

A Study of Two Quiltys: On Kubrick's Adaptation of *Lolita* into a Black Comedy

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1 - Introduction

While some research has been done on the character Lolita in Stanley Kubrick's film adaptation of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, most studies explore the mind of Humbert Humbert, the middle-aged male protagonist of the story who keeps lusting after Lolita, a young girl who is twelve years old at the start of the novel. Rachel Carroll has explored Humbert's "revulsion of mature, female sexuality" as well as Lolita's sexual objectification in relation to A.M. Homes' *The End of Alice* while drawing attention to the fact that both novels are thematically similar because they both explore non-normative female heterosexuality (Carroll 67-87). Another notable study of Nabokov's novel as well as Kubrick's film is *A Reader's Guide to Nabokov's Lolita*, where Julian W. Connolly extensively details Humbert's memoirs in Nabokov's *Lolita* and contrasts them to their translation into film, yet only briefly touches upon the significance of Clare Quilty, the antagonist of both Nabokov's novel and Kubrick's film (162-163). Others, such as Anna Pilinska and Jerold Abrams have compared Nabokov's Quilty to Kubrick's version of the character as well, but so far, not much research has been done on Quilty's significance in defining the characteristics that set Kubrick's *Lolita* apart as an adaptation of Nabokov's novel.

According to Linda Hutcheon, an adaptation need not necessarily be entirely faithful to the original material in order to be successful, as opposed to the concept of appropriation, where the goal is to import the original text into a new medium while trying to stay as close to the source material as possible (4-9). Additionally, she mentions that the concept of intertextuality is of vital importance when defining adaptation because it helps explain how the original text, adaptation and additional texts they may refer to all relate to each other (8-9). This view is largely shared by Gordon E. Slethaug who argued that "adaptation can come

in many forms and serve many purposes” (253). After all, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, to adapt means to “make something suitable for a new use or purpose”- or to modify. This paper will apply these aspects of adaptation theory to Kubrick’s portrayal of Clare Quilty in *Lolita*, his 1962 film adaptation of Nabokov’s novel to explain what sets Kubrick’s film apart as a comedic adaptation. Quilty is chosen as the focus of this study, because even though the plot and Quilty’s personality largely remain the same in Kubrick’s film, the impression the character leaves on the viewer differs from the impression Nabokov’s Quilty leaves on the reader: where Nabokov’s Quilty is an enigmatic presence who remains in the background throughout the novel, Kubrick has transformed Quilty into a flamboyant, multi-faceted master of disguise who continuously makes a fool out of Humbert by toying with the man while continuously drawing him into his schemes. This contributes to the comedic tone of Kubrick’s film, which is indicative of the film’s value as a comedic adaptation.

Anna Pilinska is one adaptation theorist who has explored the differences between the two Quiltys. She argues that “the final profile of (Kubrick’s) Quilty, constructed on the basis of all the personas he adopts, is that of a multi- personality sex maniac, who finds pleasure in harassing Humbert with his ominous presence” (90). Furthermore, Pilinska also points out that it is this constant harassment of Humbert that makes Humbert seem like an oblivious fool because even though Quilty is always disguised, the audience already knows what the man looks like and will be inclined to judge Humbert on his inability to recognise the danger that Quilty represents until *Lolita* is taken away from him (91).

Nabokov’s Quilty is an enigmatic character who almost always stays hidden in the shadows, yet somehow permeates almost every aspect of Humbert’s life. Kubrick’s Quilty on the other hand, repeatedly appears in the film in various disguises to remind both Humbert and the viewer of Humbert’s inadequacies. By repeatedly making a fool out of Humbert,

Kubrick's Quilty contributes to Kubrick's *Lolita*'s comedic nature. In order to better understand this additional function that Quilty has in Kubrick's film, the similarities between the two Quiltys must first be explored. The first chapter will focus on the similarities between the two Quiltys' personalities and how they relate to their Humberts, and will then move on to differences between the two versions of the character and the effect they might have on their respective audiences.

The second chapter will focus on the striking opening scene of Kubrick's *Lolita* and the methods Kubrick employs to illustrate his Quilty's disguises and mental instabilities, as well as the effect they might have on the viewer. By placing Quilty's death scene at the beginning of the film rather than at the end, Kubrick creates a character who is more easily recognisable to the viewer than Nabokov's Quilty. While Kubrick's Quilty largely employs similar methods to draw Humbert into his schemes, it becomes very clear from the start of the film that Kubrick's Quilty is as manipulative as he is flamboyant, as opposed to the novel where Quilty largely remains an enigma until the very end of the plot. At the beginning of Kubrick's film however, Humbert carries out his plan to murder Quilty while being relatively calm and collected about it, while the first impression Quilty leaves in the film is that of a drunken man who impersonates film characters while he bombards Humbert with ping pong balls and incoherent speech. However, by closer inspection it becomes apparent there are deeper layers to Quilty's personality that are being introduced in this scene as well, such as the labyrinth that is Quilty's mind, Quilty's controlling nature, his talent for disguises as well as the intertextual relationship between Quilty, Kubrick and film adaptations in general.

Chapter Three will highlight the scenes where Quilty takes on the identities of a police officer and Dr. Zempf, two of Quilty's most prominent disguises in Kubrick's *Lolita*, as well as their relation to Kubrick's Humbert. A comparison will be made between Nabokov's and Kubrick's Quiltys, which will then be analysed by means of Hutcheon's adaptation theory.

Simultaneously, this chapter will explain why Quilty's transition from an invisible yet ominous presence in Nabokov's novel to a shapeshifting nympholept who openly alludes to sexual themes is crucial in understanding Kubrick's *Lolita* as a comedic adaptation.

2 - From Invisibly Enigmatic to Plotting Director

In order to properly discuss an adaptation, one must first know the difference between adaptation and interpretation. According to Hutcheon, adaptation is the modification of a story to suit a new purpose at its most basic form (116). Furthermore, she notes that interpretation is merely the first step in the process of adaptation, and that creation is the second (8). Kubrick's handling of Quilty is a good example of this process because while Kubrick's Quilty generally serves the same purpose as Quilty in Nabokov's novel, an additional function has been given to him in the film. While Nabokov's Quilty stays shrouded in mystery for most of the novel, Kubrick's Quilty is a constant presence throughout the film, who repeatedly appears in various disguises to harass Humbert while simultaneously reminding the audience that he is in control. In order to illustrate this notion, a comparison between Nabokov's Quilty and Kubrick's rendition of the character must first be made.

Both Quiltys share Humbert's disturbing sexual attraction to "nymphets", or young girls between the ages of nine and fourteen, but the way in which this becomes apparent is very different. Quilty's first appearance in Nabokov's novel is in a book that Humbert reads in prison, titled *Who's Who in the Limelight*. The book is a list of actors, producers and playwrights, and Quilty is listed as one of the playwrights. On a second reading of *Lolita*, it becomes apparent from the titles of the plays Quilty has written (*The Little Nymph* and *Fatherly Love*) that Quilty is just as obsessed with "nymphets" as Humbert is (*Lolita* 33). However, this detail is easily overlooked when reading the novel for the first time. Quilty's name shows up again as the last name of Ivor Quilty, the Ramsdale dentist in (*Lolita* 70) and is also alluded to in the name of the summer camp that Lolita attends (Camp Q), but no further information is given. The next time Quilty is mentioned in the novel, he appears on a cigarette poster in Lolita's room, which Humbert describes as a poster of "a distinguished playwright smoking a Drome" (*Lolita* 77). Quilty's name pops up a few more times (mostly

in relation to plays), but he does not begin to actively stalk Humbert and Lolita until they go on a second road trip. During this time, Quilty slowly becomes a menacing presence to Humbert, but the reader only gradually learns about Quilty's similarities to Humbert by means of subtle hints and wordplays that Nabokov leaves to his identity. For example, the play that Humbert and Lolita attend on their second road trip prominently features "seven bemused pubescent girls in coloured gauze" (*Lolita* 250). It is written by Quilty, but the reader does not suspect him because Humbert, who is not interested in the play itself, draws the reader's attention to his description of the nymphets he sees in the play and away from its author (*Lolita* 250-252).

One could argue that the first significant hint to the danger that Quilty poses to Humbert is given in a fake letter that was supposedly from Lolita's friend Mona where Quilty hides a French wordplay in his letter that encapsulates his name: "Ne manque pas de dire à ton amant, Chimène, comme le lac est beau car il faut qu'il t'y mène" (*Lolita* 253). However, according to Monica Manolescu-Ouancea, Nabokov made this wordplay up to deliberately lead both Humbert and the reader astray, because in addition to Humbert missing the reference to Quilty, there is no clear translation and no previous text to trace the wordplay back to (2). Moreover, it is not until Quilty's death scene at the very end of the novel that some disclosure is given on his personality and even then, Quilty remains shrouded in mystery because he keeps switching from one identity to another (*Lolita* 336-346). Humbert keeps pressing the drunk and incoherent Quilty for answers and only then does Quilty relinquish some information about himself.

Kubrick on the other hand gave his Quilty more dialogue and even went as far as to devote at least sixteen out of thirty-five narrative units of his film to Quilty (Pilinska 84). The most notable of these scenes being the opening scene, the scene at the school dance in Ramsdale, the encounter with the stranger at the motel, Humbert's unwanted encounter with

Dr. Zempf in Beardsley and finally, the phonecall that Quilty makes under the guise of being a health inspector. Only two of these five scenes occur in Nabokov's novel (the stranger on the motel porch and the death of Quilty), and it should therefore be noted that Quilty's role in Kubrick's film has been greatly expanded. Abrams has suggested that the reason for Quilty always being in control is that Kubrick wanted to play with the idea of involution (124). This claim is supported by Kubrick's decision to place Quilty's death scene at the beginning of the film, because in doing so, Kubrick made sure that it is Quilty's name that frames the narrative of his film instead of Lolita's. This suggests that Kubrick wanted to draw attention to the idea that it is not Humbert (who is the narrator of Nabokov's novel) nor Lolita who is in control of the story, but Quilty.

In addition to this controlling aspect of Kubrick's Quilty's personality, it should be noted that Kubrick's Quilty is very similar to Humbert in his obsession with young girls. However, the most significant difference between Kubrick's Quilty and Kubrick's Humbert is that Quilty is always in control. In Nabokov's novel however, Quilty is more difficult to characterise because no significant information about the character comes to light until the very end of the novel. By more visibly presenting Quilty, Kubrick has reinvented *Lolita's* villain into multi-faceted, sex-obsessed maniac who is always in control. This shows that Kubrick has not only interpreted Kubrick's *Lolita*, but that the director has also shown great creativity in his adaptation by transforming Quilty into an even more threatening villain who, like the director himself, controls the life of Humbert as well as the plot.

3 - Quilty's Death in Relation to Intertextuality and Metaphors

In order to better understand the role that Quilty plays in making Kubrick's *Lolita* stand out as an adaptation rather than an interpretation, some aspects of Quilty's personality must first be understood. This chapter will focus on the opening scene of *Lolita* where all of the defining characteristics of Kubrick's Quilty come to light, namely his function as a mirror as well as a nemesis to Humbert, Quilty's relation to the classical myth of the maze, his being a metaphor for Kubrick, his controlling nature and not having a unified personality. It will then further analyse these traits in relation to the findings of Abrams, Pilinska and Hutcheon in their respective studies on Kubrick's *Lolita* and adaptation theory in general in an attempt to explain why Quilty's death scene is one of the most important scenes to consider when defining Kubrick's *Lolita* as an adaptation.

Jerold Abrams notes that a parallel can be drawn between Nabokov's novel and Kubrick's film to the classical myth of the maze, where Ariadne leads Theseus to the Minotaur at the heart of a labyrinth (122-123). In the case of Kubrick's *Lolita*, Humbert can be compared to Theseus because he has to navigate the maze of his own mind as well as Quilty's to reach the Minotaur (Quilty). In Humbert's search for the monster at the heart of the maze, Lolita takes on the role of Ariadne by providing the string that ties Quilty and Humbert together (Abrams 122). This labyrinth of the mind is clearly shown in the opening scene of Kubrick's film, where Quilty's house is a maze of clutter with seemingly random objects lying around everywhere, such as a ping-pong table, ornate harp, Shakespeare's bust, boxing gloves, Venus de Milo, a tiger's head, an eighteenth-century portrait and another portrait that eerily resembles Lolita (Nelson 69). When Humbert enters Quilty's domain, some of these objects are half-hidden under pieces of cloth and these can be seen as a metaphor to the darker aspects of Quilty that the viewer will gradually learn about later on in the film, namely, his obsession with sex and attraction to young girls. Among the clutter that

Humbert has to navigate in order to reach Quilty, several mirrors can be spotted, which could also be considered hints to Quilty's similarity to Humbert.

Another function that Kubrick's Quilty has, is to highlight the film's intertextuality. According to Hutcheon, adaptations can have several authors (85). This is particularly true in the case of film adaptations where the director is ultimately responsible for the finished product and someone else usually creates the screenplay (85). As Pilinska pointed out, this is not entirely the case for Kubrick's *Lolita*: While Nabokov is credited for the screenplay of *Lolita*, Kubrick heavily altered it and made the plot his own (29-31). This is reflected by Kubrick's Quilty, who introduces himself as Spartacus, which is an obvious reference to Kubrick's previous film. According to Abrams, the *Spartacus* reference can be interpreted as a nod to Nabokov's as well as Kubrick's involvement in the creation of the film because Kubrick's Quilty is a TV-playwright, or a writer as well as a director (125). However, Pilinska argues that this instance is a result of Peter Sellers' improvisation and more of a tribute to Kubrick's fascination with the intertextual trick itself rather than a homage to Nabokov (31). While it can be debated who or what caused the reference to appear in Kubrick's *Lolita*, it is an example of intertextuality, or the relationship between original text and context, which Hutcheon argues is one of the defining traits of adaptation (8).

Abrams puts forward that like Nabokov in his novel and Kubrick in his film adaptation of *Lolita*, Quilty is always controlling the action from behind the scenes, which adds yet another layer to the character's personality (125). This controlling aspect of Quilty becomes apparent in the film when Quilty goes on to invite Humbert to a game of Roman Ping-Pong, which Humbert initially refuses to join, but then ends up participating anyway because Quilty keeps bombarding him with ping-pong balls that he seems to produce out of nowhere. While Humbert initially does not react to Quilty's invitation and continues to stare at Quilty in annoyance of the playwright's blatant disregard of the seriousness of the situation, Quilty says

that he does not mind if Humbert serves first, implying that whatever control Humbert thinks he might have over the game is non-existent because Quilty is making up the rules of the game as he goes along. When Humbert finally joins in on the game, Quilty stops to comment that he “is really winning here” and that he hopes that he does not “get overcome with power”, which is a clear allusion to the control that Quilty has over Humbert throughout the entire film. Then, Quilty goes on to continuously morph into different personalities (a pretentious gentleman, a boxer and a cowboy) to further unnerve Humbert. Even when Humbert forces Quilty to read his own death sentence, Quilty keeps toying with Humbert by mocking Humbert’s bad writing while keeping up the cowboy persona. Subsequently, Humbert loses his patience as well as Quilty’s game, and this is the case with all other games Quilty plays with Humbert throughout the rest of the film as well. After all, it is Quilty who, disguised as Dr. Zempf, talks Humbert into letting Lolita participate in the school play and ultimately, it is also Quilty who is responsible for the girl’s disappearance from Humbert’s life.

The final characteristic of Kubrick’s Quilty that comes to light in his death scene is him not having a “unified self”, a term Abrams coins in his analysis of the scene (126). When Humbert shoots Quilty a second time and ultimately kills the playwright, Quilty is hiding behind a life-size portrait of Lolita, which suggests that by killing Quilty, Humbert also destroys the memory of Lolita because it will forever be tainted by the murder of Quilty. Consequently, it would seem that even in death Quilty continues to toy with and control Humbert’s life. Furthermore, while it is heavily implied by Humbert shooting the painting (and Quilty behind it) several times, the viewer never sees Quilty die because the film then cuts to the second scene. Abrams suggests that this is Kubrick’s way of showing the audience that there is ultimately nothing left behind Quilty’s final disguise (126).

Earlier in this chapter, it has been noted that Kubrick's Quilty can not only be seen as a danger to Humbert and as a reflection of Humbert's desire for Lolita, but also as a metaphor for Kubrick's own control of the plot as a director. Perhaps then it can be assumed that Quilty's death is another example of intertextuality, because Kubrick himself has always refused to clarify the messages and meanings of his films. Furthermore, in 1959 Kubrick commented that it is "misleading to try and sum the meaning of a film up verbally" (Penzotta 24). Additionally, Hutcheon defines adaptation as "a derivation that is not derivative- a work that is second without being secondary" (8-9). As is the case with Quilty's masks, when the film is stripped away from Kubrick's *Lolita*, there is nothing left because while the film bears the same title as the novel it is based on, it is also fundamentally different.

4 - Who's Who in the Limelight: Why Kubrick's Quilty Keeps Eluding Humbert

Ewa Mazierska argues that the cinematic qualities of written work are not always the same as those of films (3). This is particularly true for Nabokov's work because his prose is perceived as being close to cinema (3). For example, in *Lolita*, the reader is continuously being fed meticulously detailed and lecherous descriptions of Lolita and other girls of her age through the perspective of Humbert. For example, Humbert repeatedly describes Lolita as a nymphet, a self-invented term for girls between the ages of nine and fourteen who, according to Humbert, possess "the slightly feline outline of a cheekbone, the slenderness of a downy limb and other indices of which despair and shame and tears of tenderness forbid me to tabulate"(Lolita, 16). Other descriptions of Lolita include but are not limited to "frail, honey-hued shoulders", "silky, supple bare back", "a sudden smooth nether loveliness", "auburn hair" and "lips as red as licked red candy"(Lolita 41-47). These descriptions leave the reader with a clear image of what Lolita is supposed to look like, as would be provided in a film script. However, Mazierska also argues that it is this very cinematic quality that makes Nabokov's fiction difficult to adapt to film because it would make little artistic sense to repeat what Nabokov has already achieved in his novel (3). Hutcheon recognises this problem and further argues that in order to adapt a story from one medium to another, stories must always be mutated (32). In order to better understand the extent of the changes that Kubrick has made to adapt *Lolita*, the comedic relation between Kubrick's Quilty and Humbert must be further analysed.

By means of voiceover, Kubrick's Humbert sometimes comments on the situations he finds himself in, (such as his unwanted marriage to Charlotte and the paranoia he expresses when he first notices that he is being followed by Quilty). However, it should be noted that Humbert is not the narrator of Kubrick's *Lolita*. As opposed to Nabokov's novel, Kubrick's film is viewed from a third-person perspective. As such, Kubrick can not rely on long verbal

descriptions of the observations that Humbert makes, but rather, he has to rely on the showing of interactions between characters instead. In order to make his Humbert's obsession with Lolita believable, Kubrick employs the following method: the filmmaker lets other characters comment on Lolita's looks and behaviour, but it is from Humbert's reaction to these comments that we learn about Humbert's true nature. A striking example of such a character is Quilty, who, according to Pilinska, on multiple occasions openly tries to interrogate Humbert about Lolita's sex life while simultaneously making Humbert seem oblivious and terribly inadequate for not becoming suspicious of him (57).

An example of a scene where this becomes apparent, is the scene on the motel porch where Quilty speaks to Humbert from the shadows while pretending to be a police officer. In her discussion of this scene, Pilinska implies that Humbert is already suspicious of Quilty at the start of it (89). However, it should be noted that Humbert does not make any effort to leave the porch until Quilty suggests that he should have a look at Humbert and Lolita's room. Moreover, Humbert does not actually leave until Quilty lewdly suggests to "have breakfast" with them. At this point, Humbert is still under the impression that Quilty is a police officer and while this does make him uneasy, Humbert is still unsuspecting of Quilty's identity, even though he had already seen the man at the school dance and in the lobby of the motel, making Humbert seem almost comically inadequate.

Furthermore, Nabokov's version of the porch scene greatly differs from Kubrick's because conversation between Humbert and Quilty is not only shorter, but also because there is no clear indication that it is Quilty who is speaking to Humbert:

Suddenly I was aware that in the darkness next to me there was somebody sitting in a chair on the pillared porch. I could not easily see him but what gave him away was the

rasp of a screwing off, then a discreet gurgle, then the final note of a placid screwing on. I was about to move away when the voice addressed me:

“Where the devil did you get her?”

“I beg your pardon?”

“I said: The weather is getting better.”

“Seems so.”

“Who’s the lassie?”

“My daughter.”

“You lie-she’s not.”

“I beg your pardon?”

“I said: July was hot. Where’s her mother?”

“Dead.”

“I see. Sorry. By the way, why don’t you two lunch with me tomorrow. That dreadful crowd will be gone by then.”

“We’ll be gone too. Good night.”

“Sorry. I’m pretty drunk. Good night. That child of yours needs a lot of sleep. Sleep is a rose, as the Persians say. Smoke?”

“Not now.”

He struck a light, but because he was drunk, or because the wind was, the flame illuminated not him but another person, a very old man, one of those permanent guests

of old hotels- and his white rocker. Nobody said anything and the darkness returned to its initial place. Then I heard the old-timer cough and deliver himself some sepulchral mucus.

(*Lolita* 143-144)

From this excerpt, it becomes apparent that Nabokov's Humbert does not suspect a thing. Even though he does try to avoid the conversation, it can be argued that Humbert's discomfort stems from the subject of the conversation rather than the speaker. Furthermore, even though Humbert does meet Quilty at the motel, he has never met Quilty in person before and apart from a poster in Lolita's room Humbert does not reveal anything about other than the fact that Quilty smokes Dromes, the novel's Humbert has no prior knowledge of what the man looks like. Moreover, because the novel is written from Humbert's first-person perspective, the reader has no clue about Quilty's appearance either and will also not be inclined to suspect the mysterious stranger. As opposed to Kubrick's Quilty, Nabokov's Quilty does not turn Humbert into a laughing stock.

Another instance where Kubrick's Quilty makes a fool out of Humbert is the scene where Quilty takes on the identity of Dr. Zempf, the Beardsley High School Psychologist and unexpectedly invites himself into Humbert's home, where he waits in the dark for Humbert to arrive while wearing thick glasses and a fake moustache. Humbert reacts awkwardly when Quilty introduces himself as Dr. Zempf and looks around confusedly, wondering how the man got in. Quilty then explains that he was let in by Lolita on her way to her piano lessons and that he sat in the dark to save Humbert "precious Electricity". Humbert seems to believe his story, and even thanks Quilty for being considerate. Then, seemingly unexpected, Quilty asks Humbert if "anybody has ever instructed Lolita in the facts of life". He goes on to describe Lolita as "a sweet little child" (like he also did in the porch scene), but that to boys she is a

lovely girl mit der swing un all that jazz” and that “she’s got a curvature that they take a lot of notice of”, all while drawing said curvature in the air with his hands. He then asks Humbert to go back to the time where “they were still little high school children who used to carry little highschool girls in their arms” while leaning back and perversely rolling his eyes. When Quilty takes out his notebook containing Lolita’s supposed school report, he comments that:

“(…) Lolita is defiant and rude. Sighs a lot in class (Quilty imitates her sighing in a dirty manner), chewing gum vehemently. All the time, she is chewing this gum (he nearly licks his fingers when he says it). Handles books gracefully. It’s alright, doesn’t really matter, voice is pleasant, giggles rather often. She’s exciteable; she giggles at things, a little dreamy, concentration is poor, she looks at a book for a while and then gets fed up with it, has private jokes of her own that no-one understands when they come to enjoy them with her, she has exceptional control , or she has no control at all. I think I will decide which. Added to that, Dr. Humbert, she wrote the most obscene word with her lipstick on the health pamphlets, and so, in our opinion, she is suffering from accute repression of the libido, the natural instincts.”

(Lolita)

Humbert reacts confusedly, saying that he fails to see the significance of this. Quilty then goes on to say that: “We Americans (...) are progressively modern, and that we believe that it is equally important to prepare the pupils for the mutually satisfactory mating and the succesful child-rearing” while passionately making a thrusting gesture with his hands. When Humbert asks Quilty what he suggests, Quilty threatens to have Humbert’s house investigated by the authorities, unless Humbert lets Lolita perform in the school play (which Humbert had forbidden her from doing earlier in the film). Humbert eventually agrees to let Lolita perform, and even chuckles when Quilty says that he feels that he and Humbert should do “all in their

power to stop that old Dr. Cutler and his four little psychologists from fiddling around in the home situation". It is this chuckle that suggests that Humbert is completely buying into Quilty's story. Moreover, Quilty nearly ruins his own disguise by raising his glasses to light a cigarette and still Humbert fails to recognise him. Abrams compares Humbert to a detective and argues that the reason for Humbert's failure to recognise Quilty is his lack of "acumen and analysis" (120). Pilinska adds to this notion that Humbert's inability to recognise Quilty makes Humbert less and less understandable because at some point Humbert should recognise Quilty and react, yet he fails to do so until the very end of the film where he is briefly reunited with Lolita (89). This flaw of Humbert becomes especially glaring considering that unlike Humbert in Nabokov's novel, Kubrick's Humbert meets Quilty in person in the school dance scene earlier on in the film.

From these two scenes, it becomes apparent that Kubrick has transformed Quilty from an enigmatic yet ominous presence who shares Humbert's sexual obsession with nymphets, to a sex-obsessed maniac who repeatedly takes on disguises to harass Humbert with the secondary purpose to make Humbert look ridiculous. Of this transformation it can be said that it is one of the methods that Kubrick has employed to turn the story of *Lolita* into a dark, comedic adaptation.

5 - Conclusion

Kubrick has greatly expanded Quilty's role in his film adaptation of *Lolita*. By doing so, the director has created a Quilty whose function is two-fold: In addition to being a constant threat to Humbert, Kubrick's Quilty also contributes to the black comedic nature of Kubrick's film. By repeatedly appearing in various disguises to harass Humbert, Kubrick's Quilty has a dark, comedic effect on the audience because Humbert always remains unaware of Quilty's identity until the very end of the film. Among others, the views of Abrams, Penzotta and Pilinska have been taken into account in this study's juxtaposition of Nabokov's Quilty with Kubrick's version of the character. In doing so, this study has identified three important ways in which the adaptation of Quilty's character plays a crucial role in defining Kubrick's film as a comedic adaptation rather than an interpretation, namely Kubrick's Quilty's relation to Humbert, the intertextual relationship between Quilty as a TV-playwright and Kubrick as a director, and Quilty's dark comedic effect on the viewer's perspective of Humbert. While exploring these notions, their relation to Hutcheon's theory of adaptation has been taken into account.

According to Hutcheon, adaptation can be defined as "repetition with variation" (116). It can be argued that Kubrick's handling of Quilty fits this definition because while Kubrick's Quilty represents the same evil as Quilty in Nabokov's novel (that of a manipulative, shapeshifting nympholept), he is also very different from Nabokov's Quilty because Kubrick has given his Quilty a much larger role in the film as well as an additional, comedic function. In order to demonstrate Quilty's further importance in defining Kubrick's *Lolita* as a comedic film adaptation, an analysis of Kubrick's Quilty's personality has been provided by example of the character's death scene at the beginning of the film. From this analysis, it has become clear that Kubrick's Quilty can not only be regarded as a threat to Humbert, but also as a metaphor for the power that Kubrick has over the plot of his film as a director (Abrams 125).

Additionally, an intertextual relationship between Kubrick's Quilty's death and Kubrick's own commentary on his refusal to explain the messages and meanings of his films has been found. Furthermore, two of Quilty's most prominent disguises in Kubrick's film have been analysed, namely the police officer at the motel and Dr. Zempf, the Beardsley High School psychologist. From this analysis it becomes clear that Nabokov's Quilty takes on a passive role where he hardly interacts with Humbert in person. This causes the reader to be more understanding of Nabokov's Humbert's failure to recognise Quilty. The viewer of Kubrick's film on the other hand is less inclined to understand Humbert's inability to recognise Quilty, resulting in a dark comedic tone throughout the film.

It should also be noted that *Lolita* is a story about the abuse of a young girl. This is very clear right from the start of Nabokov's novel, where Humbert describes Lolita as the "fire of his loins", yet also mentions that she stood "four feet ten in one sock" and that she was still in school (*Lolita* 7). Pilinska points out that in Kubrick's film, this is not as clear-cut because Kubrick's Lolita wears tight bodices and high heels to emphasise her attractiveness, yet she is also often seen acting like a child, like in the scene where she wakes Humbert up by shouting that the motel is on fire (71-73). Kubrick has taken certain comedic elements from Nabokov's novel, such as Humbert's inability to recognise Quilty, and Quilty's director-like control over Humbert and the plot, and emphasised them in his adaptation of *Lolita*. This results in a film adaptation that is not only humouristic, but also dark given the subject.

This study has largely focussed on how two versions of Quilty relate to Humbert within the frameworks of Kubrick's film and Nabokov's novel. Nevertheless, there are more intertextual relationships that further research could explore, such as the relationship between Kubrick's adaptation of Nabokov's *Lolita* and the 1997 film adaptation of the same name by Adrian Lyne. Ewa Mazierska points out that Lyne's film is known for being closer to Nabokov's plot than Kubrick's, but it has also been criticised for being "low-art" and

“pornographic” because of Lyne’s tendency to rely on shock value rather than aesthetics in his films (36-44). In Lyne’s film, *Lolita* is also shown as more sexually mature and it is heavily implied that she derives sexual pleasure from her relationship with Humbert. Moreover, like in Nabokov’s novel, Quilty in Lyne’s film is not as prominent as Kubrick’s, but when he does show up in the film it is suggested that Lolita’s reason for running to Quilty is that she got bored of her relationship with Humbert. Studies of Lyne’s rebalancing of the characters and how his film relates to Kubrick’s could shed a new light on Nabokov’s novel, Kubrick’s film and intertextual relationships in general. Ultimately, there are many ways to tell the same story, but as exemplified by Kubrick’s handling of Quilty in his film adaptation of *Lolita*, a successful film adaptation builds on the source material that has come before it without becoming repetitive.

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