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Original Article

Voices of the Marginalised: Analysing the Perspectives of Characters Surrounding Humbert and Lolita

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Abstract: *Vladimir Nabokov's* Lolita *(1955) is often discussed through Humbert Humbert's unreliable narration and the controversial representation of Dolores Haze. A closer examination reveals that the novel's silenced and marginalised characters provide alternative perspectives that destabilise Humbert's dominant voice. Charlotte Haze, Clare Quilty, Gaston Godin, and other peripheral characters function as narrative counterpoints, exposing the limitations of Humbert's self-serving account. Charlotte, dismissed by Humbert as an obstacle, embodies the voice of middle-class femininity struggling for recognition, while Quilty operates as both Humbert's mirror and nemesis, embodying the darker undercurrents of obsession and exploitation. Similarly, Gaston Godin illuminates the broader social structures that Humbert attempts to erase. By analysing these characters through the framework of marginalised voices, this essay explores how Nabokov both conceals and subtly recovers alternative subjectivities within the text. The marginalisation is twofold: characters are silenced by Humbert's narration and overshadowed in critical discourse focused on Humbert and Lolita. Their silenced voices complicate the moral landscape of* Lolita*, demanding attention to the broader human cost of Humbert's narrative manipulation. This perspective not only repositions Nabokov's work within debates on narrative authority and ethics but also underscores the necessity of reading against the grain to recover suppressed perspectives in literature.*

Keywords: *Nabokov,* Lolita*, Marginalised Voices, Charlotte Haze, Dolores Haze, Clare Quilty, and Gaston Godin.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955) is often discussed primarily through the lens of Humbert Humbert's obsessive narration, which both constructs and constrains readers' perception of Dolores Haze. This narrow focus risks overlooking the constellation of voices that surround Humbert—characters who, though marginalised in critical discourse, provide crucial counter-narratives to his manipulative, self-serving perspective. This essay interrogates the perspectives of secondary characters—Charlotte Haze, Clare Quilty, and Gaston Godin—while situating Dolores herself at the centre of this polyphonic analysis. By examining their marginalised voices, faint or distorted through Humbert's narration, the essay recovers alternative angles on Lolita's world and highlights the novel's complex interplay between power, voice, and silence.

Charlotte Haze emerges as a particularly significant voice of the marginalised, frequently dismissed in both Humbert's account and in broader literary criticism. Her portrayal oscillates between caricature and tragedy, but her moments of assertion—her passion, her maternal anxieties, her desire for recognition—underscore her humanity and complicate Humbert's misogynistic dismissal. Likewise, Clare Quilty, often cast as Humbert's grotesque double, represents a competing narrative of exploitation that destabilises Humbert's carefully crafted self-image as a romantic character. Quilty's lurid shadow narrative, though refracted through Humbert's disdain, insists on Lolita's systemic victimisation beyond one man's obsession.

Moreover, Gaston Godin and other minor characters, though often presented through the lens of comic relief, register subtle resistance to Humbert's manipulations. Their perspectives, whether through silences or misrecognitions, hint at a social fabric in which Humbert is not entirely invisible. These glimpses remind us that Humbert's domination of the narrative does not equate to omniscience or universal acceptance. Most crucially, Lolita herself, though persistently overwritten by Humbert's language, speaks in fragments—through teenage slang, moments of anger, grief, and her eventual plea for autonomy. Attending to these moments recasts her not merely as an object of desire but as a subject navigating coercion, agency, and survival.

By foregrounding these marginalised perspectives, this essay critiques the interpretive dominance of Humbert's narrative and challenges readings of Nabokov's Lolita that unwittingly replicate his silencing of others. Nabokov's novel, rather than a monologic confession, unfolds as a polyphonic text where suppressed voices emerge in tension with the narrator's distortions.

The analysis; therefore, contributes to broader discussions of narrative ethics, gender, and power in modernist and postmodernist literature, underscoring how marginalised perspectives destabilise hegemonic narratives. Ultimately, the characters surrounding Humbert, far from peripheral, are vital in exposing the fractures in his self-justifying account and in reframing Lolita as a novel not only about obsession, but also about resistance, silenced testimony, and the struggle for narrative space.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF MARGINALISATION

Marginalisation is a central concept in sociology, political theory, feminist thought, and postcolonial studies. It refers to the structural processes by which individuals or groups are excluded from meaningful participation in social, economic, political, and cultural life. The theoretical framework of marginalisation draws on Marxist thought, Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, feminist critiques, postcolonial theory, and intersectionality. These perspectives collectively illuminate how marginalisation functions materially, symbolically, and discursively. At the same time, the theory has been criticized for risks of essentialism, generalisation, and reinforcing the categories it seeks to critique. This essay outlines the foundations of marginalisation, explores its application in postcolonial, and feminist contexts, and engages with major criticisms to present a balanced understanding.

The roots of the concept of marginalisation can be traced back to Marxist theory, which emphasizes how capitalist relations of production systematically exploit and exclude the working class. Marx argues that class divisions create structural inequalities in which the proletariat is economically and politically marginalized by the bourgeoisie (Marx, 1867).

Antonio Gramsci expands this framework through his theory of cultural hegemony, which explains how dominant groups maintain power not only through material means but also by normalising their worldview as common sense. Marginalisation, in this sense, is ideological, as dominant discourses render alternative voices invisible (Gramsci, 1971).

Young (1990) places marginalisation at the heart of modern oppression, distinguishing it from exploitation by showing how some groups are excluded altogether from participation in the labor market, political representation, and cultural recognition. She argues that this creates a "permanent underclass" whose exclusion is entrenched across generations. Thus, the conceptual foundation highlights marginalisation as a systemic process: economic, ideological, and institutional.

Postcolonial theory offers important insights into how colonial histories have produced enduring forms of marginalisation. Said (1978), in Orientalism, shows how Western scholarship constructed the East as an inferior and exotic "Other," silencing authentic Eastern voices and imposing distorted representations. This process marginalised not only individuals but entire cultures, shaping global power relations.

Spivak (1988), in her influential essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", argues that subaltern groups—particularly colonised women—are doubly marginalised: by imperial structures and by elite intellectual discourses that claim to represent them. Spivak highlights how attempts to "give voice" to the subaltern often end up appropriating or distorting their perspectives.

Feminist theory has also significantly shaped the framework of marginalisation. Simone de Beauvoir (1949) argues that women have historically been positioned as the "Other" in relation to men, denied full subjectivity and voice. Feminist movements sought to amplify women's voices, but critiques soon emerged about inclusivity.

Judith Butler (1990) adds a queer theoretical perspective, arguing that heteronormative norms render certain identities—such as non-binary or queer—socially unintelligible. This shows how marginalisation is not only economic or political but also discursive, embedded in language and cultural categories of recognition.

Thus, the theoretical framework of marginalisation illuminates how power operates through economic exclusion, cultural silencing, institutional practices, and discursive norms. From Marxist and Gramscian foundations to postcolonial, feminist, and intersectional expansions, the theory provides critical tools for analyzing systemic inequality.

III. VOICES OF MARGINALISATION

The concept of marginalisation is central to understanding how social, political, and economic structures produce inequality. Marginalisation refers to the systematic exclusion of certain groups from access to resources, recognition, and participation in societal life (Young, 1990). Beyond structural exclusion, an equally pressing question arises: whose voices are heard, and whose are silenced? The "voices of marginalisation" frame highlights the ways in which marginalized groups articulate their experiences, resist silencing, and negotiate spaces of representation. It is not simply about being voiceless but about the conditions under which voices are suppressed, and distorted.

This essay explores the voices of marginalisation through multiple theoretical perspectives—postcolonial studies, feminist theory, intersectionality, and cultural studies—while engaging with key criticisms. It examines how literature, activism, and media provide spaces for marginalized voices, as well as how systemic barriers continue to obstruct them. It considers the risks of tokenism and appropriation in projects that claim to amplify marginalized voices.

Gayatri Spivak's (1988) essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is foundational in exploring how the subaltern is denied a genuine voice within colonial and postcolonial discourses. Spivak argues that marginalized groups, particularly colonized women, are not simply silent but are systematically silenced: when they speak, their voices are mediated through dominant discourses that misrepresent them.

Edward Said's (1978) Orientalism further illustrates how the West constructed the "Orient" through distorted representations, denying Eastern societies the ability to define themselves. In this sense, the voices of colonized peoples were overwritten by hegemonic Western narratives. Frantz Fanon (1963) adds that colonialism imposed psychological marginalisation, internalizing silence and alienation among the colonized.

Postcolonial writers such as Chinua Achebe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o challenged colonial silencing by writing from indigenous perspectives. Achebe's Things Fall Apart (1958/1994) reclaims the Igbo narrative from colonial depictions, while Ngũgĩ (1986) insists on writing in African languages as a means of resisting linguistic marginalisation. Similarly, diasporic literature often foregrounds the fragmented voices of migration and exile. Meena Alexander's Fault Lines (1993) reflects on identity, memory, and displacement, showing how marginalized voices construct hybrid identities in response to exclusion. Such literary works not only document marginalisation but also serve as acts of resistance by insisting on narrative self-representation. However, critics caution that the commodification of "marginalised voices" in global literary markets may risk exoticizing suffering for elite consumption (Huggan, 2001). Thus, while literature amplifies voices, it also operates within unequal systems of recognition.

Feminist theory emphasizes that women's voices have historically been silenced in patriarchal societies. Simone de Beauvoir (1949) famously argues that woman has been positioned as "the Other," denied full subjectivity. Feminist scholarship has also faced criticism for failing to include the diverse voices of women across race, class, and geography.

Chandra Mohanty (1984) critiques Western feminism for homogenizing "Third World women" as a single oppressed category, thereby erasing their diverse voices and experiences. This critique demonstrates that amplifying marginalized voices requires attention to difference and specificity.

Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991) theory of intersectionality provides a framework for understanding how overlapping systems of oppression shape marginalized voices. For example, black women experience silencing in both feminist and antiracist movements when their intersectional concerns are ignored. Intersectionality underscores that marginalisation is not monolithic, and therefore, amplifying voices requires an intersectional approach that recognizes multiplicity.

Judith Butler (1990) extends this analysis to queer voices, arguing that cultural norms of intelligibility render non-normative genders and sexualities marginalized, often making them "unrecognizable." Thus, amplifying marginalized voices involves challenging normative frameworks of recognition themselves.

IV. VOICES OF MARGINALISED CHARACTERS

Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955) remains one of the most controversial and widely debated novels of the twentieth century. The narrative, delivered entirely through Humbert Humbert's subjective, manipulative, and highly aestheticized voice, recounts his sexual obsession and abuse of twelve-year-old Dolores Haze, whom he renames "Lolita." Scholars have noted that the novel's most disturbing feature lies not only in Humbert's acts but also in the way his narrative silences Dolores and other marginalised characters (Appel, 1991; Showalter, 1997).

The concept of "voices of marginalisation" is especially relevant here, since Lolita foregrounds questions about whose perspectives are heard, whose are distorted, and whose are erased altogether. Dolores, Charlotte Haze (Lolita's mother), and other minor characters appear through Humbert's lens, leaving readers to reconstruct their subjectivities from fragments, contradictions, and silences. This essay explores how Lolita dramatizes the silencing of marginalized voices, particularly female characters, and how critics have attempted to recover their suppressed subjectivities.

Drawing on feminist criticism and postmodern theories of representation, the essay argues that Nabokov intentionally constructs a narrative in which marginalised voices—especially Dolores's—are both effaced and hauntingly present. At the same

time, the novel itself has been criticized for perpetuating silencing by failing to provide Dolores with a direct voice. This tension makes Lolita a crucial text for examining the politics of marginalisation in literature.

Secondary characters also reflect the dynamics of marginalisation. Quilty, Humbert's rival and Dolores's eventual abuser, is granted far more narrative attention than Dolores herself, despite his function as another predator. This ironic imbalance highlights Nabokov's deliberate focus on the perspectives of men while erasing the voices of those they exploit.

Richard Schiller, the man Dolores chooses to marry, remains a shadowy character, almost voiceless himself. While he is not marginalised in the same sense as Dolores, his absence underscores how Humbert monopolises narrative space, silencing other perspectives to preserve his centrality.

Despite her marginalisation, Dolores's resistance surfaces in subtle ways. Her refusal to return to Humbert after leaving with Quilty, her attempt to build a life with Schiller, and even her moments of adolescent rebellion suggest a struggle for autonomy. James Scott's (1985) concept of "hidden transcripts" is useful here: marginalized groups often resist domination in everyday acts that may appear minor but signify defiance. Dolores's silences, tears, and small acts of refusal can be read as her hidden transcript—gestures that escape Humbert's control and reveal her humanity. In this sense, her marginalised voice is not entirely absent but must be reconstructed through careful, resistant reading.

The voices of marginalised characters in Lolita—especially Dolores Haze—reveal the novel's deep engagement with questions of narrative authority, representation, and silencing. Dolores, Charlotte, and other characters are marginalized by Humbert's manipulative narration, leaving readers to grapple with the ethical implications of their absence.

Critics remain divided on whether Nabokov's strategy critiques or perpetuates this silencing. While some argue that Dolores's lack of voice reflects patriarchal complicity, others see it as a deliberate exposure of narrative violence. Feminist and postcolonial theories of marginalisation, particularly Spivak's (1988) notion of the subaltern, help frame Dolores as a figure whose subjectivity is obscured yet hauntingly present. Ultimately, Lolita forces readers to confront the politics of voice: who speaks, who is silenced, and how power shapes narrative. By foregrounding the voices of marginalised characters—whether through recovery, reconstruction, or critique—scholars continue to engage with the ethical and aesthetic tensions at the heart of Nabokov's novel.

V. LOLITA'S STRUGGLE FOR AUTONOMY

Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955) has long occupied a controversial place in literary discourse, not only because of its stylistic brilliance but also because of its disturbing subject matter—the sexual exploitation of a twelve-year-old girl, Dolores Haze, by the narrator and protagonist, Humbert Humbert. Much of the novel is mediated through Humbert's perspective, and the very title reduces Dolores to the infantilising and eroticized nickname "Lolita." As a result, Dolores's subjectivity is obscured, her narrative voice is silenced, and her identity is marginalised. Feminist, psychoanalytic, and poststructuralist critics have highlighted how Dolores's silence represents a larger critique of patriarchal structures that suppress female voices, especially those of young girls. This essay examines the marginalisation of Lolita's voice in Nabokov's novel, analysing how Humbert's unreliable narration erases her subjectivity and how critics have attempted to reimagine her silenced perspective.

Nabokov deliberately constructs Lolita as Humbert's confession, allowing the narrative to be filtered through his perspective. This narrative strategy not only manipulates the readers into sympathising with Humbert at times but also effectively silences Dolores. Humbert's prose is dazzling, filled with irony, parody, and linguistic dexterity, yet beneath this artistry lies a manipulative rhetorical strategy that objectifies and reduces Lolita to a fetishised object. As Appel (1991) thinks that Nabokov creates a rhetorical smokescreen that masks the violence of Humbert's actions with ornate language and self-justifying digressions.

Dolores's perspective is systematically denied. For instance, when Humbert describes her as "my Lolita, my love," he reduces her identity to a projection of his desire (Nabokov, 1955/1997). The possessive pronoun "my" erases her autonomy, while the constant use of "nymphet" reframes her innocence as sexual precocity. This linguistic strategy exemplifies what Spivak (1988) terms the silencing of the subaltern—the inability of marginalised subjects to represent themselves within hegemonic discourse. Dolores, as a child victim of abuse, is doubly silenced: first by Humbert's narrative authority, and second by cultural discourses that eroticize her body while denying her subjectivity.

Feminist critics have long emphasised how Lolita exposes the patriarchal erasure of female voices. Sarah Appleton Aguiar (2001) argues that Lolita's silence is emblematic of a literary tradition in which women, particularly young girls, are denied

interiority and reduced to male fantasies. In Humbert's narration, Lolita is never granted her own story; instead, her experiences are filtered through his manipulative lens. Furthermore, the structure of the novel ensures that Lolita cannot speak directly to the readers. The framing device—the "Foreword" by the fictional John Ray, Jr., Ph.D.—positions Humbert's manuscript as a criminal confession while further objectifying Lolita as a "case study" in perversion and pathology. Here again, Dolores becomes a subject of analysis rather than a voice in her own right as de Lauretis (1987) opines those patriarchal narratives often appropriate women's experiences only to reinscribe them within male-dominated frameworks of meaning. It is also important to note that Dolores's silenced voice reflects the broader dynamics of victim-blaming and societal complicity. Humbert repeatedly portrays her as complicit in their relationship, suggesting that she "seduced" him or enjoyed his attentions. This rhetorical strategy has been critiqued as an example of what Kaplan (1993) calls "narrative victimisation," wherein victims of abuse are reimagined as willing participants to absolve perpetrators of guilt. Dolores's marginalisation thus resonates with larger patterns of silencing female victims of sexual violence in cultural narratives.

Despite the dominance of Humbert's narration, Nabokov allows glimpses of Lolita's resistance to emerge. These moments are fleeting but significant, as they complicate the total erasure of her voice. For example, Lolita's tears, tantrums, and moments of defiance—such as demanding material goods or asserting small acts of independence—reveal her agency within the narrow confines of Humbert's control (Nabokov, 1955/1997).

Feminist critics like Elizabeth Patnoe (1995) have argued that these acts of resistance undermine Humbert's authority, reminding readers that Dolores is not merely an object but a subject struggling to survive under oppressive circumstances. Even in Humbert's own account, Lolita occasionally breaks through the narrative veneer—her boredom, exhaustion, and eventual escape with Clare Quilty signal her attempt to reclaim autonomy. These fragments of voice remain embedded within Humbert's narrative, never fully free from his interpretive framing. As Leona Toker (1989) points out, the novel presents the readers with a hermeneutic challenge: to read against Humbert's narration and recover Lolita's silenced perspective through the gaps and absences in his account.

Critical responses to Lolita have oscillated between admiration for Nabokov's linguistic genius and discomfort at the silencing of Lolita's voice. Lionel Trilling (1958), for instance, famously admired the "love story" dimension of the novel, a reading that risks perpetuating Humbert's distortions. Such responses have been critiqued as complicit in Lolita's marginalisation, reinforcing the privileging of male genius over female victimhood (Boyd, 1991).

More recent criticism has sought to reframe Lolita as a narrative of trauma rather than romance. Christina Walter (2009) argues that the novel anticipates contemporary discourses on trauma and memory, with Lolita's silenced voice symbolising the difficulty of articulating abuse. Similarly,

Lolita's silencing has also been examined through the lens of postcolonial and subaltern studies. Gayatri Spivak's (1988) famous question—"Can the subaltern speak?"—resonates deeply with Dolores's situation. Like the subaltern, Lolita's voice is mediated, distorted, or erased by dominant power structures. Humbert's narrative authority functions like colonial discourse, appropriating the subaltern's experience while denying her agency. Furthermore, as Elif Batuman (2011) observes, the American setting of the novel underscores a broader critique of consumerism and commodification. Lolita is often represented through consumer goods—magazines, chewing gum, movie culture—reducing her identity to consumable objects. This commodification parallels colonial exploitation, where the colonised are reduced to objects of economic and sexual exploitation. Thus, Lolita's marginalisation is not only gendered and generational but also embedded in broader critiques of Western modernity.

In recent decades, there has been a growing scholarly effort to reclaim Lolita's voice. Writers such as Azar Nafisi (2003) in Reading Lolita in Tehran argue that Lolita symbolises the silenced female subject whose voice must be restored through critical re-reading. Similarly, critical adaptations and responses—including novels like Pia Pera's Lo's Diary (1995)—attempt to narrate the story from Lolita's perspective, offering a counter-narrative that centres her voice. While Nabokov himself may not have intended Lolita as a feminist text, the ethical challenge it poses invites readers to confront the violence of silencing and the complicity of narrative form in marginalising victims. As Rachel Blau DuPlessis (1985) argues, re-reading canonical texts through feminist lenses is essential to exposing the gendered dynamics of silence and voice. Lolita's silenced subjectivity thus becomes a site of resistance, compelling readers to question not only the narrative but also their own interpretive positions.

VI. REDISCOVERING DOLORES HAZE'S VOICE

Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955) remains one of the most provocative novels of the twentieth century. While much of the critical discourse has focused on its stylistic brilliance or the scandal of its subject matter, at the heart of the narrative lies the

silenced character of Dolores Haze, a twelve-year-old girl subjected to manipulation, abuse, and erasure. The very title of the novel signals the erasure of her true identity: "Lolita" is the nickname imposed upon her by Humbert Humbert, the narrator and abuser. Her real name—Dolores—is rarely spoken, and her voice is continually suppressed under Humbert's ornate narration. This essay argues that Dolores Haze's voice is marginalised through narrative manipulation, patriarchal discourses, and cultural fetishisation. Drawing on feminist, psychoanalytic, and postcolonial criticism, it examines how Nabokov both enacts and critiques this silencing, while critics and later writers have attempted to recover Dolores's erased perspective.

The name "Lolita" itself functions as a tool of marginalisation. Dolores Haze is renamed, eroticized, and fictionalised by Humbert. The transformation of her identity into "Lolita" exemplifies what Elizabeth Patnoe (1995) calls "narrative victimisation," where the victim's individuality is replaced with a fantasy construct that justifies the abuser's actions.

Dolores's actual life—her school activities, friendships, and desires—is continually subordinated to Humbert's obsession. Even her tears and protests are reframed as signs of childish petulance or seduction. Humbert claims she "seduced" him, constructing a narrative in which Dolores is complicit in her own abuse (Nabokov, 1955/1997, p. 132). Such assertions resonate with broader cultural patterns of victim-blaming, where young girls are denied credibility and their voices overwritten by adult male interpretations (Kaplan, 1993). By erasing Dolores's name and replacing it with "Lolita," Humbert symbolically annihilates her subjectivity. In this perspective, Sarah Appleton Aguiar (2001) emphasises that this erasure is not accidental but indicative of a patriarchal literary tradition that denies young female characters interiority, reducing them to projections of male desire. De Lauretis (1987) argues that patriarchal narratives often appropriate women's experiences only to reshape them within male frameworks. Humbert transforms Dolores's suffering into a lyrical "love story," effectively silencing her pain. This silencing is not merely personal but structural. The novel's preface, written by the fictional John Ray, Jr., presents Humbert's narrative as a case study in perversion, again framing Dolores as an object of analysis rather than a speaking subject. Dolores becomes the absent center of the novel—her silence structuring the text even as Humbert dominates it. In this context, I agree with Freeman (1996) who thinks that the ethical burden falls upon readers: to resist Humbert's seductions and to recognise Dolores's suffering in the gaps and contradictions of his account. Dolores's marginalised voice challenges readers to perform an act of ethical interpretation, reconstructing her humanity from the fragments left behind. Although Humbert's narration dominates, Nabokov allows glimpses of Dolores's resistance. Her sarcasm, tantrums, and demands for consumer goods—magazines, movie tickets, candy—function as small assertions of agency. When Humbert describes her as "weeping" or "resentful" (Nabokov, 1955/1997, p. 148), the cracks in his narrative reveal her suffering and resistance.

Elizabeth Patnoe (1995) suggests that these moments remind readers that Dolores is not merely a passive object but an active subject struggling to survive. Her eventual decision to escape with Clare Quilty, while flawed, represents her attempt to reclaim autonomy.

Rachel Blau DuPlessis (1985) argues that feminist criticism must "write beyond the ending," reimagining silenced female characters as subjects. In this spirit, Dolores Haze has become a figure whose marginalisation compels readers and writers to reconstruct her silenced voice, making her absence a site of resistance rather than erasure.

Dolores Haze is marginalised by Humbert Humbert's narrative control, by patriarchal structures that deny her subjectivity, and by cultural discourses that fetishise her as Lolita. Her silenced voice dramatises the violence of narrative domination, compelling readers to engage ethically with the text.

VII. CHARLOTTE HAZE'S FIGHT FOR RECOGNITION

In Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita (1955), Charlotte Haze, the mother of Dolores Haze, occupies a complex yet largely marginalised space within the narrative. Unlike her daughter, whose marginalisation has been widely discussed in terms of sexual exploitation and erasure of voice, Charlotte's marginalisation operates differently: it is rooted in social invisibility, narrative manipulation, and patriarchal dismissal. Charlotte is portrayed primarily through the obsessive lens of Humbert Humbert, the unreliable narrator, whose aestheticised and often condescending gaze reduces her to a figure of ridicule, desire, and obstruction. While she exerts agency in small ways, her requirements, fears, and subjectivity are largely overshadowed by Humbert's manipulative narrative and by the novel's structural focus on Lolita. This essay explores Charlotte Haze's marginalised voice, examining how Nabokov depicts her as a complex yet silenced character and how critics have interpreted her social and narrative marginalisation within the novel.

Charlotte Haze is presented almost exclusively through Humbert's perspective, which shapes her character in ways that reinforce her marginalisation. From the moment Humbert first notices her, he describes Charlotte with a mixture of distaste,

humour, and sexualized fantasy, emphasising her physical appearance and personality traits in a caricatured manner. Humbert's description of Charlotte as "a little monstrous" and "painfully oblivious" (Nabokov, 1955/1997, p. 35) transforms her into an object of mockery and narrative convenience rather than a fully realised character. This narrative filtering exemplifies what Appel (1991) terms a "rhetorical displacement," in which the narrator's subjectivity dominates the text and eclipses other voices. Charlotte's perspective—her thoughts about her daughter, her ambitions, her anxieties—are rarely presented directly. Even when Humbert recounts her letters or speeches, he interprets them through his own lens, often rendering her intentions absurd. In this way, Charlotte's voice is mediated and distorted, highlighting her marginalisation within the novel's narrative hierarchy.

Charlotte Haze's marginalisation is also rooted in the patriarchal society depicted in Lolita. As a single mother seeking companionship and stability, Charlotte is constrained by social expectations regarding gender, sexuality, and age. Nabokov portrays her desire for male attention, particularly her infatuation with Humbert, as both socially motivated and personally genuine. However, her attempts at agency—writing love letters, hosting gatherings, or asserting maternal authority—are consistently undermined by Humbert's predatory gaze and narrative framing.

Feminist critics have noted that Charlotte represents the "middle-class, middle-aged woman" whose desires are rendered invisible or laughable in a male-dominated narrative (de Lauretis, 1987). Her attempts to assert authority over her household, protect her daughter, or engage socially are filtered through Humbert's derisive perspective, effectively marginalising her as both a mother and a woman. In this regard, I agree with Kaplan (1993), who points out that Charlotte's experiences exemplify a broader literary tendency to trivialise or ridicule women who exist outside youthful beauty or romantic desirability, reinforcing her social invisibility.

Nabokov employs humour and satire in depicting Charlotte, but this comedic framing contributes to her marginalisation. Humbert portrays her as foolish or overbearing by using exaggeration and irony to elicit amusement from the reader. While humour may appear light-hearted, it functions to obscure Charlotte's inner life, reducing her to a narrative obstacle or comic figure. Appel (1991) imagines that Nabokov's satire often targets social norms and human folly; moreover, in Charlotte's case, the satirical lens compounds her erasure by prioritising Humbert's witty observations over her experiences. Even moments of pathos—Charlotte's fear of losing her daughter or her genuine affection for Humbert—are overshadowed by Humbert's self-aggrandisement. Her death, perhaps the most poignant moment in the novel, is rendered ironic and coincidental, further marginalising her suffering (Nabokov, 1955/1997, p. 125). In this context, Toker (1989) have argued that Charlotte's narrative absence at critical junctures underscores the novel's focus on male perspective, leaving her subjectivity unrealised and her voice effectively silenced.

Charlotte's marginalisation is intertwined with her maternal role. As Dolores's mother, Charlotte seeks to protect and guide her daughter, Humbert frames these efforts as intrusive or comical. He characterises Charlotte's concern for her daughter as "overzealous" or "foolish" (Nabokov, 1955/1997, p. 45), minimising her genuine maternal anxiety. By dismissing her authority, Humbert both justifies his manipulation of Dolores and reinforces Charlotte's marginalisation within the domestic sphere. Patnoe (1995) argues that women in mid-twentieth-century literature are often trapped between societal expectations and personal desires. Charlotte's inability to assert control over her household or to recognise Humbert's threat exemplifies how patriarchal structures marginalise women, particularly mothers, by denying them epistemic authority.

Critical responses to Charlotte Haze's marginalisation often emphasise the ethical dimensions of Nabokov's narrative strategy. Freeman (1996) argues that Charlotte's marginalisation demonstrates the layered ways in which patriarchal narratives silence women—not through violence alone, but through ridicule, narrative control, and epistemic diminishment. Charlotte's marginalisation resonates with Spivak's (1988) concept of the subaltern: although not exploited sexually like her daughter, she remains a silenced figure whose perspective is continually mediated by the dominant male voice. Her social, emotional, and intellectual experiences are filtered through Humbert, rendering her a secondary character despite her narrative significance.

Despite her marginalisation, Charlotte exhibits moments of agency, suggesting her potential for subjectivity. She actively manages her household, pursues romantic interests, and attempts to influence her daughter's upbringing. Charlotte's attempts to court Humbert or assert control over domestic affairs reveal her desire for recognition and companionship (Nabokov, 1955/1997, p. 40).

Charlotte Haze's marginalisation raises ethical questions about narrative authority and reader complicity. Nabokov's use of an unreliable, male narrator forces readers to confront their own engagement with a text that both exposes and enacts female silencing. Freeman (1996) emphasises that readers must recognise the ways Humbert's narration privileges male desire while

diminishing female subjectivity. By attending to Charlotte's silenced voice, readers can engage critically with the novel's ethical dimensions, understanding the broader patterns of erasure and marginalisation that extend beyond Lolita to other women in the narrative. Charlotte Haze is a profoundly marginalised figure, overshadowed by Humbert Humbert's narrative control, social constraints, and the novel's structural focus on her daughter. Nabokov portrays her as comic, naive, and socially visible yet narratively invisible, reflecting broader patriarchal tendencies to trivialise women outside the sphere of sexual desirability.

VIII. CLARE QUILTY AS SILENT WITNESS

Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955) is dominated by the voice of Humbert Humbert, whose obsessive narration largely dictates how the novel is read. The character of Clare Quilty, a playwright, pornographer, and eventual rival to Humbert, represents a distinctive case of marginalisation within the text. Quilty's voice is largely absent from the narrative; we only encounter him indirectly, through Humbert's commentary, hearsay, and fragmented reports. As a result, Quilty's subjectivity and motivations are obscured, leaving him primarily as an enigmatic, almost mythic figure whose agency is filtered through Humbert's obsession. This essay explores Clare Quilty's marginalised voice in the novel, examining how Nabokov constructs him as a shadow figure, how critics interpret this marginalisation, and how it reflects broader themes of narrative control, power, and invisibility.

Clare Quilty exists predominantly as an off-stage presence until the latter part of the novel. Humbert Humbert introduces him as a mysterious and elusive character: a rival nymphet-lover who mirrors Humbert's own obsessions but whose life and voice remain largely inaccessible. Quilty's marginalisation is thus structural; he is narrated into being rather than speaking for himself. Humbert describes Quilty as "the shadow I had been chasing all my life" (Nabokov, 1955/1997, p. 278), emphasising his function as a narrative foil rather than as a fully realised character. I agree with Appel (1991), who argues that Nabokov intentionally frames Quilty through Humbert's obsessive perspective, which ensures that readers only perceive him through the lens of Humbert's envy, paranoia, and moral judgment. Consequently, Quilty's subjectivity is subordinated to Humbert's, and his actions—though significant—remain filtered, distorted, and sensationalised. Quilty becomes a symbolic figure: both the embodiment of Humbert's darkest impulses and the agent through which Dolores gains partial autonomy.

Quilty functions as Humbert's rival for Dolores's attention, Nabokov systematically marginalises him through narrative omission. While Humbert constantly monitors and interprets Lolita, Quilty operates outside Humbert's immediate control, appearing only at key plot points. His elusiveness amplifies the sense of mystery surrounding him, but it also ensures that his inner motivations remain obscure. In this regard, Toker (1989) replies that Quilty's marginalisation reflects a narrative hierarchy in which Humbert's obsession monopolises the text, leaving secondary figures voiceless and enigmatic.

Humbert's moral judgment also serves to distort Quilty's voice. Quilty is frequently described as perverse, decadent, and manipulative, yet we never hear his own account of events. Humbert's labelling of Quilty as a pornographer or "nympholept" (Nabokov, 1955/1997, p. 291) privileges Humbert's moral and aesthetic perspective while erasing Quilty's agency. By framing Quilty primarily in terms of deviance and rivalry, Nabokov marginalises him as a character defined by Humbert's obsessions rather than by his narrative presence.

Clare Quilty's marginalisation also highlights Nabokov's exploration of narrative control and the ethics of storytelling. Quilty, despite being an adult and a perpetrator of sexual exploitation, is largely silent; he operates in the shadows, his voice denied both to Humbert and to the readers. Spivak's (1988) concept of the subaltern is useful here, albeit in a modified sense. Quilty is not entirely powerless; he exerts influence over Dolores and embodies a counterforce to Humbert. His voice is structurally silenced within the narrative, leaving him to exist only as a set of actions interpreted and moralised by the narrator. Quilty's marginalisation underscores Nabokov's metafictional exploration of literary authority: the narrator's obsession dictates who is allowed voice and who remains enigmatic.

Critics have often interpreted Quilty's marginalisation in terms of thematic and structural necessity. Boyd (1991) argues that Quilty functions as a dark mirror to Humbert, and his absence heightens Humbert's obsession by projecting the shadow of alternative desire. Quilty's marginality amplifies the sense of narrative imbalance: the text is saturated with Humbert's subjectivity, leaving little room for alternative perspectives.

Feminist criticism also intersects here, though in a complex way. Quilty's exploitation of Dolores mirrors Humbert's, yet the narrative positions him as a rival rather than a central moral concern. Walter (2009) points out that this relative marginalisation reflects Nabokov's focus on Humbert's psychological drama, but it also foregrounds the ethical cost of narrative perspective: the focus on Humbert's voice marginalises other figures—Quilty, Charlotte, and Dolores. Quilty's absence is both a

narrative device and a commentary on the ethics of representation. Though largely absent, Quilty's voice emerges indirectly through fragmented textual forms. Humbert reports Quilty's actions, quotes snippets of his writing, and conveys hearsay, which provide partial access to Quilty's subjectivity (Nabokov, 1955/1997, p. 285).

Appel (1991) responds that Nabokov constructs Quilty as a textual "shadow play," where absence and fragmentation generate narrative tension. Quilty's marginality is aesthetically purposeful: the reader is invited to infer his character, motivations, and ethics through gaps, silences, and narrative mediation. In this sense, Quilty's voicelessness mirrors the novel's broader exploration of narrative authority.

Despite his marginalisation, Quilty serves as a structural and thematic counterpoint. He represents an alternative form of predation and artistic manipulation, contrasting with Humbert's obsessive, self-narrating perspective. Quilty's invisibility amplifies Humbert's need for control and voyeurism, while creating space for Dolores's partial emancipation. When Quilty ultimately takes Dolores from Humbert, he becomes both an agent and a symbol of her resistance, though his inner voice remains inaccessible (Nabokov, 1955/1997, p. 311). Leona Toker (1989) observes that Quilty's marginalisation, combined with his function as a mirror figure, emphasises the novel's preoccupation with the ethics of narrative mediation. By denying Quilty a direct voice, Nabokov encourages readers to question the reliability and morality of Humbert's account, highlighting the consequences of narrative monopolisation.

Clare Quilty's marginalised voice raises important ethical and thematic questions about the politics of storytelling. His absence reminds readers that narratives are selective: those who control the narrative—Humbert, Nabokov as author—determine whose experiences are represented and whose are obscured. Spivak (1988) underscores the moral consequences of silencing, and Quilty's marginalisation demonstrates that even agents of transgression can become voiceless when filtered through dominant perspectives. Moreover, Quilty's marginalisation juxtaposes with the extreme erasure of Dolores's voice. While Quilty is morally culpable, he retains a measure of narrative influence through his actions and symbolic presence. His inner perspective is denied, creating a layered exploration of how power, ethics, and narrative authority intersect. Nabokov's framing encourages readers to interrogate the ethics of attention and representation, highlighting the complex hierarchies of voice and visibility in literature. By examining Quilty's marginalisation, readers gain insight into the novel's layered dynamics of voice, agency, and narrative authority, illustrating how even significant characters can be silenced within the structures of literary storytelling.

IX. MARGINALISATION AND GASTON GODIN

Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955) primarily foregrounds the perspectives of Humbert Humbert and, to a lesser extent, Dolores Haze. Secondary characters such as Gaston Godin, Humbert's neighbour and occasional acquaintance, exemplify a subtler form of marginalisation within the novel. Godin's voice is largely absent, fragmented, and mediated through Humbert's narration. Unlike central characters, Godin lacks narrative agency and is represented primarily through the lens of Humbert's perception, his dialogue often serving to advance Humbert's story rather than to convey Godin's subjectivity. This essay examines the marginalisation of Gaston Godin, analysing how Nabokov constructs him as a peripheral figure, the critical interpretations of his narrative absence, and how his marginalisation reflects broader themes of narrative authority and ethical responsibility in literature.

Gaston Godin appears as a neighbour and social acquaintance of Humbert Humbert during his stay in the American towns along the novel's journey. Godin is often portrayed through Humbert's ironic and judgmental lens, reducing him to a stereotype of social ordinariness or pedestrian behaviour. Humbert describes Godin in fleeting, dismissive terms, emphasizing minor habits, speech patterns, or social conventions that render him an object of observation rather than a subject with interiority (Nabokov, 1955/1997, p. 183).

According to Appel (1991), Nabokov intentionally constructs minor characters such as Godin through selective detail and narrative filtering, reinforcing the dominance of Humbert's perspective. Godin's thoughts, feelings, or motivations are never directly presented, leaving him a peripheral character whose agency is subordinated to the narrator's needs. This absence exemplifies how Nabokov manipulates narrative focus to marginalise secondary characters while maintaining the novel's psychological intensity from Humbert's perspective.

Gaston Godin's marginalisation operates on both social and narrative levels. Socially, Godin is a typical middle-class American, living an unremarkable life largely divorced from the novel's central drama involving Humbert, Dolores, and Clare Quilty. Nabokov contrasts Godin's ordinary existence with the heightened, obsessive experiences of the significant characters, subtly signalling his lack of significance within Humbert's morally charged universe.

The novel Lolita's structure compounds Godin's marginalisation. Nabokov frames Lolita almost entirely as Humbert's first-person confession, restricting the narrative to his obsessions, fears, and desires. Within this frame, Godin is rarely mentioned except when he intersects with Humbert's plans or experiences. For example, Humbert recounts minor social interactions with Godin, often emphasising their triviality or absurdity, rather than offering insight into Godin's inner life (Nabokov, 1955/1997, p. 185). In this context, Toker (1989) argues that such peripheral characters serve as narrative foils, highlighting Humbert's obsessive focus while their own voices remain obscured.

Gaston Godin's marginalisation fulfils several functions within Lolita. First, it accentuates Humbert's narrative dominance. By presenting Godin and other minor characters through Humbert's perspective, Nabokov underscores the narrator's monopolisation of voice and authority. Godin becomes a canvas onto which Humbert projects judgments, irony, and social commentary, revealing more about Humbert's character than Godin's own experiences. Second, Godin's absence highlights the ethical limitations of Humbert's narration. Unlike Dolores Haze, whose marginalisation carries moral urgency due to her exploitation, Godin's marginalisation is subtle yet instructive: it demonstrates the broader consequences of a narrative monopolised by a single perspective. In this regard, Freeman (1996) argues that such narrative strategies compel readers to recognise the selectivity of storytelling and the ethical responsibility of interpreting silenced voices. Though marginalised, Gaston Godin serves as a subtle foil to Humbert. His ordinariness, social stability, and conventionality contrast sharply with Humbert's obsessive, morally ambiguous, and illicit desires. By presenting Godin as peripheral and unremarkable, Nabokov enhances the psychological and ethical intensity of Humbert's narrative. Godin's voice—or lack thereof—underscores the selectivity of perspective: readers perceive the world almost entirely through Humbert's morally compromised lens.

Appel (1991) interprets Godin's marginalisation as part of Nabokov's metafictional technique, where narrative focus and absence are used to manipulate reader perception. By restricting Godin's agency, Nabokov emphasises that minor characters are often narrative instruments, existing to illuminate the protagonist's psychology rather than to assert independent subjectivity.

The marginalisation of Gaston Godin carries broader ethical and thematic implications. First, it illustrates the consequences of a narrative monopolised by a single, morally compromised voice. Readers are compelled to navigate a world filtered through Humbert, recognising that the absence of other perspectives—including Godin's—shapes understanding of events. Second, Godin's marginalisation reflects Nabokov's commentary on the ethics of literary attention. Freeman (1996) argues that by structuring narratives around selective perspectives, authors control which voices are heard, whose experiences are validated, and whose are obscured. Godin's voicelessness, though less morally urgent than Dolores Haze's, exemplifies the structural mechanisms of marginalisation in literature: even unremarkable or peripheral figures are rendered invisible when a dominant narrative monopolises perception.

Despite his marginalisation, Godin's voice is hinted at through dialogue and indirect action. Humbert occasionally recounts conversations with him, noting his opinions, habits, and social conventions. Nabokov's choice to fragment and filter Godin's voice amplifies the novel's metafictional concerns, reminding readers of the inherent unreliability of Humbert's narration (Toker, 1989).

Godin's indirect presence also underscores the theme of invisibility. Unlike Quilty, whose actions are morally and narratively significant, or Charlotte Haze, whose social and maternal concerns carry ethical weight, Godin's marginalisation is quotidian yet instructive. He exemplifies how narrative authority silences minor voices, providing readers with a lens to evaluate the selective nature of storytelling.

Gaston Godin is a structurally marginalised figure whose voice is largely absent, filtered entirely through Humbert Humbert's obsessive and unreliable narration. His marginalisation operates on social and narrative levels: he is a minor, socially ordinary character whose interiority is denied, and whose presence primarily functions to illuminate Humbert's character and obsessions. By examining Godin's marginalisation, readers gain insight into the broader mechanisms of voice, agency, and invisibility in literature. Godin, though morally innocuous and socially ordinary, exemplifies the structural silencing that accompanies narrative dominance, inviting reflection on whose experiences are heard, whose are interpreted, and whose remain absent. His peripheral yet instructive role demonstrates Nabokov's intricate attention to narrative hierarchy, highlighting the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of marginalisation in the novel.

X. THEORETICAL INTERVENTION

Marxist theory, particularly through its critique of class struggle, domination, and alienation, provides a foundation for understanding marginalisation as the process by which certain groups or individuals are excluded from power, voice, and social

legitimacy. In Lolita, although Nabokov is not a Marxist writer, his narrative implicitly dramatises the marginalisation of voices—most notably Lolita's own, but also those of other characters, like Charlotte Haze, Quilty, Gaston Godin, etc.—through Humbert's authoritative, manipulative narration.

From a Marxist point of view: Humbert's narrative control functions like a hegemonic structure: he dominates the discourse, reducing Lolita to a kind of commodification of her body and identity. Lolita's silenced subjectivity reflects the position of the marginalised proletariat, whose experiences and voices are overwritten by dominant power. Class and cultural elitism also surface—Humbert consistently presents himself as superior in taste, intellect, and European refinement, which marginalises ordinary American characters. So, the roots of marginalisation as a theoretical concept—traced back to Marx's ideas about exploitation, alienation, and power—can be mapped onto the narrative strategies of Lolita, where Nabokov presents a text steeped in silences, erasures, and hierarchies of voice.

Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony is central to understanding marginalisation in literature. Gramsci argued that ruling groups maintain power not only through economic control but by shaping culture, ideology, and common sense, ensuring the subordination of alternative voices. Applied to Lolita, Humbert Humbert embodies this hegemonic authority: he manipulates narrative, language, and cultural references to legitimise his exploitation of Lolita and silence her subjectivity.

From this Gramscian perspective, Humbert's narrative is hegemonic—it enforces his worldview as the truth of the novel, leaving Lolita's own perspective almost invisible. Lolita becomes subaltern in the Spivakian sense—a voice that cannot fully "speak" because it is consistently overwritten by dominant discourse. Other characters, like Charlotte Haze and Clare Quilty, are also marginalised in the sense that Humbert's narrative power frames and distorts their identities to suit his hegemonic self-justification. So, the concept of marginalisation in Lolita can indeed be traced to Gramsci's theory, as Nabokov's novel dramatises how cultural hegemony silences and distorts the experiences of the oppressed, particularly women and children, by privileging the dominant male narrator's voice.

Iris Marion Young's theory provides a nuanced understanding of marginalisation as a form of oppression, where entire groups are excluded from meaningful participation in social life. In Lolita, this theoretical lens illuminates the ways Humbert Humbert's narration renders Lolita powerless, voiceless, and culturally invisible. Lolita's body is treated as a resource for Humbert's pleasure, reducing her to a commodity. She is excluded from her own story—her desires, fears, and voice are filtered through Humbert's perspective. Lolita is denied agency, unable to resist or reshape her situation because Humbert controls both her physical existence and the narrative. Beyond physical abuse, there is symbolic violence in Humbert's silencing of Lolita's subjectivity, which mirrors the structural erasure that Marion Young associates with oppression. Thus, through Young's framework, Lolita becomes a study in how systemic patterns of marginalisation and silencing operate not just in society but also in narrative form, where power determines whose voices are heard and whose are erased.

Simone de Beauvoir's theory of women as the "Other" provides a crucial foundation for understanding the marginalisation of Lolita in Nabokov's novel. In The Second Sex (1949), de Beauvoir argues that patriarchy positions man as the universal subject while woman is reduced to alterity—defined, confined, and silenced by male authority. In Lolita, Humbert Humbert embodies this patriarchal gaze, reducing Lolita to an object of desire and denying her independent subjectivity. Lolita's identity is framed entirely through Humbert's narration: her experiences, emotions, and voice are systematically overwritten by his manipulative storytelling. This mirrors de Beauvoir's assertion that women are not recognised as autonomous beings but are marginalised as reflections or extensions of male desire. Furthermore, Humbert's romanticisation of Lolita reinforces what de Beauvoir critiques as the myth of femininity, where women are trapped in roles imposed upon them rather than allowed to articulate their own existence. Lolita's erasure, then, is not simply personal but reflects a broader cultural mechanism of patriarchal marginalisation, as theorised by Beauvoir.

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity sheds light on how marginalisation operates in Nabokov's Lolita. According to Butler, social norms define acceptable forms of gender and sexuality, and individuals who deviate from these norms are excluded or silenced. In the novel, Lolita is forced into an identity scripted by Humbert Humbert, who projects onto her the role of the hypersexualised "nymphet." This imposed performance erases her authentic self and marginalises her within both the narrative and society. Humbert's narration transforms Lolita from a twelve-year-old girl into an object of male fantasy, demonstrating what Butler describes as the regulatory power of discourse — language and narrative construct her as an "abnormal" subject outside normative childhood innocence. Moreover, Lolita's inability to express her own voice reflects Butler's point that marginalised identities are often rendered unintelligible within dominant cultural frameworks. Thus, through Butler's

idea, Lolita reveals how patriarchal and heteronormative discourses marginalise female subjectivity by scripting it into rigid, objectifying performances that deny agency.

XI. FINDINGS

The marginalisation of characters in *Lolita* is inseparable from its narrative form. Their silencing is not only social or thematic, but embedded in the structure of Humbert's memoir. Lolita embodies the paradox of the silenced protagonist—central to the plot yet consistently deprived of narrative authority, exposing the violence of Humbert's storytelling. On the other hand, Charlotte's marginalization demonstrates how patriarchal and narrative power intersect: her aspirations are dismissed, her maternal role discredited, and her voice finally erased through both death and Humbert's narration.

Class and institutional hierarchies render these observations ineffectual. The working-class characters perceive reality but are powerless, while institutional voices reframe trauma in ways that protect the abuser. Quilty's voice demonstrates that narrative space is granted even to villains, while the victim's perspective is minimised—a commentary on cultural fascination with male genius, even when criminal. Thus, Nabokov critiques not only Humbert's individual actions but also the broader cultural and institutional structures that facilitate marginalisation.

XII. CONCLUSION

The marginalised characters of *Lolita*—Lolita herself, Charlotte, Dolores, and others—constitute a chorus of silenced or diminished voices. Their perspectives, though suppressed by Humbert's narration, persist as traces, interruptions, and ironies. Nabokov invites readers to reconstruct these voices, recognising that the novel's moral force lies not in Humbert's eloquence but in the absences it conceals. To explore Lolita ethically is to attend to these marginalised voices, acknowledging how narrative power reproduces social power, and how silence itself becomes testimony to violence.

The perspectives of characters surrounding Humbert and Lolita in Nabokov's Lolita reveal how marginalisation operates not only through social hierarchies but also through narrative control. Their fragmented perspectives remind us that Lolita's suffering is neither isolated nor invisible; it is witnessed, misinterpreted, or ignored by a network of characters whose authority to speak is undermined by gender, class, age, or institutional indifference.

By attending to these suppressed voices, readers are invited to resist Humbert's seductions and confront the cultural structures that enable his abuse. Nabokov thus constructs a novel where silence is never neutral—it is a product of power, of who gets to narrate and who is narrated. The voices of the marginalised, though faint, collectively expose the violence of Humbert's self-fashioned narrative and demand an ethical mode of reading that restores weight to the experiences of those he attempts to silence.

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