). On the contrary, postmodernism is existential. He writes:

. . . the dominant of postmodernist fiction is ontological. That is, postmodernist fiction deploys strategies . . . and . . . questions like . . . : 'What world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?' Other typical postmodernist questions bear either on the ontology of the literary text itself or on the ontology of the world which it projects. (10)

World War II is significant to differentiate modernism from postmodernism. According to Maurice Couturier, there came two significant changes after the World War II. He writes:

First, there was the traumatic event of the war itself, which questioned the sanity of organized and developed societies and bore witness to the infirmity and unreliability of the accepted values—moral, economic, political and otherwise—in a god-less world Secondly there has been the tremendous development of the mass media, which . . . has undermined the real by encouraging simulation on a large scale. (255-56)

From McHale's and Couturier's writings, what we understand is that in modernism, reality is taken for granted, the writers or their characters try to interpret the reality, and the world or their life; whereas in post-modernism, reality is questioned or assailed. So, in postmodernist works, there is presented only simulation of reality. In such works, the characters also do not accept reality; fantasy and imagination becomes more real than the real world they are living in.

If we accept McHale and Couturier, Nabokov's novels like *Lolita*, *Ada*, and *Pale Fire* are purely postmodernist works, for they break line between reality and fantasy. In *Pale Fire* and *Ada*, there is no pre-textual reality to be hunted down by a sleuth or analyst, even though the text teems with elements of our everyday reality. In a modernist novel like *The Gift*, the reader, if a careful sleuth, can still trace the keys at the end and find out that the lovers are locked out.

In a postmodernist novel, the characters do not believe in the real as guaranteed by strong values and referents. They only believe in their desires: *Lolita*'s Humbert is a pervert, *Pale Fire*'s Kinbote a megalomaniac, *Ada*'s Van a Don Juan. For Humbert, the love object, i.e. the nymphet is not only a certain type of girl but a fantasy in the mind of an older mad artist. In *Pale Fire*, Kinbote imagines himself to be the king of Zembla, and the owner of the crown. As Zembla and the crown are unreal, he begs Shade to lend them a semblance of existence with his poetry. Van is so narcissistic that he does not believe in the earthly

existence of an ultimate love object. He desperately looks for it around the world, until old age makes him impotent and induces him to rewrite his life and to turn the mirage into something real, an extended poem. All the three characters resort to art to recoup their losses in life.

Technical aspect also forms demarcation between modernism and post-modernism. What modernists did is that they reacted against realism, and introduced experimental and avant-garde trends like Symbolism, Futurism, Expressionism, Imagism, Vorticism, Dadaism, Surrealism, free verse, stream-of-consciousness, and multiple point of view. They imposed hierarchy between high and low art; emphasized universality, and established meta-narratives and its hegemony. But postmodernists reject meta-narratives, hegemony, hierarchy, and universality. That is why they always disrupt modernist techniques. Narration in post-modernism takes a new turn. There appear tendencies like parody, pastiche, skepticism, irony, fatalism, the mixing of 'high' and 'low' cultural allusions, an indifference to the redemptive mission of art as conceived by the Modernist pioneers, and choice of character from minority groups.

Nabokov adopts subversive style, parodic structure, heteroglottal voice, and metafictional design for his works since 1930s. This fact turns him a postmodernist. However, the interpretation of alien world, the study of exile life through the exercise of memory, and incorporation of autobiographic elements are the modernistic techniques that he continues using till mid 1950s. Typical postmodern features begin appearing in Nabokov's works after 1950s. Consumer culture and parody dominates in *Lolita*. Subversive becomes the style of *Pale Fire*.

Nabokov destroys the detective fiction genre in *Pale Fire* and *Invitation to a Beheading*, making both postmodernist works. Helen Oakley says, "Nabokov drew upon and inverted what had become well-known archetypes of the genre [detective fiction], and also the ways in which

he exploded formulaic narrative patterns in order to destabilize the readers' relationship with the text" (480). In these two novels, Nabokov erases the distinction between the victim and the victimizer, replaces the intelligent narrator with the victimizer himself. Moreover, by putting death scene at the end, he destroys the progressive design of the narration—murder at the outset, visiting past for information, and solution of the mystery in future.

If we take only *Lolita*, then Nabokov is the champion of post-modernism. First, in this novel, he has destroyed the demarcation between reality and unreality. He has written it in such a way that the reader finds it difficult to recognize whether its characters are real or just Humbert's fantasy. Almost every incident in the novel is mixture of facts and fantasy. The protagonist Humbert Humbert lives a real life, but his actions remains real only for a short time. The reader finds himself reading his imagined happenings, and he will not know when that fantasy entered. Secondly, Nabokov's composition of the book is in the form of parody. Both facts make *Lolita* a postmodernist work and Nabokov a post-modernist writer.

Nabokov's Metafictionality

Nabokov creates fantastic, a-realistic, and involuted forms. Even his earliest fictions evolve in this manner, and make it clear that the author has gone his own way. Alfred Appel, Jr. writes, "From its birth in *King, Queen, Knave* (1928) to its full maturation in *Invitation to a Beheading* (1936), to its apotheosis in the 'involute abode' of *Pale Fire* (1962), the strategy of involution has determined the structure and meaning of Nabokov's novels" (Introduction XXVII). Involute design of metafictionality, i.e. self-reflection of the creation of the fiction itself, characterizes Nabokov's almost all novels.

Nabokov's design of involution revolves around the authorial voice. Nabokov himself calls this voice "an anthropomorphic deity impersonated by me" (qtd. in Appel, Introduction XXXI). Except *Lolita*, all the novels after *Invitation to a Beheading* are taken over by this 'deity'. This 'deity' is responsible for everything that happens in the novels: he begins the

narrative only to stop and retell the passage differently; halts a scene to return to earlier chapter; intrudes to give stage directions, to compliment or exhort the actors, to have a prop moved; reveals that the characters are author's puppets, and that all is fiction. The Nabokov-deity proclaims that 'the deity' may one day write the book the reader has just finished reading. *Pale Fire* best exemplifies the phenomena.

In involuted works, characters readily communicate with their creators. Nabokov takes apart, rearranges and reassembles his characters at will. In response, the characters may either remain uncomplaining as Cincinnatus in *Invitation to a Beheading* or lose emotional balance as Krug in *Bend Sinister* goes insane by the realization that he is a puppet at the hand of the author. For Nabokov, all reality is mask. He stages his own inventions rather than re-creations of the naturalistic world. He has the habit of alluding to something else behind the crudely painted screens, where the real plots behind the obvious one takes place. In other words, there are at least two plots in Nabokov's fiction: the characters in the book, and the consciousness of the creator above it.

Nabokov makes use of several techniques to perfectly embed his involuted design into his works. Unreliable narrators—several of Nabokov's narrators are mad like Humbert Humbert of *Lolita*—greatly contribute to this design. Parody and its allusion is another inevitable aspect of Nabokov's metafiction. Parody's nature is to refer to other works of art or itself, denying the possibility of naturalistic fiction, which provides the basis for Nabokov's involution.

Parody in Nabokov's Works

Nabokov creates with an authorial sensibility the texture of parody and self-parody. He is to parody the conventions of realistic and impressionistic fictions. In *Lolita*, he offers a grotesque parody of a 'good relationship' by making Humbert and Lolita 'pals', and parodies the murder-flicks with a movie-style murder of Quilty by Humbert. *Lolita* again

becomes a burlesque of the confessional mode, the literary diary, the Romantic novel that chronicles the effects of a debilitating love. *The Eye* parodies the nineteenth-century Romantic tales, such as V.F. Odoevsky's "The Brigadier" (1844), which is narrated by a ghost who has awakened after death. *Laughter in the Dark* mocks the love-triangle. *Despair* is cast as the kind of 'cheap mystery' story the narrator's wife reads in the novel. *The Gift* presents the parody of the Russian writers, while *Invitation to a Beheading* imitates utopian novels. Pnin masquerades 'academic novel', and turns out to parody the possibility of a novel's having reliable narrators.

The texture of Nabokov's parody is unique. It is because, in addition to being a master of parodist of literary styles, he is able to make brief reference to another writer's themes or devices which are so telling in effect that Nabokov need not burlesque that literary style. He parodies not only narrative clichés, and outworn subject matter but also genres and prototype of the novel. *Invitation to a Beheading* parodically surveys the novel's evolution. *The Gift's* Chapter Four is a mock literary biography, and anticipates theme of Nabokov's major achievement. Throughout *The Gift*, Nabokov parodies the search of a verifiable truth; and his generic quests—the autobiography, the exegesis, and the detective story—coalesce in one work.

The Real Life of Sebastian Knight is the monument of Nabokov's parody. In the novel, there is a novelist who is a parodist, and his parody summarizes Nabokov's. According to the narrator of *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, the novelist Knight's—surely the author Nabokov's—procedures are:

As often was the way with Sebastian Knight he used parody as a kind of springboard for leaping into the highest region of serious emotion. J. L. Coleman has called it 'a clown developing wings, and angel mimicking a tumbler pigeon,' and the metaphor seems to me very apt. Based cunningly on

parody of certain tricks of the literary trade, *The Prismatic Bezel* soars skyward. (91)

Nabokov thus uses the parody as the ‘springboard’ for leaping into the highest region of emotion in the same manner as that of Sebastian Knight. He understands well that the novelist who used parody is under an obligation to engage the reader emotionally. The description of *The Prismatic Bezel* and remainder of Chapter Ten in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* indicates that Nabokov is fully aware of this necessity, and, like the Knight he has succeeded in making the parody a ‘springboard’.

The double motif is another structural aspect that gives Nabokov’s novels more tricky parodic dimension. In *Lolita*, Nabokov perfects the double motif with Humbert-Quilty pairing. Throughout the narrative, Humbert is literally and figuratively pursued by Quilty, who is ludicrous and absurd, sinister and grotesque. For a while Humbert is certain that his ‘shadow’ is his Swiss cousin, Detective Trapp. Lolita’s statement, “Perhaps he is Trapp [trap]”, summarizes Quilty’s role in the novel (*Lolita*, 219). Quilty not only formulates Humbert’s entrapment, his criminal passion, his sense of shame and self hate, but also parodies his darker psychological double.

The double motif figures prominently throughout Nabokov’s productive years. In the 1930s, *Despair and Laughter in the Dark* adopted this motif. Albinus-Axel Rex pairing of *Laughter in the Dark* is significant as it rehearses the Humbert-Quilty doubling. The double motif grew and passed in and through *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, *Bend Sinister*, the story “*Scenes from the Life of Double Monster*”, and developed fully in *Lolita*, *Invitation to a Beheading*, and *Pale Fire*.

Escape into the Free World of Timelessness in Nabokov’s Works

Nabokov is an escape artist. Death is very disturbing to him. He shows ambivalent attitude towards death. He can not forget this disturbing fact, but tries to avoid it as much as

possible. Brian Boyd reports, “. . . at the end of *Speak, Memory*'s first chapter that pays tribute to Nabokov's father, [Nabokov] anticipates his [father's] death, and seems to leave him suspended in the timelessness that the very shape of the autobiography's sentences somehow impart to their subjects” (XIV). His characters confront death in the same manner. The narrator of his short story “Terror” fears death so much that he wakes from dream in fear of death. Lolita's Humbert Humbert tries to escape death penalty by writing story of his helpless love for Lolita. Meditation on death and life appears in *Pale Fire* and *Invitation to a Beheading* as well.

Confrontation of death forces Nabokov's characters escape into the free world of timelessness. In reaction to prospective death, the terrified characters either seek immortality through creation or escape into the fantasy world of ‘otherspace’. Nabokov constructs this ‘otherspace’ to host visually perfect images, as exemplified by *La Veneziana*'s portrait in his short story “*La Veneziana*” (1924). In this regard, Nabokov says, "I think that what I would welcome at the close of a book of mine is a sensation of its world receding in the distance and stopping somewhere there, suspended afar like a picture in a picture" (*Strong Opinions*, 72-73).

Nabokov views time as ‘prison’. He writes, “I have journeyed back in thought—with thought hopelessly tapering off as I went—to remote regions where I groped for some secret outlet only to discover that the prison of time is spherical and without exits” (*Speak, Memory*, 10). His characters Humbert, Cincinnatus, Krug live in claustrophobic cell-like rooms, and seek way to the free world of timelessness.

Nabokov frequently uses mirror symbol to show that his characters seek escape from the painful present. Mirror is the symbol of solipsism in his works. Nabokov himself suffered loss of his homeland, and lived his whole life reflecting his past in his writing. So are his characters. They are all imprisoned in the past. They frequently observe themselves

before the mirror. Their favorite pastime is admiring their reflection in the mirror. Hermann in *Despair* and Humbert in *Lolita* are the most narcissistic among Nabokov's characters. Fyodor in *The Gift* tries to transcend everyday existence through reflection on a stairwell with a glass door.

Nabokov's characters are sufferers; fantasy becomes the refuge for them. Nabokov makes use of fairy tale elements in almost all of his works. Alfred Appel, Jr. writes:

The fairy element has a significance far greater than its local importance to *Lolita*. Several of Nabokov's novels, stories, and poems are 'fairy tales' in the sense that they are set in imaginary lands. These lands extend from five of his untranslated Russian works (1924-1940), to Bend Sinister's Padukgrad, to *Pale Fire*'s kingdom of Zembla (1962), where the entire universe has been reimagined. (Notes 346)

These fairy tale elements provide Nabokov's characters with a chance to live in fantasy.

Nature of Creativity and the Creators in Nabokov's Works

Nabokov comments upon creativity and creative process through his works and characters throughout his career. He demonstrates what it needs to create art, views about the nature and power of creativity, and exposes his conviction about what an art should look like. For him, creativity is out of memory. His frequent incorporation of autobiographical elements into his works proves the fact. His *Speak, Memory* illustrates the unique power of memory to reconstruct the lost past at present as presence of past. *The Gift* identifies memory with literary creativity itself. *Despair* emphasizes the needs of perfect memory for a writer to be a good memory.

Nabokov believes in mnemonic power to gather what has been experienced or read into a work. Humbert Humbert of *Lolita*, Hermann of *Despair*, or Pnin of *Pnin* all remember their past experiences in order to compose a book. He celebrates power of memory to create

'intertextuality' of his works. However, he condemns mnemonic confusion, and punishes several of his characters for their poor memory. Hermann in *Despair* claims that he has read more than thousand books, but he is not able to rework them creatively into meaningful references for his own purpose. His poor memory mixes up the events from the recent past with that of the remote past. He aspires high, but Nabokov reduces his aspirations to madness. This is so because "Nabokov uses his character's failure as an intertextualist to show that a writer who is unable to use literary tradition for his own purpose is to fall out of tradition" (Paterson 1). This emphasizes how important is perfect memory in Nabokov's poetics.

Nabokov emphasizes the power of creativity through the device of metamorphosis. Just as through metamorphosis a larva turns a pupa and then a full insect, so the metamorphosis of creativity can turn a loathsome act into a beautiful work of art. *Lolita* evidences the metamorphosis of Humbert's lust into love and his crime into art through creativity. The same evidence provides the basis for Nabokov's belief on evolution of artist's self through artistic creation. Creativity creates oblivion and rescues Nabokov's characters from death or other unbearable situations. Adam Krug of *Bend Sinister* and Humbert Humbert of *Lolita* both are oblivious enough to escape torture of prospective death while they are in the spree of the sleight of hand.

Creativity produces an understanding of life in Nabokov's novels. In *Pale Fire*, the poet John Shade writes in his poem "Pale Fire", "I feel I understand/ Existence, or at least a minute part/ Of my existence, only through my art" (971-973). In this novel, the poet is bereaved of his daughter, who commits suicide. So, he tries to know the nature of life and death, and consoles himself with writing.

Nabokov works suggest that creative writers are not normal people. He never presents his writer-characters as sane ones. *Lolita's* Humbert and *Despair's* Hermann are

Nabokov's very notorious mad writer-characters. Shakespeare's famous comparison "The lunatic, lover and the poet/ Are of imagination all compact" holds true to Nabokov (221). Nabokov's writer-characters are mad, lovers and writers. *Lolita's* Humbert Humbert is the most striking example.

Morbid fantasy is the daily dose of the creators in Nabokov's works. Edgar Allan Poe once wrote "The philosophy of Composition [of the] most poetical topic of the world; the death of a beautiful woman . . . and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover" (qtd. in Appel, Notes 331). Nabokov both adopts and changes this philosophy. In *Lolita*, he makes Humbert a bereaved lover of Annabel at the outset, and murderer-turned-writer at the end. *Herman of Despair* commits a murder as an aesthetic art, and writes a novel about his crime.

Nabokov's Fascination for Cruelty, Madness and Wild Fantasies

Cruelty is Nabokov's inevitable feature. Murder, violence, death teems in Nabokov's fictions. Martin Amis is right, when he claims "Nabokov is the laureate of cruelty" (IX). It is hard to find literary characters crueler than Nabokov's characters. The cruel literary precedents turn out to be mere hooligans in compared to Humbert Humbert in *Lolita*, to Hermann in *Despair*, to Rex and Margot in *Laughter in the Dark*, and to Martha in *King, Queen, Knave*. Moreover, Nabokov is crueler to these cruel characters. These cruel characters either suffer death punishment or go mad as the consequence of their cruelty.

Nabokov loves insanity and abnormality as his subject matter. He investigates the life of a mad personality in his works. By making mad personality the narrators, Nabokov illustrates how a mad personality thinks and behaves; what logicity a mad personality has; and what relationship they bear with the sane world. Sometimes, in his works, a painful bereavement in the past leads towards madness, as in Humbert's case. Sometimes failure to

be a good writer maddens a writer like Hermann in *Despair*. Lack of control of one's life also becomes the cause of madness, as illustrated in Adum Krug's case in *Bend Sinister*.

Wild fantasies recur in Nabokov's works from time to time. The writer-character Herman sinks in thought of murder as aesthetic bliss. Sexual pervert Humbert Humbert tries to satisfy his lust with unusual sexual fantasies. He does not scruple to have a child as his sexual partner. Fear of incest does not haunt him. Van Veen of *Ada* lives fantasizing his sister Ada as his sexual partner.

Nabokov's fascination for cruelty, madness, and wild fantasies gives rise to antiheroes in his works. Aristotle's 'noble hero' was already outdated model for a hero in the twentieth century. So it was natural for a twentieth-century writer like Nabokov to turn away from the Aristotelian concept of hero. But Nabokov does not simply break the old concept, rather goes too far. He completely uproots the concepts of nobility, gentility, and heroism through his works. We can only find cruelty, villainy, criminality, and madness in his characters.

Nabokov's Humbert Humbert is one of the most talked about antihero in English literary circle. This sexual pervert is a typical antihero with his eccentric habits. He is presented as a cruel murderer, mad writer, and obsessive personality. Hermann of *Despair* is another Humbert Humbert if we consider only the antiheroic qualities. He is such a mad writer who does not hesitate to commit a murder as an aesthetic act. Pnin of *Pnin*, and Adum Krug of *Bend Sinister* are also mad characters. Both are far away from the Aristotelian concept of heroes. Nabokov does not dramatize heroism and nobility in his fictions, rather illustrates defeat, abnormality, and pettiness. We can simply say that Nabokov is fond of antiheroes, and weaves his stories around notoriety.

Antics of Antiheroes in Literature After 1940s

Concept of Protagonist, Antagonist, Antihero and the Antics

It is hard to locate exactly when the concept of hero originated. Heroes and the heroic have existed since the first humans, certainly since the Hebrew David and the Indian Gilgamesh. In this regard, Greek people and their documents are most pivotal. It is because the Greeks took the concept of heroism from myths and legends. They were obsessed with hero worship. They not only loved to practice heroism but also entertained themselves with the dramatic performances based on heroism.

Aristotle defined the concept of hero and heroism that is applied to tragedy. In his *Poetics*, he defines the tragic hero as “a man who is not eminently good and just yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty. He must be one who is highly renowned and prosperous—a personage like Oedipus, Thyestes, or other illustrious man of such families” (qtd. in Henn 4). This means the hero is ‘noble’ in qualities so as to arouse pity and fear among the audience. He is neither vicious and depraved nor perfect. This is because vice and depravity can not draw sympathy; whereas perfection does not allow tragedy, rather uplifts man from his manliness to godliness. So, the hero should be admirable, but not perfect.

Heroism is related to courage, pride, virtue and justice. T. R. Henn writes, “The state may be regarded as the perfect abstract protagonist in tragedy. It can include among its claims the most powerful stimulatory virtues: honor, patriotism, love of tradition, loyalty; it can call on the hidden *totientrieb* for its mystical defense through blood” (245). The hero aspires high and has high regard for divine law. He even does not hesitate to rebel against God if he needs to restore the divine law. Hero never bows down before a tyrant. Antigone and Prometheus show true heroism from this view.

Greek Tragedy stressed martyrdom as the hero's heroism. It means the hero involves in a war or conflict, where he encounters an unconquerable force. He fights injustice and corruption but in vain. The hero has good intention and endeavors for a good cause, but becomes a victim because of the unconquerable antagonist he is opposing. T. R. Henn opines:

One pole of the established type of conflict is often formed of a kind of stalactite of petrified law, custom, usage, which is in itself challenged and broken by a new order. An older variant may be personified in a tyrant figure, man or god; the opposing force in it elements of heroic rebellion, or of the struggle of the Fox against the Lion, or of an epic or despairing martyrdom.

(245)

Immortality is the motive for heroism. The hero always seeks reputation, admiration, celebrations, and above all immortality. The hero sacrifices his life for immortality, for the grand celebration of his funeral, and for the story of his great deeds. The heroes themselves elect doom as Achilles did during the Trojan War. T. R. Henn says, "The Hero's record is proud and notable: 'And in the harsh world draw thy breath in pain / To tell my story'" (265). By choosing death, on the one hand, the heroes got a sense of relief in the sense of the saying 'only the dead can be forgiven'. On the other hand, they brought themselves "into the line with the historical past of all ages, imposing on him a kind of timelessness" (Henn 263).

In the twentieth century, the concept of hero and heroism saw its counter concept of antihero and antiheroism. Antihero is the term invented in 1940s and is applied to the "protagonists of literature written since the First World War—those of Hemingway in America, of Sartre in France, of the 'Angry' novelists in Britain and, in more recent years, of dramatists such as Beckett, Ionesco, Albee, Osborne, Pinter, perhaps Le Roi Jones" (Adams 30). Such protagonists lack courage, grace, honesty, and other heroic and noble

qualities of a hero. Unlike the heroes, they do not die bravely fighting in war, for public benefit or for immortality. They are coward, defeated characters who can not tolerate their life and commit suicide. Or they may flee the battlefield because of fear of death. Some of them are persons of no consequence. They try hard, but are too insignificant to have a desired result. Others retain darker self of a villain within them. However, they neither completely forget established morality and traditions, nor can fully adopt cruel, vicious, and despicable ways of a villain. Thus, the antiheroes show ambivalent attitude towards traditional moral and social virtues.

However, antiheroism is not a quality invented in twentieth century. Only the term is new. The antiheroic qualities were embedded upon the ancient heroes themselves, more in amount than had Aristotle assumed. There were few flawless Hectors and Beowulfs; often the great heroes were willing to employ magic, deceit, stratagem, disguise, spying in order to attain their ends. Achilles was excess with his cruel fury, Gilgamesh's lust left no virgin to her lover, the Hebrew David seduced Bathsheba, and Aeneas dawdled with Dido. In the heroic tradition itself, there was the seed of antiheroism.

In order to understand well what exactly hero, antihero and villain are, we should compare and contrast each with the others. In this regard, Stephen M. Fuller's line "his [the antihero Hannibal Lectre's in *Hannibal* (1999)] indeterminacy marks him as a typical representation of the modern/post-modern antihero who neither warrants full approval nor complete condemnation" is significant (823). It means the hero stands for goodness and is admired, while the villain stands for badness and is condemned. If the hero is white, the villain is black; and if the hero is God, the villain is Satan or Devil. The antihero is the middle term between the hero and the villain. The hero does some work which is worthy of admiration but impossible from an ordinary man. The villain does some loathsome work,

which the general public hates to do. The antihero should do some action, which is debatable about its goodness and badness.

Antiheroes are different from heroes and villains because of antics in their behavior. They are abnormal, insane, aberrant, eccentric and idiosyncratic. Their behavior is strange not because they are deviant but because their actions are very difficult to categorize. They may be philosophical in their ideas but actionless like Hamlet's Hamlet. They may be scholar but can not stop themselves from committing pedophilia as Lolita's Humbert Humbert. They may be violent but innocent. They may be coward but proud. Or they may champion morality but never practice it.

Antiheroes are mere parodies of a hero. They have heroic aspirations, but they fail miserably. They fail because they do not understand the demands of the changing time. Don Quixote, for example, is the antihero in whom heroic ideals, which exist in the mind, become ridiculous because they are vestiges of an earlier age and because they do not agree with the evidence of the senses, with flesh and blood reality.

Antiheroes are confused with the idea of heroism itself. Heroes use power and violence for public benefit, but they use for personal benefit. Heroism is the public standard. The antiheroes do not understand this fact. About the confusion of Dostoevsky's titular antihero Raskolnikov, William Mills Todd, III writes:

The clearest example [of antihero] is Raskolnikov, who defines the historical hero (conqueror, law-giver) as one who has the right to use force and violence to achieve his ends; working with this perverted, Napoleonic definition of heroism, Raskolnikov finds himself committing the messy, useless murder of the old pawnbroker. (104)

So, the antiheroes are found applying distorted heroic ideals in their lives.

Antics of antiheroes illustrates the collapse of spiritual values in modern/postmodern land. They are skeptic and ironical of the simplicity, austerity, security, decorum and the established order. Prostitution, debauchery, drunkenness, criminality are their typical antics. That is why the modern/postmodern writers always choose antiheroes to portray annihilation of social and cultural traditions. The movement of an antihero from confusion to ambivalence to cynicism, and then to criminality answers how in a society arise various problems related to law, morality, tradition, madness and criminality.

Criminal Behavior of a Young Black: The Antics of Antihero in *Native Son*

Criminal behavior is one of the various antics that characterize the antiheroes. Among various literary antiheroes, Bigger Thomas in Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) is one of the antiheroes infected with criminal behavior. He is a young black of about twenty years of age. He accidentally kills Mary Dalton, his Master's daughter. He, then, tries to make Mary's vanishing her abduction by criminals. He writes a ransom letter, and demands ransom of \$10,000 from her family. In order to hide his crime, he decapitates Mary's body and incinerates the mutilated parts in a furnace. This colored antihero commits another murder to hide the first. In the second instance, he shows absolute brutality eventhough the victim is his own girlfriend Bessie.

If we analyze the behavior of the antihero, then we find that the circumstances play significant role in shaping the antics of antihero. The antihero Bigger Thomas develops criminal passion because of the environment he is living in. He is the young black who lives in a society where the whites hold the upper hand in everything. He complains, "they [the whites] don't let us [the blacks] do nothing" (qtd. in Butler 565). He is the victim of the society. He is, as Stephen K. George claims, "caught up in economic and racial forces he can neither comprehend nor control" (1). It is not he but society which forces him to choose a criminal path.

The domination of white society produces among the blacks ambivalent attitude towards the whites. Bigger Thomas as a black-and-poor boy feels both fear and anger towards the whites. His accidental killing of the white girl Mary Dalton is itself a result of his ambivalent attitude towards the powerful whites. When Mary and her boyfriend behave well with him, he fears such friendly advance. When they all drink and Bigger has alone to help Mary, already drunk, to her bedroom, Mary's unconscious sexual advance makes Bigger to rethink it as a genuine one. But a sudden appearance of Mary's blind mother frightens him. In fear of losing his job, he smothers Mary with a pillow to prevent her from producing another unconscious sign of his presence. Unfortunately, Mary dies, and Bigger becomes a murderer.

Childhood trauma is one of the psychological prisons from which the antihero Bigger Thomas can never get out of. The antihero may be sociable and may mix up with people, but he remains a loner from inside. Claiming that the Loeb and Leopold murder case of 1924, Jackson, Mississippi to be the source of Bigger Thomas' murder case in *Native Son*, Robert Butler writes:

All three had lonely childhoods, suffering from . . . 'fragile loneliness'.

Bigger's loss of his father in a southern race riot traumatizes him at an early age, and Leopold's loss of his mother at age 17 had . . . a 'profound effect' on him since she was the only person in his family to whom he was emotionally close. Loeb was outwardly very sociable but inwardly a loner who established very few genuinely close ties with people. Likewise, at one point in Book 3, Bigger reveals to Max, 'I don't reckon I was ever in love with nobody'. (559)

The feeling of alienation pushes the antihero towards fantasies. Fantasy is for pleasure, and one gets pleasure when one imagines himself to be in some favorable place

and pleasant situation. It is natural for Bigger Thomas to imagine himself to be rid of his poor life and live a 'new life'. Robert Butler supports it: "Bigger enjoys a perverse 'elation' . . . from his killing of Mary Dalton and a 'queer sense of power' . . . when he murders Bessie. Bigger deludedly thinks that his violence will provide him with a 'new life'" (560). In other words Bigger's antics is just his attempt to live a better life.

Loneliness plays vital role in Bigger Thomas' criminality otherwise as well. Ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas best describes how loneliness deprives Bigger Thomas to understand the 'Other'. Levinas' idea of "epiphanic understanding of the 'Other', as paraphrased by Stephen K. George, explains:

. . . the purest and most basic human relationship [i]s the face-to-face encounter of the same and the other, in which the face or expression of the other breaks through its own limited form and speaks to me (the same) in a way that ultimately transcends any of my attempts to define, categorize, or totalize it for my own egocentric purposes. . . . the other refuses any reduction to a totality comprised of my own expectations and definitions, my feeble attempts to grasp his or her 'otherness'. . . . This infinite aspect of the other, however, does not preclude a relationship with the same, for this is possible through what Levinas terms 'language' or 'conversation'. . . . (1-2)

So, Bigger does not understand the whites because of lack of communication.

To sum up, Bigger's criminality seems more his innocence than his criminality. It is his innocence in the sense that he never deliberately acts his crimes. To fantasize being a notorious criminal is a different thing. Bigger seems more innocent when he feels happy when his crime is spread through newspaper. Only when the judge gives him his verdict of death penalty, Bigger realizes that he did an unforgivable crime.

Failure and Suicide of an American Dreamer

Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1947) presents an antihero who fails miserably and commits suicide. This antihero Willy Loman is a salesman. He has to wander to sell his things. Throughout his career, he is just able to manage to survive in the business. When he becomes old, he can not sell him as a salesman and is fired from the job. The economic condition of his family pressurizes him to sell him at any cost. So, he decides to sell him for his death insurance. Suicide to get the insurance money for his family is the only real triumph that he earns in his career as a salesman.

Willy Loman is a failed dreamer of success. The life and success of eighty-four years old salesman Dave Singleman inspires him to be a great salesman in future. He jumps into the field and sets his vales: “. . . the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want” (Miller 778). Willy aspires to ‘be liked’ by everyone and wants to remain a successful salesman as his role-model Singleman. But expectation and achievement do not match. Willy fails to be a successful salesman.

Story of success completely blinds Willy Loman. When he dives into it, he never gets out of it. His brother Ben had bad knowledge of geography. When he heads towards Alaska, he reaches Africa. He finds diamonds there and becomes rich. In fact, Ben becomes rich just by chance, but Willy misinterprets it. For him Ben is ‘a great man’. Willy lives by such foolish value and tries to instill it into the minds of his sons:

BEN. William, when I walked into

the jungle, I was seventeen, when I walked out I was

twenty-one. And, by God, I was rich!

WILLY. . . . was rich! That's just the spirit I want to

imbue them with! To walk into a jungle! I was right!

I was right! I was right! (Miller 783)

While living with expectation of a great success in future, Willy becomes unnecessarily proud of himself. He feels himself great, which he is not. He never wants to bow down before anyone. He does not have money, and, so borrows money from his friend Charley. However he rejects his offer of job thinking that Charley is below his standard. His double standardness worsens his economic condition.

When love for success encounters failure, suicide becomes the only refuge for Willy Loman. Deep inside his heart, Willy has got his own ghost, which is the successful one. In reality, he is just a 'roadman'. He dreamt of success for his sons, but got disappointment. He loves his wife, but has no money to give her. So, though death is dark, he sees great success in death insurance—twenty-thousand dollars. "It's dark there", speaks Ben's ghost inside him, "but full of diamonds" (Miller 807). He immediately runs towards success. Finally, he wins 'diamonds' for his family, though not for him.

A Teenager's Refusal to Grow Up

J. D. Salinger's novel *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) deals with very unusual behavior of a teenager. The teenager Holden Caulfield hates the adult world which he calls 'phony'. He himself wants to remain a teenager. He wants to save all the teenagers from falling into the adult world. He compares growing up into adult is to fall from a cliff while playing happily in a green-field. Later, he ends up in sanatorium.

Holden Caulfield constantly seeks a favorable place, but he never gets a one. He has been expelled from three schools. His fourth school Pencey prep school also does not prove favorable. He fails in four out of five of his classes, and gets notice that he is being expelled. With such bad result, he can not go home. Lack of solace and instant decision in order to break boredom of loneliness leads him to commit error after error. His decision to leave his school, his wandering here and there, his fear to confront his parents all are childish response to his unfavorable situation.

Mistreatment by the older friends grows in Holden a feeling of hatred towards the adult world. While in Hostel, Holden seeks company, but gets only older mates, who, being physically stronger, bully him instantly when there is dispute. He is irritated by his unhygienic friend Ackley. He does not like Stradlater's dating Jane Gallagher, whom he dated in the past and still admires. Already disturbed by the dating, he can not tolerate Stradlater's further teasing. In the resulting fight, Stradlater breaks his nose. Carl Luce, another older friend whom he admires, also does not keep him company when he needs his company. In such case, he finds no any reason to love the adult world.

Holden Caulfield's sexual jealousy develops into dislike for sex. Holden does not want sex between his ex-girlfriend Jane and Stradlater. So, he questions Stradlater about what happened in the date. As a typical male, he does not want his past girlfriend, whom he still admires or surely loves, sexed by others. His fear of Jane's being spoilt by sex, later turns him away from sex. When curiosity is to be aroused, the teenager is disturbed by the thought of sex. This is the reason why he can not have sex when he calls Sunny for sex. He has already turned an abnormal. Sex belongs to the adult world, and he dislikes sex. He believes that there is beauty in the world, but the adult's obscenity spoils it. Thus, later he dislikes the adult world itself.

Alienation is the only way out for Holden Caulfield. Throughout the novel, Holden seems to be excluded from and victimized by the world around him. As he says to Mr. Spencer, he feels trapped on 'the other side' of life, and he continually attempts to find his way in a world in which he feels he doesn't belong. His alienation is his way of protecting himself. Just as he wears his hunting hat to advertise his uniqueness, he uses his isolation as proof that he is better than everyone else around him. The truth is that interactions with other people usually confuse and overwhelm him, and his cynical sense of superiority serves as a

type of self-protection. Thus, the alienation is the source of what little stability Holden has in his life.

However, alienation gives Holden the most of his pain. He never addresses his own emotions directly, nor does he attempt to discover the source of his troubles. He desperately needs human contact and love, but his protective wall of bitterness prevents him from looking for such interaction. Alienation is both the source of Holden's strength and the source of his problems. For example, his loneliness propels him into his date with Sally Hayes, but his need for isolation causes him to insult her and drive her away. Similarly, he longs for the meaningful connection he once had with Jane Gallagher, but he is too frightened to make any real effort to contact her.

Holden suffers emotional breakdown when his expectation of support and company from whom he loves is destroyed one by one. He is already alienated from the 'phony' world. His favourite Carl Luce has already disappointed him; his best teacher Mr. Antolini has already frightened him by behaving in such a way as to arouse fear of homosexual relationship; lastly his sister Phoebe disappoints him by giving him advices as if she were older to him. These facts continue disturbing him until he is mad.

A University Graduate's Anger and Mistreatment of his Wife

John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1957) is the first play that introduces 'angry young man' into British literature. Its protagonist Jimmy Porter is a provincial graduate of humble social background married to a girl of an upper-class family. Despite being a graduate, he behaves savagely. Every time he seems fuming. Moreover, he treats his wife with mixture of self pity and sadism.

Anger in Jimmy Porter is due to frustration. He is from the new educated class that arose in London after the Second World War. This new middle class was full of deepest anxieties and frustrations due to the lack of proper opportunities for them. They were

educated but they never found employment chances suitable to their education. Regarding the then London situation, David Daiches writes:

They [the provincial graduates] had gone to a ‘red-brick’ university, not to Oxford and Cambridge, and the state had paid their way. But on leaving university to look for a place in the world they found that the prizes were still reserved for those who went through the traditional public school plus ‘Oxbridge’ education, or at least that the values by which society was governed were those of a backward-looking ‘establishment’ in which the raw product of, say, a provincial university in the Midlands felt awkward and out of place. (1112-13)

Therefore, such unlucky graduates always vented their frustration. Jimmy Porter represents one of them.

Jimmy Porter’s mistreatment of his wife is, in fact, is not an anger just towards her, but it is toward her whole race. She belongs to the upper-class, which has dominated the society. Despite being a graduate, Jimmy has to earn a living by running a sweet-stall and has to live in a ‘one-room flat in a large Midland town’. He feels like an outsider, a provincial. He is a misfit, ‘born out of his time’. Deep inside his heart, Jimmy has the pang of being looted by the aristocrats. His remarks about his wife’s brother Nigel prove the fact. He states, “Somewhere at the back of [Nigel’s] mind is the vague knowledge that he and his pals have been plundering and fooling everybody for generations” (qtd. in Daiches 1114-15).

Jimmy’s frustration is nostalgic. He feels that the past was better, and more heroic than the present. He looks back to the better past, and vents his anger towards the present: “There aren’t any good, brave causes left If the big bang does come, and we all get killed off, it won’t be in aid of the old-fashioned, grand design. It’ll just be for the Brave

New-nothing-very-much-thank-you. About as pointless and inglorious as stepping in front of a bus” (qtd. in Daiches 1114).

Jimmy Porter is a confused personality. He does not have proper outlet for his own emotions. He has anyhow to outlet his half-understood resentments and grievances. He takes to self-pity and sadism, but never knows that these are not admirable. So, at last he turns, in Andrew Sanders’ terms, a “revolutionary without a revolution, or . . . rebel without a cause . . . classless, restless, and aimless . . .” (593). A university graduate becomes a savage just because he desperately desires admiration from his degree.

Anti-Intellectual Antics of an Intellectual

Kingsley Amis presents anti-intellectual antics in his novel *Lucky Jim* (1954). His antihero Jim Dixon is an assistant lecturer, but has no respect for academic work. He is indecisive, meek, and enjoys drink, sex and smoke. Only the girls of his class interest him. He does not scruple to have sex with his senior staff. He is a junior lecturer, so, needs more intellectual strength to secure his job, but does not labor to raise his intellectuality. He remains ineffectual as a lecturer. When he has to provide an important lecture, he attends it being drunk. As a result, he is fired from the job.

Jim Dixon is the man who is guided by personal interest than by the public one. He occupies public post, but personal interest brings lack of seriousness in him. Public interest does not improve him. He loves the beautiful girls of his class, but hates their boyfriends. To worsen his problem, Michie, the boyfriend of one of the girls, knows about Scholasticism more than he does. In such situation, naturally, Dixon loses his temper. His love for Christine and subsequent fight with her boyfriend Bertrand pushes him further away from academic works. He is happy to get Christine, though he loses his lecturing job. He seems that he hates academic work from his heart.

Carelessness is one of the various reasons that make Jim Dixon an antihero. He is careless regarding both teaching and personal life. Carelessness continuously pushes him toward more and more problems. His drinking habit worsens it. He makes sexual advance to Margaret under the influence of drink. When she kicks out of her room, he goes to sleep. At night, he burns his blanket with his cigarette, but notices it only in the morning. He has to give his best in his lecture on the topic 'Merrie England', given by Professor Welch, but he does not prepare well. His attendance of the lecture in his drinking bout spoils his position; Professor Welch immediately fires him from the job.

However, Jim Dixon's drinking habit reveals his true nature. Though he enjoys drink and sex, he does not seem hedonistic. His drinking habit is not to enjoy but to forget a bad thing. When a bad thing happens—when he fights Bertrand to get favor of Christine—he goes to drink. Moreover, his drunken lecture reveals what unpleasant thing he has to hide. While Jim is lecturing on 'Merrie England', the drink discloses his dislike for Professor Welch and his remorse for his miserable job. When the lecture begins, he reads his written material with blatant contempt. He caricatures Professor Welch and says that 'Merrie England' was the most unmerry period in history. His dislike for aristocracy is also nuanced in his strong northern accent.

Dixon's indecisive actions and quite demeanor reflect his fear of being fired from his post at the end of the term next month. Dixon's meekness also reflects his fear of hurting Margaret, whom he is not attracted to, but to whom he is attached by virtue of their friendship and his concern for her. That is why Dixon's character becomes filled out as he defines himself by what he does not like. Dixon despises unnecessary complexity, pomposity, hypocrisy, and those who feel that some people—artists, higher classes, for example—have special needs that ordinary people don't have. From this last conviction

arises Dixon's socialism, which fits in with the Labor government atmosphere after the World War II in Britain.

However, Jim Dixon is a true-to-heart ordinary man, though we can not call him a hero according to the Aristotelian concept. Though he likes several girls, he does not play games with them. He is different from Bertrand, who dates both Christine and Carol. He is different from Margaret, who fakes suicide attempt to gain sympathy from him and Catchpole. He loves Christine, and he remains faithful to her. He is free from hypocrisies of Bertrand. He does not hold family pretensions that professor Welch and his wife do.

Anti-Military Ethos of a Bombardier

Joseph Heller's *Catch 22* (1961) features a coward soldier, who flees from the battlefield. Yossarian is the coward soldier, serving as bombardier in the US Air Force Squadron. He hates the war, and has strong desire to live. When he has to serve in the Air Force longer and longer, he suspects he may die soon. He thinks that everyone is trying to kill him. He decides either to live forever or, ironically, die trying. He feigns madness, but his claim of his insanity proves his sanity. Finally, he flees to Switzerland to live longer.

Yossarian suffers from paranoia. However, it is not just a madman's fear of death. Rather it is his horror at human mortality; it represents the fear and frustration of whole humanity at its mortality. Yossarian's discovery near the end of the book of 'Snowden's secret' is the climactic epiphany of what actually a human life is. In the scene, Yossarian futilely tends to a mortally wounded gunner on his plane:

Yossarian ripped open the snaps of Snowden's flak suit and heard himself scream wildly as Snowden's insides slithered down to the floor in a soggy pile and just kept dripping out. . . . he gazed down despondently at the grim secret Snowden had spilled all over the messy floor. It was easy to read the message in his entrails. Man was matter, that was Snowden's secret. Drop

him out a window and he'll fall. Set fire to him and he'll burn. Bury him and he'll rot, like other kinds of garbage. The spirit gone, man is garbage. That was Snowden's secret. (qtd. in Doloff 180)

Yossarian behaves as a coward and desires to live in the way quite opposite to Greek heroes' courage and willingness to die in war. This is his antiheroic attitude. However, his antiheroism suggests futility and unheroicness of the war itself. This is the twentieth century, not the Greco-Roman period. War has already turned unheroic. Yossarian's twentieth century perspective sees only hollowness in war ethics and craziness among the war-lords. He expresses, ". . . men went mad and were rewarded with flying medals. Boys on ever side of the bomb line were laying down their lives for what they had been told was their country, and no one seemed to mind, least of all the boys who were laying down their young lives" (qtd. in Podhoretz 34).

Yossarian's cowardice and desertion of the army is the rebellion against the army officers. When the army officers increase the combat missions, Yossarian, unlike his friends, does not find that people are dying for their country. He is sure he has to fly more combat missions because Colonel Cathcart wants to be a general. He rebels against them by running away. "Let the bastards thrive," says Yossarian, "since I can't do a thing to stop them but embarrass them by running away" (qtd. in Cacicedo 357). The abusive word 'bastard' suggests how much anger he has been growing in his heart against those who intimidate soldiers to jump into death.

Yossarian's madness to live is his moral responsibility for his personal life. He is tired of living for his country. His dialogue with Major Danby mixes his boredom of patriotism with his desire for personal life: "I know that . . . Christ, Dandy . . . I've flown 70 goddam combat missons. Don't talk to me about fighting to save my country. Now I'm

going to fight a little to save myself From now on I'm thinking only of me" (qtd. in Podhoretz 35). Finally, he is a mellowed man.

If looked from the perspective of humanity, Yossarian's anti-military ethos becomes more moral and more heroic. The most simplified version of humanity and human rights is 'live and let live'. The war was heroic in Homer's time; brutality and death in war were sacred. But in the twentieth century, people think otherwise. Like the colonels in *Catch-22*, there are still war-preferring people. Yossarian-like soldiers counter it. Military tradition upholds war as sacred, and salutes patriotic soldiers whenever they prove fatal to the people of other countries. However, Yossarian raises himself above the military morality, and adopts humanity's morality. He is coward according to the military ethics, but a hero like Einstein according to humanity ethics.

In fact, Yossarian is the paranoid who is the only sane person in the novel. He is the only person who responds sensibly to the real danger—the death. He never minds pretending being crazy to avoid war's craziness, though for a short time. The *Catch-22* disrupts his feigning, proving his sanity as he himself claims his being crazy. Heller presents all the warring soldiers as crazy. For him all the armed forces are ruled by an 'establishment' made up of madmen and criminals. He once commented about crazy society: "Frankly, I think the whole society is nuts—and the question is: what does a sane man in an insane society?" (qtd. in Podhoretz 35). Sane ones find no solace among the insanes. Yossarian's is the same case.

From above discussions, it can be concluded that the antiheroes suffer problems and while tackling with such problems, they react in such a way as to make themselves appear strange. They may be confused like Bigger Thomas, and in confusion follow wrong path. They may be dreamers like Willy Loman, to whom the dream is just like an ocean to a bad-swimmer. Or incompatibility with the other world as that of Holden Caulfield may turn them

mad. Savagery and sadism may be the reaction to their unhappy situation as Jimmy Porter's. Or the unhappy antihero like Jim Dixon may develop hatred against academic activities.

Whatever may be the specific reaction, one thing is common to all the antiheroes, and that is all of them suffer and all of them react against it. But the problem is that their reaction is inappropriate and unimaginative. They all are locked in their personal world. They have to transcend their life and watch it from above to understand what is going on there. But they remain locked in the prison of their life. Their immanence within the boundary of their troubled life plunges them further deeper and deeper into the problematic life.

Chapter Three

Antics of Antihero in Lolita

The Antihero and his Antics

The antihero in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* is its protagonist Humbert Humbert. He is a Frenchman in his forties. He had planned to take his degree in psychiatry, but later turned to English literature. For several years, he taught English literature in Paris. He wrote few books as well. When his marriage is broken, he migrates to America. As an exile, he finds several odd jobs for survival. And it is in the States where he suffers mental breakdowns; he remains in the sanatorium for recuperation for at least two times. Later, he commits pedophilia and a murder, and then ends up in prison.

The antihero, Humbert Humbert, is a schizophrenic personality, living in extreme fantasy. He has strange taste, and behaves strangely. His antics range from cynicism to law-breaking, from disrespect of traditions to love in the tabooed region, and from cruelty to his wives to murder of a fellow criminal. Moreover, he tries to defend himself and his actions by writing a memoir about how and why he behaved the way he did.

Humbert Humbert is a sexual pervert, who can not live by normal adult male-female sexual relationship. He dislikes adult women. 'Big', 'fat', 'plump', 'fleshy', 'of repulsive type', 'large-as-life' etc are some of the adjectives he prefers to use for adult women. Even if he has to have sex with an adult woman, he seeks ways to dress her in child-clothing. He makes his first wife Valeria wear 'a girl's plain nightshirt' for the satisfaction of his maniacal lust. He does not have a normal sexual relationship with his second wife Charlotte Haze as well. In this case, he takes help of liquor and drugs to avoid the embarrassment that may happen due to his inability to have a normal sexual relationship.

Humbert Humbert is a "nympholept" (17) in his own words. He is obsessed with 'nymphets', and lives by schizophrenic nymphet-fantasy. He has his own definition and

criteria for them. His definition for the nymphets reads: “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 as ‘nymphets’” (16).

However, Humbert does not call every prepubescent girl a nymphet. Though he sets the age limits for the nymphets between nine and fourteen, he believes only certain girl-children have the quality to become a nymphet. He gives us the criteria:

Neither are good looks any criterion; and vulgarity, or at least what a given community terms so, does not necessarily impair certain mysterious characteristics, the fey grace, the elusive, shifty soul shattering, insidious charm that separates the nymphet from such coevals of hers as are incomparably more dependant on the spatial world of synchronous phenomena than on that intangible island of entranced time. (17)

Humbert believes that nymphets should have ineffable signs. Those signs resist their view both from the viewer and the viewed. The viewer should have certain qualities to recognize those nymphets. He says, “You have to be an artist and a madman, a creature of infinite melancholy, with bubble of hot poison in your loins and a super-voluptuous flame permanently aglow in your subtle spine” (17). He also sets the age difference between the nymphet and the man who comes under Nymphets’s spell. He claims it needs “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 the nymphet’s spell” (17). This requirement of madness, artistry, and a huge age-gap to recognize the nymphets among prepubescent girls is itself the road to pedophilia.

Humbert’s schizophrenic antics appears as incest-pedophilia when he meets Dolores Haze, whom he calls Lolita [Lo, Lola]. Dolores is living with her widow mother Charlotte

Haze. As a nympholept, Humbert suffers an evocation of unquenchable lust by the childish and vulgar, but innocent manners of Lolita. In order to get her, he marries her mother Charlotte. When Charlotte is killed in an accident, he gets Lolita. For almost two years, he wanders with Lolita from motel to motel, satisfying his lust until she escapes him.

Humbert shows his cruel antics as well. With his first wife, he is “. . . a bourgeois sadist . . . fantasiz[ing] about ‘slapping her breasts out of alignment’ or ‘putting on [his] mountain boots and taking a running kick at her rump’ . . . [or] ‘twisting fat Valechka’s brittle wrist . . .’ and saying, ‘Look here, you fat fool, c’est moi qui décide’” (Amis VIII). With Charlotte, he is cruel to plot her death. With Lolita, he is cruel with his intimidating of her into living an incestual life with him. Finally, he is cruel to Clare Quilty—a child-pornographer, who is the cause of Lolita’s escape—whom he murders with absolute cruelty in a movie style, asking for his final desire before his death.

Finally, Humbert Humbert completes his range of antics with a strange feeling of satisfaction while breaking the law before falling at the hand of police. He deliberately drives on the wrong road. He passes through the red light, calling the act as “a sip of forbidden Burgundy when I was a child” (306). Moreover, he feels a greater satisfaction when he thinks that he has broken each and every law.

The Trauma and the Growing-up of the Antihero

The first significant thing in Humbert Humbert’s life occurs as a traumatic experience. At his childhood, he falls in love with Annabel. Both are madly in love with each other. They want to consummate their love, but they can not do so. Annabel’s family is too strict to leave her alone for hours. The beach which they choose is also not a lonely place. After two months of their unhappy love, Annabel dies of typhus. Her death opens for Humbert Humbert a road of problems, in which he can never walk with a balance of his feet.

The role of memory begins then. Memory is the retrospective faculty that takes people back to the memory lane from time to time. Of course, the present is one's life, but the present is such that one does not get satisfaction from it. For satisfaction, desire should be fulfilled, but it is the nature of desire that it resists its fulfillment. Spatial and temporal context may or may not conform to the desire, and so, desire may or may not be fulfilled. The fulfillment or unfulfillment of desire later gets entangled into the life, for memory forms a concentration of one's mind to the same fulfilled/unfulfilled desire. If the desire suffers a trauma like that of Humbert Humbert, then the memory's concentration swells to become a psychological prison, which never lets one come out to normal life. Humbert's trauma thus forms a psychological prison of nymphet-desire from which he can never come out of.

Humbert Humbert's account proves that it is the very obsessive memory that forms his psychological prison. Carl Proffer describes Humbert Humbert as unreliable due to his poor memory. He complains of his "bad memory' and 'messy time keeping'" (qtd. in Moore 72). However, Humbert's memory for Annabel is as clear as reflection in mirror. His visual memory is very perfect to "see Annabel in such general terms as: 'honey-colored skin', 'thin arms', 'brown bobbed hair', 'long lashes', 'big bright mouth'" (11). Carl Proffer is right in his argument. Humbert's memory is poor. The trauma has fixed Annabel's image into his mind. He remembers her image well, but mixes up other things.

The psychological prison never allows Humbert Humbert come into normal life in later days. He complains, "I also know that the shock of Annabel's death consolidated the frustration of that nightmare summer, made of it a permanent obstacle to any further romance throughout the cold years of my youth" (14). Whenever he sees the likes of Annabel, he remembers her. Physically he has become mature, but mentally he is still the childhood lover of Annabel. He desires only Annabel, and, so seeks only the Annabels.

While Humbert grows-up, his childhood trauma and the resulting isolation obstruct the development of his faculty for understanding others. In his story, his family members come only before Annabel event. After the event, the whole story stands on the various nymphets he sees, and the impressions they make upon his life. This absolute lack of family details in his accounts after his traumatic experience is itself a proof of his being locked in his private world. He can only think about his own trauma, pain, and desire. He rarely thinks about others. He never develops the capacity to understand other people and their feelings.

Humbert Humbert's alienation and his impaired understanding faculty further develop into two directions. The first is narcissism, i.e., love of self. Humbert loves himself and is happy in his own world. He wants to remain undisturbed in his own world. He says, "Ah, leave me alone in my pubescent park, in my mossy garden" (21). His love for, and pride of, his own image is also the narcissism. He enthuses about his own image: "I was, and still am, despite mes malbeurs, an exceptionally handsome male; slow-moving, tall, with soft dark hair and a gloomy but all the more seductive cast of demeanor" (25).

Secondly, Humbert Humbert becomes cynical in his attitude. Narcissism is love of self, which, in opposite way, means disregard for others. It is the extreme development of narcissism that produces in him hatred and disregard for others. He says, "Oh, let me be mawkish for the nonce! I am so tired of being cynical", but never stops being cynical (109). He is cynical of everything and everyone—his wives, the doctors, the law, the schools, and the people he acquaints. For instance, he speaks cynically of his second wife Charlotte: "Oh, she was very genteel: she said 'excuse me' whenever a slight burp interrupted her flowing speech, called an envelope an ahnvelope, and when talking to her lady-friends referred to me as Mr. Humbert" (75).

Humbert Humbert is a writer. So, his writer's sensibility also has a big share in his growing-up. Observing habit, sensitiveness, scholarship, madness and wild fantasy form his

writer's sensibility. All contribute to his strange personality. All are directed towards what Nabokov calls "aesthetic bliss, that is a sense of being somehow, somewhere connected with other states of being where art (curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy) is the norm" (314-15). As Humbert Humbert is guided by his writer's sensibility, he behaves strangely.

In fact, Humbert Humbert is just like other normal males, but additional desires make him different from them. He claims, ". . . the sensations I derived from natural fornication were much the same as those known to normal big males consorting with their normal big mates in that routine rhythm which shakes the world. The trouble was that those gentlemen had not, and I had, caught glimpses of an incomparably more poignant bliss" (18).

Now the question comes what that poignant bliss is, and what nature it is of. There is only one answer: this poignant bliss is, of course, the desire of the poets/writers. G. D. Josipovici says these poetic desires "are not of the body, but of the spirit: desire for unattainable beauty—for that which is beautiful just because it is unattainable" (37).

Humbert later retells that his desires are of the kind what Josipovici defines. He writes:

There was in the fiery phantasm a perfection which made my wild delight also perfect, just because the vision was out of reach, with no possibility of attainment to spoil it by the awareness of an appended taboo; indeed, it may well be that the very attraction immaturity has for me lies not so as in the limpidity of pure young forbidden fairy child beauty as in the security of a situation where infinite perfections fill the gap between the little given and the great promised—the great rosegray never-to-be-had. (264)

This means that Humbert Humbert has the habit of enjoying suspension of desire between fulfillment and unfulfillment. Suspension of desire or the delay of fulfillment of desire is a type of poignancy, which only a person with writer's sensibility loves to inflict

upon his self. Humbert Humbert suffers from such habit. And this habit has later to affect his personality, and his moral responsibility.

Ambivalence in Antihero's Moral Vocabulary

Morality is the accepted standard of life in a society. It is the norms and values formed of various traditions passed from generations to generations. Morality is learnt. It is knowledge. How a person learns and how his knowledge affects his life is the parallel situation of how a member of a society learns its moral values and how his morality leads his life. So, formation of moral vocabulary in Humbert Humbert should be studied as his growing-up process, i.e., his education process.

Environment is the most significant thing for learning process. Traumatic experience has snatched away from Humbert Humbert the favorable environment for the acquisition of moral standards. Psychologists and other mentors can resupply the favorable environment for the sufferer like him. According to John Ray, “. . . had our demented diarist gone, in the fatal summer of 1947, to a competent psychologist, there would have been no disaster” (5). But Humbert did not consult psychologists. He even did not have other mentors. He regrets, “but alas, in the summer of that year; he [Humbert's father] was touring Italy with Mme de R. and her daughter, and I had nobody to complain to, nobody to consult” (11).

Absence of mentors and unbearable pain entangle with his life in such a way that Humbert's learning process gets obstructed. Knowledge is the conclusion made from various experiences. Attitude and intelligence affect both conclusion and experience. Having a disturbed mind and lacking mentors for guidance, Humbert Humbert can draw only confused conclusions. In this way, his morality becomes an ambivalent one—ambivalent in the sense that he mixes up both morality and immorality into his moral vocabulary, impairing his judging faculty seriously.

Morality is the public standard. But Humbert Humbert's psychological prison imprisons him into his own private standards. The clash between the public standard and the private standard in his mind results into his moral ambivalence. At his twenties, he is already torn between his desire and the social taboos: "While my body knew what it craved for, my mind rejected my body's plea. One moment I was ashamed and frightened, another recklessly optimistic. Taboos strangulated me" (18).

The divided mind of Humbert Humbert soon tends towards his body's plea. To defend his personal interest he begins to rationalize his situation. He reports, "At other times I would tell myself that it was all a question of attitude, that there was really nothing wrong in being moved to distraction by girl children" (18-19). The obsession for the nymphets, his likes and dislikes, and his unquenchable lust continue influencing his morality. He gradually develops the habit of seeking ways to preserve his personal desires in the breaches of moral values. Finally, at his forties, Humbert becomes so unhappy with the civilian laws:

The stipulation of the Roman law, according to which a girl may marry at twelve, was adopted by the Church, and is still preserved, rather tacitly, in some of the United States. And fifteen is lawful everywhere. There is nothing wrong, say both hemispheres, when a brute of forty, blessed by the local priest and bloated with drink, sheds his sweat-drenched finery and thrust himself up to the hilt into his youthful bride. (135)

Humbert Humbert's wide scholarship also goes in the wrong way. He finds literary precursors of his nympholepsy. Those evidences lure him to his perverse intention. He writes, "This is all very interesting Virgil who could the nymphet sing in single tone Dante fell madly in love with Beatrice when she was nine Petrarch fell madly in love with his Laureen, she was a fair-haired nymphet of twelve running in the wind" (19).

While drawing conclusions from various examples, Humbert misses the essence of morality, i.e., the fact that morality is limited into spatio-temporal boundary. Spatio-temporal boundary means: first, morality of one place holds true only to the very place, and secondly, morality of one time fits only to the very time limit. Edgar Allan Poe is from past. The culture and morality were different at the time. But Humbert thinks himself as Poe and Lolita as Poe's prepubescent cousin-wife Vee [Virginia]. He never realizes that there is a huge moral and cultural gap between his and Poe's time. In other instance, he reports, "Lepcha old men of eighty copulate with girls of eight, and nobody minds" (19). It is true, but it is also true that he and Lolita are not Lepchas of Indian provinces. He does not notice the cultural difference.

Morality is maintained in society either with love/respect or with fear. At the beginning, a child learns morality from punishment. Love and respect develops in him when he grows up and understands the significance of morality. In the meantime, spiritual motive is added. A child thus starts maintaining morality to avoid hell and to secure heaven. However, such punishment is absent from Humbert's life. He talks about his innocent crimes. He "had filched [Pinchon's sumptuous *La Beauté humaine*] from under a mountain of marble-bound Graphics in the hotel library" (11). He never talks about any punishment for his theft. Throughout the novel he never tells the reader that he got punishment from anybody. In such circumstances, factors like confusion, false interpretation, indifference, indetermination, and ignorance all combine to form moral ambivalence into his mind.

Contradictory nature of social morality itself also forms ambivalence in Humbert's morality. Soldiers are considered brave and respectable in society. They go to war, kill people, destroy other's property, and violate women. Yet they get recognition. Humbert is troubled with this unfair social tradition. Why not he be troubled? After all, his aberrant behavior is milder than the soldiers' ruthlessness. He claims:

[The nympholepts] . . . are innocuous, inadequate, passive, timid stranger who merely ask the community to allow them to pursue their practically harmless, so-called aberrant behavior, their little hot wet private acts of sexual deviation without the police and society cracking down upon them. We are not sex fiends! We do not rape as soldiers do. We are unhappy, mild, dog-eyed gentlemen, sufficiently well integrated to control our urge in the presence of adults, but ready to give years and years of life for one chance to touch a nymphet. (88)

Here, the problem with Humbert Humbert is that he does not seek the ways to erase the unfairness of the society. He rather demands the same recognition for nympholeptic sexual deviants as the soldiers'. Humbert Humbert thus finds immoral solution for immoral actions.

Finally, Humbert Humbert becomes ambivalent just like the corrupt leaders and the corrupt bureaucrats. He does not destroy the laws and established traditions. He even does not wish to do it. Just as the corrupt leaders and corrupt bureaucrats need established laws and order in order to serve their purpose, so Humbert needs laws and order to keep Lolita to his side. First, he tries to satisfy his lust with bribes and bullying. Secondly, he threatens Lolita with hard, dry and dull life of civilization itself. He exposes disgusting conditions of reformatories to distract Lolita from resuming civilized order: "In plainer words, if we two are found out, you will be analyzed and institutionalized, my pet, c'est tout. You will dwell, my Lolita will dwell (come here, my brown flower) with thirty-nine other dopes in a dirty dormitory (no, allow me, please) under the suspension of hideous matrons" (151). Thus, he uses his knowledge of cultural breaches for his own benefit.

Antihero's Life of Contradictions

Contradictory attitude develops in Humbert Humbert right from his traumatic experience. As a child, he hated mature people but loved baby animals. He discloses his childhood liking and disliking: “Bald brown Mr. Leigh and fat, powdered Mrs. Leigh How I loathed them! . . . Our [his and Annabel’s] brains were turned the way those of intelligent European preadolescents were in our day The softness and fragility of baby animals caused us the same intense pain” (12). This type of childish contradictory attitude improves as one grows up, but Annabel’s death stops its improvement in Humbert’s case. Desire for Annabel’s child-physique becomes the hatred for adult females throughout his European existence. He confesses, “Overtly, I had so called normal relationships with a number of terrestrial women having pumpkins or pears for breasts; inly, I was consumed by a hell furnace of localized lust for every passing nymphet, whom as a law abiding poltroon I never dared approach” (18). He needs females for sexual satisfaction but hates them.

Contradictory habit is not always a problem. It is a normal way of life. Normal person has also opposing impulses, but he is not obstructed by such contradictions in his thinking and acting. However, when it reaches the stage of strong destructive and erotic wishes, then it is a serious mental disorder. It is schizophrenia, it is ambivalence. The person of schizophrenic ambivalence can not think and act well. He is misled by his own ambivalence.

Humbert Humbert has reached this stage. He can not control himself. He is not simply a morally ambivalent person. Rather he has become ambivalent emotionally. His moral confusion and his confused behaviors have become his life itself. His ambivalence is destructively beyond his own control. He laments:

Humbert Humbert tried hard to be good. Really and truly, he did. He had the utmost respect for ordinary children, with their purity and vulnerability, and under no circumstances would he have interfered with the innocence of a

child, if there was the least risk of a row. But how his heart beat when, among the innocent throng, he espied a demon child, ‘enfant charmante et fourbe,’ dim eyes, bright lips, ten years in jail if you only show her you are looking at her. (19-20)

Humbert Humbert is ambivalent in his perception as well. He perceives himself as both handsome and ape-like figure: “I am said to resemble some crooner or actor chap on whom Lo has a crush” (43); “. . . the writer’s good looks—pseudo Celtic, attractively simian, boyishly manly—had on women of every age and environment I have to remind the reader of my appearance much as a professional novelist” (104). He perceives nymphets as “some immortal daemon disguised as a female child” (139). His emotion towards Lolita is mixture of hatred and love, or of disrespect and respect. He sees Lolita both as a bride and a concubine, a beloved and a devil, a tempter and a prey, a daughter and an impossible daughter, and a spoilt-child and a girl of childish innocence. To him he himself becomes humble and hoarse, brave and poor, and lover and brute. He is cruel and sadistic but in his cruel desires there is masochism as well. He writes, “I long for terrific disaster. Earthquake. Spectacular explosion” (53). He shows mixed feelings at the same time.

Humbert Humbert is destroyed due to his life of contradiction. However, he does not perceive ambivalence and contradiction as problems. Rather he enjoys ambivalence. He gets satisfaction in pendulum-like existence of ambivalence. Ambivalence is his game, which he wins. For instance, he suffers a bout of insanity when returns to civilization from his expedition into arctic Canada. He hates doctors, but finds “an endless source of robust enjoyment in trifling with psychiatrists” (34). He can not tolerate civilization, and wants to go away from it into the fantasy-adventures. However, his source of satisfaction lies in civilization. He can satisfy himself by cheating only in civilization.

The cheating for satisfaction is the sense of superiority complex in Humbert Humbert's life of ambivalence. When a person near him does not understand his moves and mind, he becomes happy. He is petty and does not understand others. Yet he loves self-centered and dull persons like Gaston. He perceives himself cleverer and more intelligent among such dull personalities. He writes of Gaston:

I am loath to dwell so long on the poor fellow [Yet] I need him for my defense. There he was, devoid of any talent whatsoever, a mediocre teacher, a worthless scholar, a glum repulsive fat old invert, highly contemptuous of the American way of life, triumphantly ignorant of the English language—there he was in priggish New England, crooned over by the old and caressed by the young—oh, having a grand time and fooling everybody; and here was I.

(183)

As a cynic, he has no respect of laws, and his superiority complex gives him satisfaction while he breaks the law. He finds a deeper satisfaction in a win over the civilized world. He cheats the medics. He deliberately misleads them to quench his strange ways of satisfaction. And he goes into raptures at the thought that he broke all laws of humanity.

Antihero's Fantasy and Perversion

Learning process is entangled with the life itself. When life flows in time, it produces knowledge. Knowledge then influences life. New life again produces new vocabularies of knowledge, which give life again a new look. Thus life and knowledge continuously influence each other, reshaping each other as time goes on. In the same way, Humbert's case involves a continuous interaction between his life and the formation of his moral vocabulary, his habits of fantasy always affecting his morality, while his ambivalence further deteriorating his life providing the way for more fantasy.

For a personality like Humbert Humbert, who is a writer and psychologically imprisoned into his own private world, fantasy is very normal mode of life. So, it is not a problem when he dives into strange fantasies. For instance, he muses:

A shipwreck. An atoll. Alone with a drowned passenger's shivering child.
Darling, this is only a game! How marvelous were my fancied adventures as I
sat on a hard park bench pretending to be immersed in a trembling book.
Around the quiet scholar, nymphets played freely, as if he were a familiar
statue or part of an old tree's shadow and sheen. (20)

The problem comes when Humbert can not return back to reality. Reality means the normal order of life, i.e., life led according to what morality allows in a sane world. The problem for him is that, on the one hand, his world is “brand new, mad new dream world, where everything is permissible” (133), and, on the other hand, his morality is too weak. His moral ambivalence can not bind him to the order of the sane world. When Annabel dies, he is heart-broken. Thereafter, continuous absence of mentors and subsequent loss of touch with values of normal world pushes him deeper and deeper into the world of fantasy. Finally, at his forties, when he meets Lolita, he has already turned a schizophrenic personality—a mad person engulfed into his own private fantasy world.

When fantasy combines with moral ambivalence, forbidden thoughts get entry into the fantasy world. People have fear of thinking bad things. It is due to their strong morality. They are able to make a balance between public life and private life. But Humbert can not stick to a single principle of traditional virtues. For him public standard is negligible compared to his self created nymphet-world, where he can fulfill his personal interest. It is his moral ambivalence that leaves his self unpunished even if he desires the prepubescent girls, who are forbidden otherwise. This means that Humbert's indifference towards

everything but himself opens the way for moral confusion, which then opens the way for perverse fantasy.

When Humbert's poetic desire unperturbed by his weak morality goes slight distortion, the result is again his perverse fantasy. Poetic desire is the desire to attain something unattainable. His pleasure is from suspension of his desire in between achievement and non-achievement. The unattainableness of beauty and the satisfaction from getting and not-getting at the same time is the real cause of confusion for him. Immorality, criminality and perversion all are unattainable due to the moral restriction, and for the same reason, these come under the category 'beauty'. Through perverse fantasy, he both does and does not get immorality/criminality/perversion, and it is source of his satisfaction. His single statement "You can always count on a murderer for a fancy prose tale" (9) justifies his confusion.

Humbert Humbert's thought-perversion leads to act-perversion, which then leads his way to prison. If he had limited himself to fantasy, and if he had penned down his imagined experience, he would have become less despicable, or would have escaped punishment, or maybe, he would have been one of the greatest writers ever. *Lolita* would have been 'safely solipsized'. He would be able to be proud of himself forever in the same manner as he felt proud of himself when he could satisfy his lust by the caress and touch he got from *Lolita's* play in his lap one Sunday morning:

I felt proud of myself. I had stolen the honey of a spasm without impairing the morals of a minor. Absolutely no harm done. The conjurer had poured milk, molasses, foaming champagne into a young lady's new white purse; and lo, the purse was intact. Thus had I delicately constructed my ignoble, ardent, sinful dream; and still *Lolita* was safe—and I was safe. (62)

However, things do not go according to what Humbert desires. He has already lost sense of reality and unreality. He has already started believing fantasy as reality, and reality as fantasy. He has already started looking his life and his world through the veil of literature. So, he repeatedly imagines literary parallels for whatever situation he finds himself in. He describes himself, his situation and his beloved with literary allusions: “Oh Lolita, you are my girl, as Vee was Poe’s and Bea Dante’s” (107); “What a comic, clumsy, wavering Prince Charming I was!” (109). Humbert Humbert, thus, in Matthew Winston’s terms, “desperately and pitiably attempts to stop the movement of time, which presents him the threat of his enchanting nymphet metamorphosing into an ordinary woman” (425).

Moreover, girl-children can easily make Humbert Humbert oblivious of reality. Even the quality of nymphets can arouse his lust and make him oblivious of everything. He can not judge correctly in the presence of those nymphets. For instance, Humbert tells us that he “decided to marry . . . to purge myself of my degrading and dangerous desires, at least to keep them under pacific control” (24). Then his choice fell on Valeria, the daughter of a Polish doctor, with whom he played chess. “What attracted [him] to Valeria”, he says, “was the imitation she gave of a little girl”, and regrets, “how dreadfully stupid poor Humbert always was in matters of sex” (25). The nymphic features can easily distort his judgment. He marries Valeria though he hates all the adult females including Valeria.

Moral ambivalence brings further problem into Humbert’s fantasy-life. It turns his fantasy for nymphets into voyeurism and then into pedophilia. He lacks respects for almost everything. More importantly he lacks spiritual fear for morality. He has the habit of filching things. Filching is, in fact, a tiny instance of moral ambivalence. A person who filches things does have fear for physical punishment, but lacks fear for spiritual punishment. If there is no risk of physical punishment, the person happily picks other’s things. Humbert’s lack of fear for spiritual punishment itself is what permits him to practice voyeurism with perfect

impunity. That is why he loves those “orphanages and reform schools, where pale pubescent girls with matted eyelashes could be stared at in perfect impunity remindful of that granted one in dreams” (16).

Humbert Humbert’s voyeurism takes a new turn after he meets Lolita. Before, he only sought such windows where he could see the nymphets undressing before the mirror. Sometimes he was granted with “a rich flavor of hell” (20), and sometimes irritated by “the disgusting lamp-lit bare arm of a man” (20). His voyeurism did not harm anyone, except costing him of his moral integrity. But situation with Lolita is different. She is not to be sought in windows. Humbert is renting in Lolita’s house. Now he gets chance to enjoy the nymphet’s nudity, brighter and livelier than the earlier ones.

Lolita is not a fantastic character, but a real person. So, as a person from reality, she carries problems of a real person along with her. She has a family—she and her mother. Her mother, being a widow, seeks Humbert Humbert’s company. She writes a love letter to him. Now his dream of possessing Lolita is shattered. But he soon finds solution with the help of his impaired moral and judgment faculty. He grins in his moral ambivalence:

I felt a Dostoevskian grin dawning (through the very grimace that twisted my lips) like a distant and terrible sun. I imagined (under conditions of new and perfect visibility) all the casual caresses her mother’s husband would be able to lavish on his Lolita. I would hold her against me three times a day, everyday I saw myself administering a powerful sleeping potion to both mother and daughter so as to fondle the latter through the night with perfect impunity. (70-71)

The condition ‘with perfect impunity’ is the real problem for Humbert Humbert. It allows him to filch things, to practice voyeurism, and to caress and fondle a little girl. Now the same situation allows him to consummate the pedophilia-cum-incest. Before the The

Enchanted Hunters event, Humbert limits himself to caressing, kissing and fondling his step daughter. He limits himself to the same activities before Lolita herself surrenders to him. He is timid to have sex with Lolita, but when he gets an easy opportunity, he never misses the chance. And he makes that easy chance the rationale for proving himself innocent:

Frigid gentleman of the jury! . . . I am going to tell you something very strange: it was she who seduced me Upon hearing her first morning yawn, I feigned handsome profiled sleep. I just did not know what to do. Would she be shocked at finding me by her side, and not in some spare bed? Would she collect her clothes and lock herself up in the bathroom? Would she demand to be taken at once to Ramsdale—to her mother's bedside—back to camp? But my Lo was sportive lassie She rolled over to my side We lay quietly. I gently kissed her 'Lay off, will you,' she said

(132-33)

Antihero's Cruelty and Desire for Murder

The implication of moral ambivalence into the attitude and behavior is the answer for cruelty with which the antihero Humbert Humbert behaves. E. A. Carruthers locates four primary drives in man and beast: food, fear, sex, and aggression. These drives make both man and beast the same. What differentiates man from animals is ritual. He writes:

What creates the society of social animals? . . . Lorenz suggests that the substance of the social bond is ritual, whether in the form of the courtship dances of certain birds, or in that of the law and complex customs of a human society. In this observation lies the basis of conscience and the sense of sin, for a man who flouts one of the customs of his people rejects the bond which lay in sharing its observance; by so much he diminishes the extent of his

belonging, and by so much his drive his drive to belong will trouble his spirit.

(220)

If so, Humbert Humbert's loneliness, and lack of social bond unleash his sexual and aggressive drive in order to trouble him for the rest of his life.

Humbert's another problem resulting into cruelty is his obsessive fantasy. Obsessive fantasy means one-sided imagination, which is just like the total lack of imagination. Lack of imagination means lack of understanding others. If one does not understand others, then he is prone to treat them as objects. And anyone is brutal and cruel to the objects. This is exactly what Josipovici suggests in his writing: "Although the tone here and throughout the novel [Lolita] is gentler than in *Bend Sinister*, the offence is the same: through the total lack of imagination man has been reduced to a gadget, love to a form of gymnastics, and beauty to a saleable commodity" (41).

Alienated and unimaginative Humbert is worsened by his unhappy life. Cruelty becomes his easy option to react against the unhappy situation. He marries Valeria as she gave 'imitation' of a child. He also makes her wear "a girl's plain nightshirt and derive[s] some pleasure from that nuptial night" (26). But reality soon asserts itself. Instead of a pale little girl, Valeria turns to be "a large, puffy, short-legged, big-breasted and practically brainless baba." (26). Valeria destroys his obsessive and one-sided expectation. In such situation, one can not expect Humbert Humbert to respect and behave well with her.

Economic condition is also against Humbert's favour. He has to live with "an odd sense of comfort in our small squalid flat: two rooms, a hazy view in one window, a brick wall in the other, a tiny kitchen, a shoe-shaped bath tub, within which I felt like Marat but with no white-maid to stab me" (26). In summer of 1939, his mon oncle d'Amérique dies bequeathing him an annual income of a few thousand dollars on condition that he goes to America. He enthuses about his future, "This prospect was most welcome to me. I felt my

life needed a shake-up” (27). But Valeria brings another man into her life. He can not tolerate the situation. He strikes her on the knee with his fist. He gives economic reason for his discomfort. “A mounting fury was suffocating me”, he says, “not because I had any particular fondness for that figure of fun, Mme Humbert, but because matters of legal and illegal conjunction were for me alone to decide, and here she was, Valeria, the comedy wife, brazenly preparing to dispose in her own way of my comfort and fate” (27-28).

In Humbert’s cruelty there is always reflection of moral ambivalence: his confusion and his distorted judgment. He is confused with the idea of heroism. He brags, “To beat her up in the street, there and then, as an honest vulgarian might have done, was not feasible. Years of secret suffering had taught me superhuman self-control” (28). For him, superhuman quality lies in control of his cruelty only before the public. His distorted judgment perceives such moral obligation as a public necessity, but not as a spiritual one that needs its fulfillment even in privacy. So, he does not scruple to beat her in privacy.

Now we can say that Humbert at least knows that morality is public standard, but he distorts the meaning of morality while applying it. The reason may be his greater knowledge or maybe his half-understanding of morality. Sometimes it seems that he is parodying heroism with his cynical attitude, and so makes “a heroic decision of attacking him [Valeria’s boyfriend] barefisted” (30). Sometimes it seems that he draws wrong conclusion from various instances, and so, loves “the backhand slap with which I ought to have hit her across the cheekbone according to the rules of the movies” (29-30). His wide scholarship points towards his cynicism and parodying habit at the breaches of morality, whereas his obsessive personality and his lack of growth from a child-lover points toward his incomplete learning. Whatever may be the reason, it is true that Humbert Humbert is a moral leper.

The more unbearable becomes the unhappiness, the crueler becomes Humbert Humbert. At the increase in the degree of unhappiness, i.e., at the loss of precious things,

Humbert's cruelty grows more serious to turn into a murdering desire. The nymphets are precious in his life. If somebody snatches or tries to snatch away from him his nymphets, he reacts with murdering desire. He wants to kill Charlotte as she comes between him and Lolita. When Pratt becomes obstruction in his path with her pointing towards his role in the development of Lolita's obsessive behavior, he asks with himself, "Should I marry Pratt and strangle her?" (197). But Valeria is not nymphet, and so unworthy of murder-revenge. He writes, "I now wondered if Valechka . . . was really worth shooting, or strangling, or drowning. She had very vulnerable legs, and I decided I would limit myself to hurting her very horribly as soon as we were alone" (29). In the same manner, when the unhappiness becomes extreme, Humbert's murdering desire becomes the actual murder. So, when Clare Quilty takes away Lolita for good, he does not simply desire to kill, but really kills him.

Clare Quilty's murder is the most significant cruelty Humbert ever shows throughout the novel. Here, Humbert reflects his whole personality: his insanity, his poetic ability, his monstrous nature, his lover's self and his bizarre taste for satisfaction. Insomnia had been a part of his nymphet-fantasy. It attacks him again before Quilty's murder. He loses contact with reality. "Visions of bungling the execution keep obsessing him . . . [Quilty's] elaborate and decrepit house seem[s] to stand in a kind of daze . . . [as if he] had overdone alcoholic stimulation business" (293). He becomes "lucidly insane, crazily calm, and enchanted and very tight hunter" (294). He forces Quilty at gunpoint to give all details about how he took Lolita away. In the name of 'poetical justice', he forces Quilty to read out a poem about why he is being killed. Finally, he shoots Quilty with several bullets, one by one in a gap of time, letting him beg for his life each time he is shot.

Moral confusion surfaces more prominently in Humbert Humbert's murdering enactment. He is not religious, but he parodies religious feeling while enacting his murdering desire. He thinks, "It was high time I destroyed him, but he must understand why

he was being destroyed” (297). His justification for Quilty’s murder also parodies a court trial. The charge, in the form of a poem, reads: “because you took advantage of a sinner/ . . . when I stood Adam-naked/ before a federal law/ . . . because you took/ her at the age when lads/ play with erector sets/ . . . because you stole her/ from her wax-browed and dignified protector/ . . . because of all you did/ because of all I did not/ you have to die” (300). Thus, Humbert’s cruelty shows a parody of morality. It is moral ambivalence resulted out of confusion. It is the distorted form of moral and social practices.

Antihero’s Guilt, Repentance and Continuing Ambivalence

Lolita is Humbert Humbert’s memoir. It is in the form of a confession about how he suffered in life, how he became a nympholept, and how he had to commit a murder. Humbert Humbert wrote it while he was in trial for murder of Clare Quilty. So, obviously it is his self-explanation of what he is and how he is the way he is. It is his attempt to know his inner truths so that he can find out how things went wrong for him. In his own words, it is his attempt “to fix once for all the perilous magic of nymphets” (134). He says it is “not to relive them in my present boundless misery, but to sort out the portion of hell and the portion of heaven in that strange, awful, maddening world—nymphet love. The beastly and beautiful merged at one point, and it is that borderline I would like to fix . . .” (135). From his words, Humbert seems to be repentant of his crimes.

At several points, Humbert Humbert seems to realize his follies. When growing-up signs begin to appear in Lolita, Humbert seems to come out of his psychological prison of nymphets. He regrets, “How wrong I was. How mad I was! Everything about her was of the same exasperating impenetrable order—the strength of her shapely legs, the dirty sole of her white sock . . . her wrenchy smell . . . the dead end of her face . . .” (204). And especially when he meets Lolita after two years of her escape, he shows signs of his realization of his follies. He admits, “I simply did not know a thing about my darling’s mind and that quite

possibly, behind the awful juvenile clichés, there was in her a garden and a twilight, and a palace gate—dim and adorable regions which happened to be lucidly and absolutely forbidden to me, in my polluted rags and miserable convulsions” (284).

When Humbert Humbert cries, it seems that he is coming to contact of reality. He cries only once throughout the novel. That happens when Lolita opts for her impoverished married life than his wealth. He writes, “I covered my face with my hand and broke into the hottest tears I had ever shed. I felt them winding through my fingers and down my chin I said. ‘You are sure you are not coming with me?’ . . . ‘No’, she said. ‘No honey, no.’” (279). He does not report any instance of his crying when he loses Annabel. At the loss of Annabel, his pain remains along with the tears he retains. At the loss of Lolita, he gets rid of his pain by shedding tears.

Now he shows some signs of repairing his moral faculty as well. The most important instance of his realization comes when he admits:

Alas, I was unable to transcend the simple human fact that whatever spiritual solace I might find, whatever lithophanic eternities might be provided for me, nothing could make my Lolita forget the foul lust I had inflicted upon her. Unless it can be proven to me—to me as I am now, today, with my heart and my beard, and my putrefaction—that in the infinite run it does not matter a jot that a North American girl-child named Dolores Haze had been deprived of her childhood by a maniac, unless this can be proven (and if it can, then life is a joke) (282-83)

In this instance, he seems to understand what life is and what damage his fantasy-life has caused to himself and to Lolita. He is clear that life is not a joke, rather it is real.

Humbert now knows the role of the art as well. He can differentiate between what is mortality and what is beauty. He reasons just like normal people: “I see nothing for the

treatment of my misery but the melancholy and very local palliative of articulate art. To quote an old poet: The moral sense in mortals is the duty/ We have to pay on mortal sense of beauty” (283). He seems very clear about art’s function of getting rid of pains. He seems to understand that morality and duty should come at first in mortal’s lives. Even beauty is to be given a mortal sense in reality. Art gives immortality to the mortal beauty. However, art is art, it is not reality. He seems to realize art is to be practiced, but art should not be lived as he tried to do.

If we analyze Humbert’s murder of Clare Quilty from symbolic point of view, Humbert again becomes a repentant. According to Alfred Appel Jr., Clare Quilty is the psychological double for Humbert Humbert: “Quilty embodies both ‘the truth and a caricature of it,’ for he is at once a projection of Humbert’s guilt and a parody of the psychological double” (IX). Humbert’s calling Quilty “my brother” (247), both being pedophiles, and the poet Humbert’s losing Lolita due to Quilty’s trap all justify Alfred Appel’s claim. While fighting with Clare Quilty, Humbert himself uses the pronouns I, we, he and they in such a way as if he and Quilty are the same person: “We rolled all over the floor, in each other’s arms, like two huge helpless children. He was naked and goatish under his robe, and I felt suffocated as he rolled over me. I rolled over him. We rolled over me. They rolled over him. We rolled over us” (299).

If Clare Quilty is really Humbert’s darker self, then by killing Quilty Humbert purifies his self. Humbert’s brighter self will be only that Humbert Humbert who has poetic desire; who enjoyed voyeurism by sparing the nymphet’s purity. It is the darker self which robbed Lolita’s purity. It is the darker self which forced Lolita to run away from her stepfather. This interpretation holds true when he passes sentence for him only for the rape, but not for the murder. His sentence reads: “Had I come before myself, I would have given Humbert at least thirty-five years for rape, and dismissed the rest of the charges” (308).

However, Humbert Humbert is a man of contradiction. He feels love and hate at the same time for himself, for Lolita, and for others. He bears double standardness within himself. He can not reject his lust though he calls himself a lover. A lover needs to live for his lover's wellbeing, but he lives for his benefit. His guilt-feeling is also double-natured. He realizes that he has inflicted pain upon his beloved Lolita. He feels sorry for it, but he leaves his lust intact in his guilt:

This was a lone child, an absolute waif, with whom a heavy-limbed, foul-smelling adult had had strenuous intercourse three times that very morning. . . . it had . . . overshot its mark—and plunged into a nightmare. I had been careless, stupid, and ignoble. . . . Mingled with the pangs of guilt was the agonizing thought that her mood might prevent me from making love to her again as soon as I found a nice country road where to park in peace. (140)

Even after murdering Clare Quilty, Humbert does not behave as a repentant. He has already gone mad. His moral ambivalence has already taken him to schizophrenic disorder. He feels a deep satisfaction not out of killing a criminal, but out of breaking the law. He describes his ecstatic moment: “The road now stretched across open country, and it occurred to me—not by way of protest, not as a symbol, or anything like that, but merely as a novel experience—that since I had disregarded all laws of humanity, I might as well disregard the rules of traffic” (306). He then drives his car wildly until he is caught.

This type of behavior makes Humbert Humbert not a repentant, but an insane one. And his insanity is not just moral ambivalence, but it is the desire to live a life of ambivalence and contradiction. He is mentally a confused personality. He has lost contact of reality, and he does not want to return to reality either. He just goes on behaving with his ambivalence. That's why his confession, i.e., the whole book *Lolita*, is in such a way as to prove himself innocent, rather than to plead guilty.

Chapter Four

Conclusion: The Antihero and Moral Ambivalence

From Nabokov's representation of antihero in *Lolita*, it can be established that the antiheroes are more pathetic than despicable. They are notorious criminals, but at the same time they are sufferers. While trying to cope up with the problems of their lives, they make wrong choices. They need cooperation and guidance to lead a normal life. Absence of good mentors results only in repetition of their mistakes. If they lead their troubled life in isolation for long, they impair their judging faculty so seriously that they lose contact with reality. And for the same reason, their insanity becomes almost incurable.

Lolita's antihero Humbert Humbert was a normal person while he was a child. He had childish fondness for babies and other delicate things. He had a normal love-life with Annabel. But frustration enters into his childish mind since he can not consummate his love with Annabel. Worse, she dies after two months of their unsuccessful attempt to consummate their love. So, he should not be cursed for his psychotic adulthood.

Circumstance is the real culprit for the antihero's depravity. Nabokov starts the antihero's story right from the beginning of his problem. There can be only one thing in his doing so. That is, Nabokov wants to dramatize the way in which Humbert Humbert slowly but continuously impairs his moral faculty until he becomes a schizophrenic personality. Therefore, the antihero's psychotic journey—the journey from normalcy to the perversion and criminality—should be the focus if one studies the character of an antihero. And definitely, the various situations the antihero undergoes come to be the significant factors for disentangling the complex personality of the antihero.

Humbert's case illustrates that a single instance of trauma can destroy one's life in absence of mentors. Humbert slips into the prison of his obsessive memory after Annabel's death. That single shock produces in him the excessive love for girl-children, their childish

manners and their slender physique. Later the obsession seeks its fulfillment through voyeurism. Voyeurism soon becomes insufficient. Pedophilia must replace it. Now the sufferer has already turned a criminal. There is only one way to stop this wrong path. Constant contact with the mentors and their good advices can only rescue a person like Humbert Humbert from the psychopathic direction.

The most serious damage that results in absence of mentors is the impairment of judging faculty. The analysis of Humbert Humbert's behavior proves that the absence of mentors results into prison of personal world. Personal interest is the sole motive for such prisoner. This is the reason why the antihero Humbert Humbert gives consciously or unconsciously more priority to his own personal benefit. Rather than understand why taboos came and what function they do, he sees them only as the obstruction in the path of his desire. Rather than check his wrong manners, he defends himself with few nympholeptic evidences in history. Moral ambivalence is the sure destination for such confused personality.

Once the moral ambivalence enters into one's moral vocabulary, then the life itself sinks into ambivalence. Fantasy is the normal tonic of happiness for everyone. But fantasy-life worsens due to the distorted judgment. Humbert Humbert's nymphet-obsession is his fantasy-life. It grows into a serious problem as he goes away from morality day by day. First, he allows himself indulge into filthy things as much as he can. Secondly, he brings his filthy fantasies into reality at any moment when he finds a chance. He can't balance himself between fantasy and reality. There is no clear-cut distinction between the two in his demented mind. If there is anything crystal clear in his mind, then it is his own definition of things, it is his own ways. The term 'other/s' that brings balance in one's judgment is absent in his moral vocabulary.

If moral ambivalence continues growing-up, it results into criminal craving. Nabokov's dramatization of a moral leper ends in a murder, thus swelling the moral confusion into a serious crime. From this perspective, morality becomes too sensitive aspect of life. Everyone is vulnerable. Very common errors like passing filching habit can swell into a huge moral crack. Everything can become permissible as in Humbert's life. Otherwise, Humbert would not have become fantasy-ridden in such a way.

Nabokov dramatizes criminality out of moral ambivalence in such a way as to prove it more serious than other type of crimes. Generally, the other crimes are out of scarcity, or of uncontrollable emotion. But Humbert's crime is out of distorted judgment. The other criminals realize that they have committed crime. They are ignorant and they learn from their crimes. But Humbert Humbert is an intellectual. His intellectuality passes his love in the tabooed region. He has intellectual justification for his crime of murder. His justification is not the ignorance as that happens with the other criminals. His is thought-cum-act criminal enactment. It is schizophrenia, and is almost incurable.

What lacks in criminality of moral ambivalence is guilt and repentance. Humbert Humbert commits crime. He realizes that he has done damage to Lolita's life. But his repentance is to take revenge against a fellow criminal. He does not try to return to Lolita what he has taken away from her. Even if he can not return to her her chastity, he can at least rescue her from the financial crisis she is going through. But only one thing comes to his mind, i.e., Quilty took away his Lolita for good. And there is also not any sign of repentance in his murder of Quilty. He becomes happy for he broke all laws of humanity. He has gone mad and in his madness there are no such terms as guilt and repentance.

Even if the feeling of guilt and repentance occurs in the antihero's moral vocabulary, it happens to be vestigial. Nabokov's antihero also shows guilt-feeling, but the feeling reflects moral ambivalence. Persistence of moral ambivalence for long time spreads

ambivalent attitude to each and every pore of life. Guilt and ambivalence turn half-hearted. Filthy desires become sacred. Humbert Humbert represents the perfect man of ambivalence. For him he is more a helpless lover than a criminal who needs repentance.

Paroxysm of love and hate also involves in Humbert's behavior. But impairment of moral faculty is more significant in his psychotic path than his impulsive acts. It's neither his cruel blows nor his inflammable lust that turns him criminal. Rather it is his distorted morality that turns him a criminal. If only his impulsiveness was responsible for his criminal psychology, he would be a criminal several years ago. Distortion in thinking results in a long gap of time. Humbert's long isolated life gradually affects his mentality and finally when he meets Lolita he has already digested love in the tabooed region. Such internalization of immorality still resists the fulfillment of his desire. Morality stands on his way. To avoid this, Humbert hovers between morality and immorality. By attaching himself to both the sides, he enacts his immoral desire.

Lolita thus presents the problem of fantasy that worsens due to moral ambivalence. It dramatizes how vulnerable a person is in his moral responsibility. It emphasizes the role of traumas and lack of proper guidance in one's moral depravity. This means if we are studying the morality of antihero like Humbert Humbert, then his traumatic experience and resultant psychological prison should be taken as the point of departure. Madness, perversion, cruelty, and criminality all have their starting point in traumatic experience. In order to explain the antics of antihero, the second step is to study how he develops other characteristics. The studies about how his attitude developed, how he gained his moral vocabulary, and how his moral vocabulary reshaped his life will give the final explanation of the whole complex personality like Humbert Humbert.

Chapter Three

Antics of Antihero in Lolita

The Antihero and his Antics

The antihero in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* is its protagonist Humbert Humbert. He is a Frenchman in his forties. He had planned to take his degree in psychiatry, but later turned to English literature. For several years, he taught English literature in Paris. He wrote few books as well. When his marriage is broken, he migrates to America. As an exile, he finds several odd jobs for survival. And it is in the States where he suffers mental breakdowns; he remains in the sanatorium for recuperation for at least two times. Later, he commits pedophilia and a murder, and then ends up in prison.

The antihero, Humbert Humbert, is a schizophrenic personality, living in extreme fantasy. He has strange taste, and behaves strangely. His antics range from cynicism to law-breaking, from disrespect of traditions to love in the tabooed region, and from cruelty to his wives to murder of a fellow criminal. Moreover, he tries to defend himself and his actions by writing a memoir about how and why he behaved the way he did.

Humbert Humbert is a sexual pervert, who can not live by normal adult male-female sexual relationship. He dislikes adult women. 'Big', 'fat', 'plump', 'fleshy', 'of repulsive type', 'large-as-life' etc are some of the adjectives he prefers to use for adult women. Even if he has to have sex with an adult woman, he seeks ways to dress her in child-clothing. He makes his first wife Valeria wear 'a girl's plain nightshirt' for the satisfaction of his maniacal lust. He does not have a normal sexual relationship with his second wife Charlotte Haze as well. In this case, he takes help of liquor and drugs to avoid the embarrassment that may happen due to his inability to have a normal sexual relationship.

Humbert Humbert is a "nympholept" (17) in his own words. He is obsessed with 'nymphets', and lives by schizophrenic nymphet-fantasy. He has his own definition and

criteria for them. His definition for the nymphets reads: “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 as ‘nymphets’” (16).

However, Humbert does not call every prepubescent girl a nymphet. Though he sets the age limits for the nymphets between nine and fourteen, he believes only certain girl-children have the quality to become a nymphet. He gives us the criteria:

Neither are good looks any criterion; and vulgarity, or at least what a given community terms so, does not necessarily impair certain mysterious characteristics, the fey grace, the elusive, shifty soul shattering, insidious charm that separates the nymphet from such coevals of hers as are incomparably more dependant on the spatial world of synchronous phenomena than on that intangible island of entranced time. (17)

Humbert believes that nymphets should have ineffable signs. Those signs resist their view both from the viewer and the viewed. The viewer should have certain qualities to recognize those nymphets. He says, “You have to be an artist and a madman, a creature of infinite melancholy, with bubble of hot poison in your loins and a super-voluptuous flame permanently aglow in your subtle spine” (17). He also sets the age difference between the nymphet and the man who comes under Nymphets’s spell. He claims it needs “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 the nymphet’s spell” (17). This requirement of madness, artistry, and a huge age-gap to recognize the nymphets among prepubescent girls is itself the road to pedophilia.

Humbert’s schizophrenic antics appears as incest-pedophilia when he meets Dolores Haze, whom he calls Lolita [Lo, Lola]. Dolores is living with her widow mother Charlotte

Haze. As a nympholept, Humbert suffers an evocation of unquenchable lust by the childish and vulgar, but innocent manners of Lolita. In order to get her, he marries her mother Charlotte. When Charlotte is killed in an accident, he gets Lolita. For almost two years, he wanders with Lolita from motel to motel, satisfying his lust until she escapes him.

Humbert shows his cruel antics as well. With his first wife, he is “. . . a bourgeois sadist . . . fantasiz[ing] about ‘slapping her breasts out of alignment’ or ‘putting on [his] mountain boots and taking a running kick at her rump’ . . . [or] ‘twisting fat Valechka’s brittle wrist . . .’ and saying, ‘Look here, you fat fool, c’est moi qui décide’” (Amis VIII). With Charlotte, he is cruel to plot her death. With Lolita, he is cruel with his intimidating of her into living an incestual life with him. Finally, he is cruel to Clare Quilty—a child-pornographer, who is the cause of Lolita’s escape—whom he murders with absolute cruelty in a movie style, asking for his final desire before his death.

Finally, Humbert Humbert completes his range of antics with a strange feeling of satisfaction while breaking the law before falling at the hand of police. He deliberately drives on the wrong road. He passes through the red light, calling the act as “a sip of forbidden Burgundy when I was a child” (306). Moreover, he feels a greater satisfaction when he thinks that he has broken each and every law.

The Trauma and the Growing-up of the Antihero

The first significant thing in Humbert Humbert’s life occurs as a traumatic experience. At his childhood, he falls in love with Annabel. Both are madly in love with each other. They want to consummate their love, but they can not do so. Annabel’s family is too strict to leave her alone for hours. The beach which they choose is also not a lonely place. After two months of their unhappy love, Annabel dies of typhus. Her death opens for Humbert Humbert a road of problems, in which he can never walk with a balance of his feet.

The role of memory begins then. Memory is the retrospective faculty that takes people back to the memory lane from time to time. Of course, the present is one's life, but the present is such that one does not get satisfaction from it. For satisfaction, desire should be fulfilled, but it is the nature of desire that it resists its fulfillment. Spatial and temporal context may or may not conform to the desire, and so, desire may or may not be fulfilled. The fulfillment or unfulfillment of desire later gets entangled into the life, for memory forms a concentration of one's mind to the same fulfilled/unfulfilled desire. If the desire suffers a trauma like that of Humbert Humbert, then the memory's concentration swells to become a psychological prison, which never lets one come out to normal life. Humbert's trauma thus forms a psychological prison of nymphet-desire from which he can never come out of.

Humbert Humbert's account proves that it is the very obsessive memory that forms his psychological prison. Carl Proffer describes Humbert Humbert as unreliable due to his poor memory. He complains of his "bad memory' and 'messy time keeping'" (qtd. in Moore 72). However, Humbert's memory for Annabel is as clear as reflection in mirror. His visual memory is very perfect to "see Annabel in such general terms as: 'honey-colored skin', 'thin arms', 'brown bobbed hair', 'long lashes', 'big bright mouth'" (11). Carl Proffer is right in his argument. Humbert's memory is poor. The trauma has fixed Annabel's image into his mind. He remembers her image well, but mixes up other things.

The psychological prison never allows Humbert Humbert come into normal life in later days. He complains, "I also know that the shock of Annabel's death consolidated the frustration of that nightmare summer, made of it a permanent obstacle to any further romance throughout the cold years of my youth" (14). Whenever he sees the likes of Annabel, he remembers her. Physically he has become mature, but mentally he is still the childhood lover of Annabel. He desires only Annabel, and, so seeks only the Annabels.

While Humbert grows-up, his childhood trauma and the resulting isolation obstruct the development of his faculty for understanding others. In his story, his family members come only before Annabel event. After the event, the whole story stands on the various nymphets he sees, and the impressions they make upon his life. This absolute lack of family details in his accounts after his traumatic experience is itself a proof of his being locked in his private world. He can only think about his own trauma, pain, and desire. He rarely thinks about others. He never develops the capacity to understand other people and their feelings.

Humbert Humbert's alienation and his impaired understanding faculty further develop into two directions. The first is narcissism, i.e., love of self. Humbert loves himself and is happy in his own world. He wants to remain undisturbed in his own world. He says, "Ah, leave me alone in my pubescent park, in my mossy garden" (21). His love for, and pride of, his own image is also the narcissism. He enthuses about his own image: "I was, and still am, despite mes malbeurs, an exceptionally handsome male; slow-moving, tall, with soft dark hair and a gloomy but all the more seductive cast of demeanor" (25).

Secondly, Humbert Humbert becomes cynical in his attitude. Narcissism is love of self, which, in opposite way, means disregard for others. It is the extreme development of narcissism that produces in him hatred and disregard for others. He says, "Oh, let me be mawkish for the nonce! I am so tired of being cynical", but never stops being cynical (109). He is cynical of everything and everyone—his wives, the doctors, the law, the schools, and the people he acquaints. For instance, he speaks cynically of his second wife Charlotte: "Oh, she was very genteel: she said 'excuse me' whenever a slight burp interrupted her flowing speech, called an envelope an ahnvelope, and when talking to her lady-friends referred to me as Mr. Humbert" (75).

Humbert Humbert is a writer. So, his writer's sensibility also has a big share in his growing-up. Observing habit, sensitiveness, scholarship, madness and wild fantasy form his

writer's sensibility. All contribute to his strange personality. All are directed towards what Nabokov calls "aesthetic bliss, that is a sense of being somehow, somewhere connected with other states of being where art (curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy) is the norm" (314-15). As Humbert Humbert is guided by his writer's sensibility, he behaves strangely.

In fact, Humbert Humbert is just like other normal males, but additional desires make him different from them. He claims, ". . . the sensations I derived from natural fornication were much the same as those known to normal big males consorting with their normal big mates in that routine rhythm which shakes the world. The trouble was that those gentlemen had not, and I had, caught glimpses of an incomparably more poignant bliss" (18).

Now the question comes what that poignant bliss is, and what nature it is of. There is only one answer: this poignant bliss is, of course, the desire of the poets/writers. G. D. Josipovici says these poetic desires "are not of the body, but of the spirit: desire for unattainable beauty—for that which is beautiful just because it is unattainable" (37).

Humbert later retells that his desires are of the kind what Josipovici defines. He writes:

There was in the fiery phantasm a perfection which made my wild delight also perfect, just because the vision was out of reach, with no possibility of attainment to spoil it by the awareness of an appended taboo; indeed, it may well be that the very attraction immaturity has for me lies not so as in the limpidity of pure young forbidden fairy child beauty as in the security of a situation where infinite perfections fill the gap between the little given and the great promised—the great rosegray never-to-be-had. (264)

This means that Humbert Humbert has the habit of enjoying suspension of desire between fulfillment and unfulfillment. Suspension of desire or the delay of fulfillment of desire is a type of poignancy, which only a person with writer's sensibility loves to inflict

upon his self. Humbert Humbert suffers from such habit. And this habit has later to affect his personality, and his moral responsibility.

Ambivalence in Antihero's Moral Vocabulary

Morality is the accepted standard of life in a society. It is the norms and values formed of various traditions passed from generations to generations. Morality is learnt. It is knowledge. How a person learns and how his knowledge affects his life is the parallel situation of how a member of a society learns its moral values and how his morality leads his life. So, formation of moral vocabulary in Humbert Humbert should be studied as his growing-up process, i.e., his education process.

Environment is the most significant thing for learning process. Traumatic experience has snatched away from Humbert Humbert the favorable environment for the acquisition of moral standards. Psychologists and other mentors can resupply the favorable environment for the sufferer like him. According to John Ray, “. . . had our demented diarist gone, in the fatal summer of 1947, to a competent psychologist, there would have been no disaster” (5). But Humbert did not consult psychologists. He even did not have other mentors. He regrets, “but alas, in the summer of that year; he [Humbert's father] was touring Italy with Mme de R. and her daughter, and I had nobody to complain to, nobody to consult” (11).

Absence of mentors and unbearable pain entangle with his life in such a way that Humbert's learning process gets obstructed. Knowledge is the conclusion made from various experiences. Attitude and intelligence affect both conclusion and experience. Having a disturbed mind and lacking mentors for guidance, Humbert Humbert can draw only confused conclusions. In this way, his morality becomes an ambivalent one—ambivalent in the sense that he mixes up both morality and immorality into his moral vocabulary, impairing his judging faculty seriously.

Morality is the public standard. But Humbert Humbert's psychological prison imprisons him into his own private standards. The clash between the public standard and the private standard in his mind results into his moral ambivalence. At his twenties, he is already torn between his desire and the social taboos: "While my body knew what it craved for, my mind rejected my body's plea. One moment I was ashamed and frightened, another recklessly optimistic. Taboos strangulated me" (18).

The divided mind of Humbert Humbert soon tends towards his body's plea. To defend his personal interest he begins to rationalize his situation. He reports, "At other times I would tell myself that it was all a question of attitude, that there was really nothing wrong in being moved to distraction by girl children" (18-19). The obsession for the nymphets, his likes and dislikes, and his unquenchable lust continue influencing his morality. He gradually develops the habit of seeking ways to preserve his personal desires in the breaches of moral values. Finally, at his forties, Humbert becomes so unhappy with the civilian laws:

The stipulation of the Roman law, according to which a girl may marry at twelve, was adopted by the Church, and is still preserved, rather tacitly, in some of the United States. And fifteen is lawful everywhere. There is nothing wrong, say both hemispheres, when a brute of forty, blessed by the local priest and bloated with drink, sheds his sweat-drenched finery and thrust himself up to the hilt into his youthful bride. (135)

Humbert Humbert's wide scholarship also goes in the wrong way. He finds literary precursors of his nympholepsy. Those evidences lure him to his perverse intention. He writes, "This is all very interesting Virgil who could the nymph sing in single tone Dante fell madly in love with Beatrice when she was nine Petrarch fell madly in love with his Laureen, she was a fair-haired nymphet of twelve running in the wind" (19).

While drawing conclusions from various examples, Humbert misses the essence of morality, i.e., the fact that morality is limited into spatio-temporal boundary. Spatio-temporal boundary means: first, morality of one place holds true only to the very place, and secondly, morality of one time fits only to the very time limit. Edgar Allan Poe is from past. The culture and morality were different at the time. But Humbert thinks himself as Poe and Lolita as Poe's prepubescent cousin-wife Vee [Virginia]. He never realizes that there is a huge moral and cultural gap between his and Poe's time. In other instance, he reports, "Lepcha old men of eighty copulate with girls of eight, and nobody minds" (19). It is true, but it is also true that he and Lolita are not Lepchas of Indian provinces. He does not notice the cultural difference.

Morality is maintained in society either with love/respect or with fear. At the beginning, a child learns morality from punishment. Love and respect develops in him when he grows up and understands the significance of morality. In the meantime, spiritual motive is added. A child thus starts maintaining morality to avoid hell and to secure heaven. However, such punishment is absent from Humbert's life. He talks about his innocent crimes. He "had filched [Pinchon's sumptuous *La Beauté humaine*] from under a mountain of marble-bound Graphics in the hotel library" (11). He never talks about any punishment for his theft. Throughout the novel he never tells the reader that he got punishment from anybody. In such circumstances, factors like confusion, false interpretation, indifference, indetermination, and ignorance all combine to form moral ambivalence into his mind.

Contradictory nature of social morality itself also forms ambivalence in Humbert's morality. Soldiers are considered brave and respectable in society. They go to war, kill people, destroy other's property, and violate women. Yet they get recognition. Humbert is troubled with this unfair social tradition. Why not he be troubled? After all, his aberrant behavior is milder than the soldiers' ruthlessness. He claims:

[The nympholepts] . . . are innocuous, inadequate, passive, timid stranger who merely ask the community to allow them to pursue their practically harmless, so-called aberrant behavior, their little hot wet private acts of sexual deviation without the police and society cracking down upon them. We are not sex fiends! We do not rape as soldiers do. We are unhappy, mild, dog-eyed gentlemen, sufficiently well integrated to control our urge in the presence of adults, but ready to give years and years of life for one chance to touch a nymphet. (88)

Here, the problem with Humbert Humbert is that he does not seek the ways to erase the unfairness of the society. He rather demands the same recognition for nympholeptic sexual deviants as the soldires'. Humbert Humbert thus finds immoral solution for immoral actions.

Finally, Humbert Humbert becomes ambivalent just like the corrupt leaders and the corrupt bureaucrats. He does not destroy the laws and established traditions. He even does not wish to do it. Just as the corrupt leaders and corrupt bureaucrats need established laws and order in order to serve their purpose, so Humbert needs laws and order to keep Lolita to his side. First, he tries to satisfy his lust with bribes and bullying. Secondly, he threatens Lolita with hard, dry and dull life of civilization itself. He exposes disgusting conditions of reformatories to distract Lolita from resuming civilized order: "In plainer words, if we two are found out, you will be analyzed and institutionalized, my pet, c'est tout. You will dwell, my Lolita will dwell (come here, my brown flower) with thirty-nine other dopes in a dirty dormitory (no, allow me, please) under the suspension of hideous matrons" (151). Thus, he uses his knowledge of cultural breaches for his own benefit.

Antihero's Life of Contradictions

Contradictory attitude develops in Humbert Humbert right from his traumatic experience. As a child, he hated mature people but loved baby animals. He discloses his childhood liking and disliking: “Bald brown Mr. Leigh and fat, powdered Mrs. Leigh How I loathed them! . . . Our [his and Annabel’s] brains were turned the way those of intelligent European preadolescents were in our day The softness and fragility of baby animals caused us the same intense pain” (12). This type of childish contradictory attitude improves as one grows up, but Annabel’s death stops its improvement in Humbert’s case. Desire for Annabel’s child-physique becomes the hatred for adult females throughout his European existence. He confesses, “Overtly, I had so called normal relationships with a number of terrestrial women having pumpkins or pears for breasts; inly, I was consumed by a hell furnace of localized lust for every passing nymphet, whom as a law abiding poltroon I never dared approach” (18). He needs females for sexual satisfaction but hates them.

Contradictory habit is not always a problem. It is a normal way of life. Normal person has also opposing impulses, but he is not obstructed by such contradictions in his thinking and acting. However, when it reaches the stage of strong destructive and erotic wishes, then it is a serious mental disorder. It is schizophrenia, it is ambivalence. The person of schizophrenic ambivalence can not think and act well. He is misled by his own ambivalence.

Humbert Humbert has reached this stage. He can not control himself. He is not simply a morally ambivalent person. Rather he has become ambivalent emotionally. His moral confusion and his confused behaviors have become his life itself. His ambivalence is destructively beyond his own control. He laments:

Humbert Humbert tried hard to be good. Really and truly, he did. He had the utmost respect for ordinary children, with their purity and vulnerability, and under no circumstances would he have interfered with the innocence of a

child, if there was the least risk of a row. But how his heart beat when, among the innocent throng, he espied a demon child, ‘enfant charmante et fourbe,’ dim eyes, bright lips, ten years in jail if you only show her you are looking at her. (19-20)

Humbert Humbert is ambivalent in his perception as well. He perceives himself as both handsome and ape-like figure: “I am said to resemble some crooner or actor chap on whom Lo has a crush” (43); “. . . the writer’s good looks—pseudo Celtic, attractively simian, boyishly manly—had on women of every age and environment I have to remind the reader of my appearance much as a professional novelist” (104). He perceives nymphets as “some immortal daemon disguised as a female child” (139). His emotion towards Lolita is mixture of hatred and love, or of disrespect and respect. He sees Lolita both as a bride and a concubine, a beloved and a devil, a tempter and a prey, a daughter and an impossible daughter, and a spoilt-child and a girl of childish innocence. To him he himself becomes humble and hoarse, brave and poor, and lover and brute. He is cruel and sadistic but in his cruel desires there is masochism as well. He writes, “I long for terrific disaster. Earthquake. Spectacular explosion” (53). He shows mixed feelings at the same time.

Humbert Humbert is destroyed due to his life of contradiction. However, he does not perceive ambivalence and contradiction as problems. Rather he enjoys ambivalence. He gets satisfaction in pendulum-like existence of ambivalence. Ambivalence is his game, which he wins. For instance, he suffers a bout of insanity when returns to civilization from his expedition into arctic Canada. He hates doctors, but finds “an endless source of robust enjoyment in trifling with psychiatrists” (34). He can not tolerate civilization, and wants to go away from it into the fantasy-adventures. However, his source of satisfaction lies in civilization. He can satisfy himself by cheating only in civilization.

The cheating for satisfaction is the sense of superiority complex in Humbert Humbert's life of ambivalence. When a person near him does not understand his moves and mind, he becomes happy. He is petty and does not understand others. Yet he loves self-centered and dull persons like Gaston. He perceives himself cleverer and more intelligent among such dull personalities. He writes of Gaston:

I am loath to dwell so long on the poor fellow [Yet] I need him for my defense. There he was, devoid of any talent whatsoever, a mediocre teacher, a worthless scholar, a glum repulsive fat old invert, highly contemptuous of the American way of life, triumphantly ignorant of the English language—there he was in priggish New England, crooned over by the old and caressed by the young—oh, having a grand time and fooling everybody; and here was I.

(183)

As a cynic, he has no respect of laws, and his superiority complex gives him satisfaction while he breaks the law. He finds a deeper satisfaction in a win over the civilized world. He cheats the medics. He deliberately misleads them to quench his strange ways of satisfaction. And he goes into raptures at the thought that he broke all laws of humanity.

Antihero's Fantasy and Perversion

Learning process is entangled with the life itself. When life flows in time, it produces knowledge. Knowledge then influences life. New life again produces new vocabularies of knowledge, which give life again a new look. Thus life and knowledge continuously influence each other, reshaping each other as time goes on. In the same way, Humbert's case involves a continuous interaction between his life and the formation of his moral vocabulary, his habits of fantasy always affecting his morality, while his ambivalence further deteriorating his life providing the way for more fantasy.

For a personality like Humbert Humbert, who is a writer and psychologically imprisoned into his own private world, fantasy is very normal mode of life. So, it is not a problem when he dives into strange fantasies. For instance, he muses:

A shipwreck. An atoll. Alone with a drowned passenger's shivering child.
Darling, this is only a game! How marvelous were my fancied adventures as I
sat on a hard park bench pretending to be immersed in a trembling book.
Around the quiet scholar, nymphets played freely, as if he were a familiar
statue or part of an old tree's shadow and sheen. (20)

The problem comes when Humbert can not return back to reality. Reality means the normal order of life, i.e., life led according to what morality allows in a sane world. The problem for him is that, on the one hand, his world is “brand new, mad new dream world, where everything is permissible” (133), and, on the other hand, his morality is too weak. His moral ambivalence can not bind him to the order of the sane world. When Annabel dies, he is heart-broken. Thereafter, continuous absence of mentors and subsequent loss of touch with values of normal world pushes him deeper and deeper into the world of fantasy. Finally, at his forties, when he meets Lolita, he has already turned a schizophrenic personality—a mad person engulfed into his own private fantasy world.

When fantasy combines with moral ambivalence, forbidden thoughts get entry into the fantasy world. People have fear of thinking bad things. It is due to their strong morality. They are able to make a balance between public life and private life. But Humbert can not stick to a single principle of traditional virtues. For him public standard is negligible compared to his self created nymphet-world, where he can fulfill his personal interest. It is his moral ambivalence that leaves his self unpunished even if he desires the prepubescent girls, who are forbidden otherwise. This means that Humbert's indifference towards

everything but himself opens the way for moral confusion, which then opens the way for perverse fantasy.

When Humbert's poetic desire unperturbed by his weak morality goes slight distortion, the result is again his perverse fantasy. Poetic desire is the desire to attain something unattainable. His pleasure is from suspension of his desire in between achievement and non-achievement. The unattainableness of beauty and the satisfaction from getting and not-getting at the same time is the real cause of confusion for him. Immorality, criminality and perversion all are unattainable due to the moral restriction, and for the same reason, these come under the category 'beauty'. Through perverse fantasy, he both does and does not get immorality/criminality/perversion, and it is source of his satisfaction. His single statement "You can always count on a murderer for a fancy prose tale" (9) justifies his confusion.

Humbert Humbert's thought-perversion leads to act-perversion, which then leads his way to prison. If he had limited himself to fantasy, and if he had penned down his imagined experience, he would have become less despicable, or would have escaped punishment, or maybe, he would have been one of the greatest writers ever. *Lolita* would have been 'safely solipsized'. He would be able to be proud of himself forever in the same manner as he felt proud of himself when he could satisfy his lust by the caress and touch he got from *Lolita's* play in his lap one Sunday morning:

I felt proud of myself. I had stolen the honey of a spasm without impairing the morals of a minor. Absolutely no harm done. The conjurer had poured milk, molasses, foaming champagne into a young lady's new white purse; and lo, the purse was intact. Thus had I delicately constructed my ignoble, ardent, sinful dream; and still *Lolita* was safe—and I was safe. (62)

However, things do not go according to what Humbert desires. He has already lost sense of reality and unreality. He has already started believing fantasy as reality, and reality as fantasy. He has already started looking his life and his world through the veil of literature. So, he repeatedly imagines literary parallels for whatever situation he finds himself in. He describes himself, his situation and his beloved with literary allusions: “Oh Lolita, you are my girl, as Vee was Poe’s and Bea Dante’s” (107); “What a comic, clumsy, wavering Prince Charming I was!” (109). Humbert Humbert, thus, in Matthew Winston’s terms, “desperately and pitiably attempts to stop the movement of time, which presents him the threat of his enchanting nymphet metamorphosing into an ordinary woman” (425).

Moreover, girl-children can easily make Humbert Humbert oblivious of reality. Even the quality of nymphets can arouse his lust and make him oblivious of everything. He can not judge correctly in the presence of those nymphets. For instance, Humbert tells us that he “decided to marry . . . to purge myself of my degrading and dangerous desires, at least to keep them under pacific control” (24). Then his choice fell on Valeria, the daughter of a Polish doctor, with whom he played chess. “What attracted [him] to Valeria”, he says, “was the imitation she gave of a little girl”, and regrets, “how dreadfully stupid poor Humbert always was in matters of sex” (25). The nymphic features can easily distort his judgment. He marries Valeria though he hates all the adult females including Valeria.

Moral ambivalence brings further problem into Humbert’s fantasy-life. It turns his fantasy for nymphets into voyeurism and then into pedophilia. He lacks respects for almost everything. More importantly he lacks spiritual fear for morality. He has the habit of filching things. Filching is, in fact, a tiny instance of moral ambivalence. A person who filches things does have fear for physical punishment, but lacks fear for spiritual punishment. If there is no risk of physical punishment, the person happily picks other’s things. Humbert’s lack of fear for spiritual punishment itself is what permits him to practice voyeurism with perfect

impunity. That is why he loves those “orphanages and reform schools, where pale pubescent girls with matted eyelashes could be stared at in perfect impunity remindful of that granted one in dreams” (16).

Humbert Humbert’s voyeurism takes a new turn after he meets Lolita. Before, he only sought such windows where he could see the nymphets undressing before the mirror. Sometimes he was granted with “a rich flavor of hell” (20), and sometimes irritated by “the disgusting lamp-lit bare arm of a man” (20). His voyeurism did not harm anyone, except costing him of his moral integrity. But situation with Lolita is different. She is not to be sought in windows. Humbert is renting in Lolita’s house. Now he gets chance to enjoy the nymphet’s nudity, brighter and livelier than the earlier ones.

Lolita is not a fantastic character, but a real person. So, as a person from reality, she carries problems of a real person along with her. She has a family—she and her mother. Her mother, being a widow, seeks Humbert Humbert’s company. She writes a love letter to him. Now his dream of possessing Lolita is shattered. But he soon finds solution with the help of his impaired moral and judgment faculty. He grins in his moral ambivalence:

I felt a Dostoevskian grin dawning (through the very grimace that twisted my lips) like a distant and terrible sun. I imagined (under conditions of new and perfect visibility) all the casual caresses her mother’s husband would be able to lavish on his Lolita. I would hold her against me three times a day, everyday I saw myself administering a powerful sleeping potion to both mother and daughter so as to fondle the latter through the night with perfect impunity. (70-71)

The condition ‘with perfect impunity’ is the real problem for Humbert Humbert. It allows him to filch things, to practice voyeurism, and to caress and fondle a little girl. Now the same situation allows him to consummate the pedophilia-cum-incest. Before the The

Enchanted Hunters event, Humbert limits himself to caressing, kissing and fondling his step daughter. He limits himself to the same activities before Lolita herself surrenders to him. He is timid to have sex with Lolita, but when he gets an easy opportunity, he never misses the chance. And he makes that easy chance the rationale for proving himself innocent:

Frigid gentleman of the jury! . . . I am going to tell you something very strange: it was she who seduced me Upon hearing her first morning yawn, I feigned handsome profiled sleep. I just did not know what to do. Would she be shocked at finding me by her side, and not in some spare bed? Would she collect her clothes and lock herself up in the bathroom? Would she demand to be taken at once to Ramsdale—to her mother's bedside—back to camp? But my Lo was sportive lassie She rolled over to my side We lay quietly. I gently kissed her 'Lay off, will you,' she said

(132-33)

Antihero's Cruelty and Desire for Murder

The implication of moral ambivalence into the attitude and behavior is the answer for cruelty with which the antihero Humbert Humbert behaves. E. A. Carruthers locates four primary drives in man and beast: food, fear, sex, and aggression. These drives make both man and beast the same. What differentiates man from animals is ritual. He writes:

What creates the society of social animals? . . . Lorenz suggests that the substance of the social bond is ritual, whether in the form of the courtship dances of certain birds, or in that of the law and complex customs of a human society. In this observation lies the basis of conscience and the sense of sin, for a man who flouts one of the customs of his people rejects the bond which lay in sharing its observance; by so much he diminishes the extent of his

belonging, and by so much his drive his drive to belong will trouble his spirit.

(220)

If so, Humbert Humbert's loneliness, and lack of social bond unleash his sexual and aggressive drive in order to trouble him for the rest of his life.

Humbert's another problem resulting into cruelty is his obsessive fantasy. Obsessive fantasy means one-sided imagination, which is just like the total lack of imagination. Lack of imagination means lack of understanding others. If one does not understand others, then he is prone to treat them as objects. And anyone is brutal and cruel to the objects. This is exactly what Josipovici suggests in his writing: "Although the tone here and throughout the novel [Lolita] is gentler than in *Bend Sinister*, the offence is the same: through the total lack of imagination man has been reduced to a gadget, love to a form of gymnastics, and beauty to a saleable commodity" (41).

Alienated and unimaginative Humbert is worsened by his unhappy life. Cruelty becomes his easy option to react against the unhappy situation. He marries Valeria as she gave 'imitation' of a child. He also makes her wear "a girl's plain nightshirt and derive[s] some pleasure from that nuptial night" (26). But reality soon asserts itself. Instead of a pale little girl, Valeria turns to be "a large, puffy, short-legged, big-breasted and practically brainless baba." (26). Valeria destroys his obsessive and one-sided expectation. In such situation, one can not expect Humbert Humbert to respect and behave well with her.

Economic condition is also against Humbert's favour. He has to live with "an odd sense of comfort in our small squalid flat: two rooms, a hazy view in one window, a brick wall in the other, a tiny kitchen, a shoe-shaped bath tub, within which I felt like Marat but with no white-maid to stab me" (26). In summer of 1939, his mon oncle d'Amérique dies bequeathing him an annual income of a few thousand dollars on condition that he goes to America. He enthuses about his future, "This prospect was most welcome to me. I felt my

life needed a shake-up” (27). But Valeria brings another man into her life. He can not tolerate the situation. He strikes her on the knee with his fist. He gives economic reason for his discomfort. “A mounting fury was suffocating me”, he says, “not because I had any particular fondness for that figure of fun, Mme Humbert, but because matters of legal and illegal conjunction were for me alone to decide, and here she was, Valeria, the comedy wife, brazenly preparing to dispose in her own way of my comfort and fate” (27-28).

In Humbert’s cruelty there is always reflection of moral ambivalence: his confusion and his distorted judgment. He is confused with the idea of heroism. He brags, “To beat her up in the street, there and then, as an honest vulgarian might have done, was not feasible. Years of secret suffering had taught me superhuman self-control” (28). For him, superhuman quality lies in control of his cruelty only before the public. His distorted judgment perceives such moral obligation as a public necessity, but not as a spiritual one that needs its fulfillment even in privacy. So, he does not scruple to beat her in privacy.

Now we can say that Humbert at least knows that morality is public standard, but he distorts the meaning of morality while applying it. The reason may be his greater knowledge or maybe his half-understanding of morality. Sometimes it seems that he is parodying heroism with his cynical attitude, and so makes “a heroic decision of attacking him [Valeria’s boyfriend] barefisted” (30). Sometimes it seems that he draws wrong conclusion from various instances, and so, loves “the backhand slap with which I ought to have hit her across the cheekbone according to the rules of the movies” (29-30). His wide scholarship points towards his cynicism and parodying habit at the breaches of morality, whereas his obsessive personality and his lack of growth from a child-lover points toward his incomplete learning. Whatever may be the reason, it is true that Humbert Humbert is a moral leper.

The more unbearable becomes the unhappiness, the crueler becomes Humbert Humbert. At the increase in the degree of unhappiness, i.e., at the loss of precious things,

Humbert's cruelty grows more serious to turn into a murdering desire. The nymphets are precious in his life. If somebody snatches or tries to snatch away from him his nymphets, he reacts with murdering desire. He wants to kill Charlotte as she comes between him and Lolita. When Pratt becomes obstruction in his path with her pointing towards his role in the development of Lolita's obsessive behavior, he asks with himself, "Should I marry Pratt and strangle her?" (197). But Valeria is not nymphet, and so unworthy of murder-revenge. He writes, "I now wondered if Valechka . . . was really worth shooting, or strangling, or drowning. She had very vulnerable legs, and I decided I would limit myself to hurting her very horribly as soon as we were alone" (29). In the same manner, when the unhappiness becomes extreme, Humbert's murdering desire becomes the actual murder. So, when Clare Quilty takes away Lolita for good, he does not simply desire to kill, but really kills him.

Clare Quilty's murder is the most significant cruelty Humbert ever shows throughout the novel. Here, Humbert reflects his whole personality: his insanity, his poetic ability, his monstrous nature, his lover's self and his bizarre taste for satisfaction. Insomnia had been a part of his nymphet-fantasy. It attacks him again before Quilty's murder. He loses contact with reality. "Visions of bungling the execution keep obsessing him . . . [Quilty's] elaborate and decrepit house seem[s] to stand in a kind of daze . . . [as if he] had overdone alcoholic stimulation business" (293). He becomes "lucidly insane, crazily calm, and enchanted and very tight hunter" (294). He forces Quilty at gunpoint to give all details about how he took Lolita away. In the name of 'poetical justice', he forces Quilty to read out a poem about why he is being killed. Finally, he shoots Quilty with several bullets, one by one in a gap of time, letting him beg for his life each time he is shot.

Moral confusion surfaces more prominently in Humbert Humbert's murdering enactment. He is not religious, but he parodies religious feeling while enacting his murdering desire. He thinks, "It was high time I destroyed him, but he must understand why

he was being destroyed” (297). His justification for Quilty’s murder also parodies a court trial. The charge, in the form of a poem, reads: “because you took advantage of a sinner/ . . . when I stood Adam-naked/ before a federal law/ . . . because you took/ her at the age when lads/ play with erector sets/ . . . because you stole her/ from her wax-browed and dignified protector/ . . . because of all you did/ because of all I did not/ you have to die” (300). Thus, Humbert’s cruelty shows a parody of morality. It is moral ambivalence resulted out of confusion. It is the distorted form of moral and social practices.

Antihero’s Guilt, Repentance and Continuing Ambivalence

Lolita is Humbert Humbert’s memoir. It is in the form of a confession about how he suffered in life, how he became a nympholept, and how he had to commit a murder. Humbert Humbert wrote it while he was in trial for murder of Clare Quilty. So, obviously it is his self-explanation of what he is and how he is the way he is. It is his attempt to know his inner truths so that he can find out how things went wrong for him. In his own words, it is his attempt “to fix once for all the perilous magic of nymphets” (134). He says it is “not to relive them in my present boundless misery, but to sort out the portion of hell and the portion of heaven in that strange, awful, maddening world—nymphet love. The beastly and beautiful merged at one point, and it is that borderline I would like to fix . . .” (135). From his words, Humbert seems to be repentant of his crimes.

At several points, Humbert Humbert seems to realize his follies. When growing-up signs begin to appear in Lolita, Humbert seems to come out of his psychological prison of nymphets. He regrets, “How wrong I was. How mad I was! Everything about her was of the same exasperating impenetrable order—the strength of her shapely legs, the dirty sole of her white sock . . . her wrenchy smell . . . the dead end of her face . . .” (204). And especially when he meets Lolita after two years of her escape, he shows signs of his realization of his follies. He admits, “I simply did not know a thing about my darling’s mind and that quite

possibly, behind the awful juvenile clichés, there was in her a garden and a twilight, and a palace gate—dim and adorable regions which happened to be lucidly and absolutely forbidden to me, in my polluted rags and miserable convulsions” (284).

When Humbert Humbert cries, it seems that he is coming to contact of reality. He cries only once throughout the novel. That happens when Lolita opts for her impoverished married life than his wealth. He writes, “I covered my face with my hand and broke into the hottest tears I had ever shed. I felt them winding through my fingers and down my chin I said. ‘You are sure you are not coming with me?’ . . . ‘No’, she said. ‘No honey, no.’” (279). He does not report any instance of his crying when he loses Annabel. At the loss of Annabel, his pain remains along with the tears he retains. At the loss of Lolita, he gets rid of his pain by shedding tears.

Now he shows some signs of repairing his moral faculty as well. The most important instance of his realization comes when he admits:

Alas, I was unable to transcend the simple human fact that whatever spiritual solace I might find, whatever lithophanic eternities might be provided for me, nothing could make my Lolita forget the foul lust I had inflicted upon her. Unless it can be proven to me—to me as I am now, today, with my heart and my beard, and my putrefaction—that in the infinite run it does not matter a jot that a North American girl-child named Dolores Haze had been deprived of her childhood by a maniac, unless this can be proven (and if it can, then life is a joke) (282-83)

In this instance, he seems to understand what life is and what damage his fantasy-life has caused to himself and to Lolita. He is clear that life is not a joke, rather it is real.

Humbert now knows the role of the art as well. He can differentiate between what is mortality and what is beauty. He reasons just like normal people: “I see nothing for the

treatment of my misery but the melancholy and very local palliative of articulate art. To quote an old poet: The moral sense in mortals is the duty/ We have to pay on mortal sense of beauty” (283). He seems very clear about art’s function of getting rid of pains. He seems to understand that morality and duty should come at first in mortal’s lives. Even beauty is to be given a mortal sense in reality. Art gives immortality to the mortal beauty. However, art is art, it is not reality. He seems to realize art is to be practiced, but art should not be lived as he tried to do.

If we analyze Humbert’s murder of Clare Quilty from symbolic point of view, Humbert again becomes a repentant. According to Alfred Appel Jr., Clare Quilty is the psychological double for Humbert Humbert: “Quilty embodies both ‘the truth and a caricature of it,’ for he is at once a projection of Humbert’s guilt and a parody of the psychological double” (IX). Humbert’s calling Quilty “my brother” (247), both being pedophiles, and the poet Humbert’s losing Lolita due to Quilty’s trap all justify Alfred Appel’s claim. While fighting with Clare Quilty, Humbert himself uses the pronouns I, we, he and they in such a way as if he and Quilty are the same person: “We rolled all over the floor, in each other’s arms, like two huge helpless children. He was naked and goatish under his robe, and I felt suffocated as he rolled over me. I rolled over him. We rolled over me. They rolled over him. We rolled over us” (299).

If Clare Quilty is really Humbert’s darker self, then by killing Quilty Humbert purifies his self. Humbert’s brighter self will be only that Humbert Humbert who has poetic desire; who enjoyed voyeurism by sparing the nymphet’s purity. It is the darker self which robbed Lolita’s purity. It is the darker self which forced Lolita to run away from her stepfather. This interpretation holds true when he passes sentence for him only for the rape, but not for the murder. His sentence reads: “Had I come before myself, I would have given Humbert at least thirty-five years for rape, and dismissed the rest of the charges” (308).

However, Humbert Humbert is a man of contradiction. He feels love and hate at the same time for himself, for Lolita, and for others. He bears double standardness within himself. He can not reject his lust though he calls himself a lover. A lover needs to live for his lover's wellbeing, but he lives for his benefit. His guilt-feeling is also double-natured. He realizes that he has inflicted pain upon his beloved Lolita. He feels sorry for it, but he leaves his lust intact in his guilt:

This was a lone child, an absolute waif, with whom a heavy-limbed, foul-smelling adult had had strenuous intercourse three times that very morning. . . . it had . . . overshot its mark—and plunged into a nightmare. I had been careless, stupid, and ignoble. . . . Mingled with the pangs of guilt was the agonizing thought that her mood might prevent me from making love to her again as soon as I found a nice country road where to park in peace. (140)

Even after murdering Clare Quilty, Humbert does not behave as a repentant. He has already gone mad. His moral ambivalence has already taken him to schizophrenic disorder. He feels a deep satisfaction not out of killing a criminal, but out of breaking the law. He describes his ecstatic moment: “The road now stretched across open country, and it occurred to me—not by way of protest, not as a symbol, or anything like that, but merely as a novel experience—that since I had disregarded all laws of humanity, I might as well disregard the rules of traffic” (306). He then drives his car wildly until he is caught.

This type of behavior makes Humbert Humbert not a repentant, but an insane one. And his insanity is not just moral ambivalence, but it is the desire to live a life of ambivalence and contradiction. He is mentally a confused personality. He has lost contact of reality, and he does not want to return to reality either. He just goes on behaving with his ambivalence. That's why his confession, i.e., the whole book *Lolita*, is in such a way as to prove himself innocent, rather than to plead guilty.

Chapter Four

Conclusion: The Antihero and Moral Ambivalence

From Nabokov's representation of antihero in *Lolita*, it can be established that the antiheroes are more pathetic than despicable. They are notorious criminals, but at the same time they are sufferers. While trying to cope up with the problems of their lives, they make wrong choices. They need cooperation and guidance to lead a normal life. Absence of good mentors results only in repetition of their mistakes. If they lead their troubled life in isolation for long, they impair their judging faculty so seriously that they lose contact with reality. And for the same reason, their insanity becomes almost incurable.

Lolita's antihero Humbert Humbert was a normal person while he was a child. He had childish fondness for babies and other delicate things. He had a normal love-life with Annabel. But frustration enters into his childish mind since he can not consummate his love with Annabel. Worse, she dies after two months of their unsuccessful attempt to consummate their love. So, he should not be cursed for his psychotic adulthood.

Circumstance is the real culprit for the antihero's depravity. Nabokov starts the antihero's story right from the beginning of his problem. There can be only one thing in his doing so. That is, Nabokov wants to dramatize the way in which Humbert Humbert slowly but continuously impairs his moral faculty until he becomes a schizophrenic personality. Therefore, the antihero's psychotic journey—the journey from normalcy to the perversion and criminality—should be the focus if one studies the character of an antihero. And definitely, the various situations the antihero undergoes come to be the significant factors for disentangling the complex personality of the antihero.

Humbert's case illustrates that a single instance of trauma can destroy one's life in absence of mentors. Humbert slips into the prison of his obsessive memory after Annabel's death. That single shock produces in him the excessive love for girl-children, their childish

manners and their slender physique. Later the obsession seeks its fulfillment through voyeurism. Voyeurism soon becomes insufficient. Pedophilia must replace it. Now the sufferer has already turned a criminal. There is only one way to stop this wrong path. Constant contact with the mentors and their good advices can only rescue a person like Humbert Humbert from the psychopathic direction.

The most serious damage that results in absence of mentors is the impairment of judging faculty. The analysis of Humbert Humbert's behavior proves that the absence of mentors results into prison of personal world. Personal interest is the sole motive for such prisoner. This is the reason why the antihero Humbert Humbert gives consciously or unconsciously more priority to his own personal benefit. Rather than understand why taboos came and what function they do, he sees them only as the obstruction in the path of his desire. Rather than check his wrong manners, he defends himself with few nympholeptic evidences in history. Moral ambivalence is the sure destination for such confused personality.

Once the moral ambivalence enters into one's moral vocabulary, then the life itself sinks into ambivalence. Fantasy is the normal tonic of happiness for everyone. But fantasy-life worsens due to the distorted judgment. Humbert Humbert's nymphet-obsession is his fantasy-life. It grows into a serious problem as he goes away from morality day by day. First, he allows himself indulge into filthy things as much as he can. Secondly, he brings his filthy fantasies into reality at any moment when he finds a chance. He can't balance himself between fantasy and reality. There is no clear-cut distinction between the two in his demented mind. If there is anything crystal clear in his mind, then it is his own definition of things, it is his own ways. The term 'other/s' that brings balance in one's judgment is absent in his moral vocabulary.

If moral ambivalence continues growing-up, it results into criminal craving. Nabokov's dramatization of a moral leper ends in a murder, thus swelling the moral confusion into a serious crime. From this perspective, morality becomes too sensitive aspect of life. Everyone is vulnerable. Very common errors like passing filching habit can swell into a huge moral crack. Everything can become permissible as in Humbert's life. Otherwise, Humbert would not have become fantasy-ridden in such a way.

Nabokov dramatizes criminality out of moral ambivalence in such a way as to prove it more serious than other type of crimes. Generally, the other crimes are out of scarcity, or of uncontrollable emotion. But Humbert's crime is out of distorted judgment. The other criminals realize that they have committed crime. They are ignorant and they learn from their crimes. But Humbert Humbert is an intellectual. His intellectuality passes his love in the tabooed region. He has intellectual justification for his crime of murder. His justification is not the ignorance as that happens with the other criminals. His is thought-cum-act criminal enactment. It is schizophrenia, and is almost incurable.

What lacks in criminality of moral ambivalence is guilt and repentance. Humbert Humbert commits crime. He realizes that he has done damage to Lolita's life. But his repentance is to take revenge against a fellow criminal. He does not try to return to Lolita what he has taken away from her. Even if he can not return to her her chastity, he can at least rescue her from the financial crisis she is going through. But only one thing comes to his mind, i.e., Quilty took away his Lolita for good. And there is also not any sign of repentance in his murder of Quilty. He becomes happy for he broke all laws of humanity. He has gone mad and in his madness there are no such terms as guilt and repentance.

Even if the feeling of guilt and repentance occurs in the antihero's moral vocabulary, it happens to be vestigial. Nabokov's antihero also shows guilt-feeling, but the feeling reflects moral ambivalence. Persistence of moral ambivalence for long time spreads

ambivalent attitude to each and every pore of life. Guilt and ambivalence turn half-hearted. Filthy desires become sacred. Humbert Humbert represents the perfect man of ambivalence. For him he is more a helpless lover than a criminal who needs repentance.

Paroxysm of love and hate also involves in Humbert's behavior. But impairment of moral faculty is more significant in his psychotic path than his impulsive acts. It's neither his cruel blows nor his inflammable lust that turns him criminal. Rather it is his distorted morality that turns him a criminal. If only his impulsiveness was responsible for his criminal psychology, he would be a criminal several years ago. Distortion in thinking results in a long gap of time. Humbert's long isolated life gradually affects his mentality and finally when he meets Lolita he has already digested love in the tabooed region. Such internalization of immorality still resists the fulfillment of his desire. Morality stands on his way. To avoid this, Humbert hovers between morality and immorality. By attaching himself to both the sides, he enacts his immoral desire.

Lolita thus presents the problem of fantasy that worsens due to moral ambivalence. It dramatizes how vulnerable a person is in his moral responsibility. It emphasizes the role of traumas and lack of proper guidance in one's moral depravity. This means if we are studying the morality of antihero like Humbert Humbert, then his traumatic experience and resultant psychological prison should be taken as the point of departure. Madness, perversion, cruelty, and criminality all have their starting point in traumatic experience. In order to explain the antics of antihero, the second step is to study how he develops other characteristics. The studies about how his attitude developed, how he gained his moral vocabulary, and how his moral vocabulary reshaped his life will give the final explanation of the whole complex personality like Humbert Humbert.

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