

A Lacanian Study of Lolita by Vladimir Nabokov

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Abstract: This paper is an attempt to explore how Lacanian concepts of desire, unconscious, as well as alienation are reflected in the major characters of Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov's *Lolita*. Before unleashing the new, inexplicable yet highly fascinating aspects of psychoanalysis by the advent of French poststructuralist and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, Freudian psychoanalysis used to play the pivotal and, accordingly, unique role in the realm of literary criticism which suffered from some drawbacks and left many questions unanswered in the psychoanalytic sphere. However, under the auspices of Lacan, almost all of these eerie ambiguities have already been resolved. It would be a gross underestimate that expressing Lacanian concepts in simple words is feasible, since Lacan stipulates that "unconscious is complex, so that the language used to express it, inevitably, should be complicated" (*Écrits*, 24). The present paper aims to elucidate the ulterior reasons underling the interactions of the three main characters in Nabokov's *Lolita* through Lacanian model for the development of psyche, namely: Imaginary Order, Symbolic Order, and the Real.

Keywords: Jacques Lacan, Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, Imaginary Order, Symbolic Order, the Real.

Introduction

Apart from his multifarious concepts in the realm of psychoanalysis, Lacan introduced a three-part phase for the development of psyche: *the Imaginary Order*, *the Symbolic Order* and *the Real*, which entail many other concepts to be grasped, and are applied to many other fields from philosophy, sociology, to even mathematics. Although there are always a number of answers to any given question, the present study aims to limit its scope to exploring the three top characters in Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov's *Lolita* through the aforementioned Lacanian concepts.

Psychoanalytic theories on literature encompass much of the twentieth century. Throughout the twentieth century, they have undergone many changes as important developments in practice. With the advent of psychoanalytic criticism on literature with Freud, the critical focus was on the psychology of the author, in that, Freudian psychoanalysis considered the work of literature as the fantasy of a particular author aiming to reveal the author's unconscious by analyzing the sexual instincts, slips of tongues and physical demands of the characters all of which disclosed the relation between the work of literature and the author. However, this traditional psychoanalysis was not adequate to present the relationship between author and reader as well as text because, the text was assumed to be a steady object and to have a fixed meaning. Therefore, in recent years, with the emergence of plurality of meanings in a given text, the new psychoanalytic criticism has appeared. This new approach establishes a direct link with the name of the French poststructuralist and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, whose works re-interpret and criticize Freudian psychoanalysis with regard to the structuralist and post-structuralist theories. Unlike Freudian psychoanalytic approach, in Lacanian criticism, the main concern is that the unconscious is limited to the level of language used in a text. In other words, Lacan does not deal with an instinctive unconscious that anticipates language. Lacan emphasizes the concept of speech which is disregarded in Freudian psychoanalysis, in that, he interprets the Freudian theories in the language of Saussure. Following Saussure, Lacan asserts that language is a system of signs. This system of signs includes a signifier (a sound or an image) and a signified (the concept or the meaning). Lacan states that the relationship between signifiers and signifieds is arbitrary and based on convention rather than an eternal, timeless relation... Meaning is created through linguistic differences, through the play of signifiers" (105). In the unconscious, the subject always experiences a lack which is unable to be filled with language and consequently forms the identification of the subject in the symbolic order of the signifiers. For Lacan, the subject is represented in the signifying chain which consists of the *Imaginary*, *Symbolic* and *Real Orders*. The *Imaginary Order* "is not the world of imagination but a world of perception" (Lois Tyson 27). *Imaginary* phase

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“is one of unity as well as immediate possession (of mother and object)...a world that is NOT fragmented or meditated by differences, categories, or in a word by language and signs” (Habib 589). So the child’s thinking is immediate and his perception is pure, in the sense that they do not need to go through language filter in order to be configured and as a result, they are not restricted to and based on language in their scope. *Symbolic Order* is “the world of predefined social roles and gender differences, the world of subject and object, the world of language” (Habib 589). *The Real* “is that which resists symbolization” (Sean Homer), it’s an ever elusive concept to be defined, it’s beyond the rules and regulations of any ideologies. Lacanian literary criticism “tends to focus on the structures of desire as determined by a signifying chain” (Wright *MLT* 155) as without language there would be no desire. In the following, accordingly, this paper aims at applying Lacanian Psychoanalysis to Nabokov’s *Lolita* on the basis of the desires of the characters as well as their alienation by uncovering their split personalities, and identifying the *Imaginary*, *Symbolic* and the *Real Order*.

A Russian-American profligate novelist, Nabokov is best known for his highly admired, yet vehemently denounced, novel entitled *Lolita*(1955) which is noted for his complex plots, clever word play, and use of alliteration. *Lolita* tells of a grown man’s devouring passion for a twelve-year-old girl. Humbert Humbert, the main character of the story, details his childhood and background in Europe as a scholar and relates his tragic childhood love for Annabel Leigh, whose death traumatized him. He is now obsessively attracted by “nymphets”, young girls who possess a mysterious seductive power.

After being hospitalized in some mental institutions and doing odd writings, Humbert, the British professor comes to the US to teach. He rents a room at the house of widower Charlotte Haze, but soon after he sees her 14-year-old daughter, Dolores (Lolita), he immediately gets attracted to her as she reminds him of Annabel. Humbert lusts after and flirts with Lolita, but is afraid to do anything. The repulsive Haze, who wants Humbert, discovers that her lodger is pedophile. Lolita goes to summer camp, and Humbert reluctantly marries Haze, since this is the only chance to be close to the girl, who will prove to be too mature for her age. Humbert toys with the idea of killing Haze, but is unable to do so. She discovers his diary, filled with entries about his love for Lolita and hatred for her, and tells him that she is leaving. However, she is immediately run over by a car, and Humbert picks Lolita who is at camp. He eventually breaks the news about her mother’s death, and at a hotel called Enchanted Hunter, they have sex for the first time.

Humbert and Lolita drive across the U.S. for a year. Humbert threatens Lolita to put her in an orphanage if she does not comply with his sexual demands. Humbert gets a job at Beardsley College and enrolls Lolita in the girl’s school there. Lolita’s desire to socialize with boys sprain her relationship with Humbert, and finally he agrees to let her participate in a school play called “The Enchanted Hunter”. Humbert suspects Lolita of infidelity, so they leave for another road trip. A man who resembles the relative of Humbert named Trapp seems to be following them, and Lolita appears to be in contact with him. When Lolita gets sick and is placed in a doctor’s office, she is taken away by the man who resembles Trapp. Humbert attempts to find her for the next two years to no avail. He spends two years with a woman named Rita until he receives a letter from Lolita, now pregnant, married, and asking for money.

Humbert plans to kill Lolita’s husband, but when he visits them, finds out that her kidnapper was actually Clare Quilty, a playwright with whom Lolita was in love. When she refused to participate in his child pornography, he rejected her. Lolita turns down Humbert’s invitation to live with him, and he leaves heartbroken. Humbert finds out Quilty’s whereabouts, and after talking to him and shooting him numerous times, kills him. Humbert is arrested and put in jail where he finishes his memoir. He died soon after in captivity, and Lolita died while giving childbirth that Christmas.

Through this part an all-out description of the aforementioned concepts and of their relations to the characters in the novel will be represented. Through the analysis of the main characters in the mentioned novels, this study asserts that these concepts are structured with the effect of the Lacanian symbolic order and the language. We need to begin with Lacan’s theory of the psychological development of personality. In its early months, Lacan maintains, the infant experiences both itself and its environment as something formless and random, in that, it is unable to differentiate itself from its environment, since it lacks any sense of self. For example, its fingers are the objects to be explored, put in mouth, and played with, and so forth, just like a toy or a pencil or other objects in its environment. Roughly between six and eight months, what Lacan named *Mirror Stage* occurs, whereby the child sees itself in the actual mirror or in the reflection of its mother’s face. As Dany Nobus puts it:

The mirror stage has always been viewed by Lacan as a solid piece of theorizing, A paradigm retaining its value to explain human self-consciousness,

aggressively, rivalry, narcissism, jealousy and fascination with images in general. In a sense, this does not come as a surprise when it is appreciated that the 1949 *Mirror Stage* article was not something Lacan had concocted at a moment's notice, but a pearl which he had carefully cultured for some thirteen odd years. (1998: 104)

Lacan claims that *Mirror Stage* initiates the *Imaginary Order*, a world of not imagination but of perception, a world experienced through images rather than words, a world of fullness, completeness and delight which results from the child's sense of itself as a whole, from its still perception of itself as an inseparable part that in turn brings about the illusion of control over its environment, and over its mother, with whom it feels it is in union mutual satisfaction: my mother is all I need and I am all my mother needs. Lacan refers to this experience as the *Desire of the Mother*. It intends to allude the reciprocated and two-way desire of mother and child to each other, in that, the desire of the mother to the child and that of the child to the mother. This pre-verbal experience is the first and most experience of the child before it steps into the second order, the *Symbolic Order*, begun with its acquisition of language.

No sooner did the child begin to acquire language than he has already entered to *Symbolic Order*, since language is first and foremost a system of signification, that is, a symbolic system of meaning-making, through which it can differentiate itself from the world and its objects. The first meaning that we make, or it's better to say that are made to us, is that we are a separate being ("I" am "me" not "you") and that I have a gender (I am a girl, not a boy, or vice versa), (Lois Tyson, 28). Our entrance into *Symbolic Order* equals to our separation from others, and above all, our separation from mother, which is, according to Lacan, our most experience of loss. This will obsess us all our lives, in that, we will be incessantly in search of substitutes for that lost union with our mothers. We try to find a perfect mate, acquire more money, convert to new religion, become better looking, buy a flashier car or a bigger house, become more popular and whatsoever, the *Symbolic Order* tells us it is fulfillment, but no matter how far we manage to achieve them, we'll never sustain a feeling of complete fulfillment. Lacan refers to this lost object of desire as *objet petit a*, which is impossible to achieve. In other words, *objet petit a* is "anything that puts me in touch with my repressed desire for my lost object" (Lois Tyson, 29). It is small *a* since our relationship with our *objet petit a* is so exclusive, so personal and so private that it only affects and prompts us to pick up a specific substitute for our lost object, that is, one might choose to become fashionable or (more) reach in order to fill that gap, while another may adopt a different means as the substitute, and even others may turn to be more religious, find more sexual partner than one, etc.

The use of language implies a loss, a lack since I wouldn't need to use specific names, if I still felt that I was an inseparable part of those things. At this time, the dichotomy between the subject, I, and the object, anything other than me, will spring into existence. I am something different and distinct from any other things around me; this is tantamount to my separation and consequently my alienation from people, society, and in all, from my surroundings. It's through the course of language acquisition that I get acquainted, and as a result, made to comply with the behavioral, educational, ethical, and religious rules and regulations, and in a broader scope, with the ideologies of the society thereby I, the subject, start to mold as who and what I am and what my relationships to the other people, and to my environment are (expected to be). Accordingly, my attitudes, expectations, definitions, and criteria of concepts like love, trust, value, happiness, bliss, freedom, salvation, etc. are shaped.

There are moments, far from being rare, in our lives that we feel that there is no purpose to life, that we suspect that religion or any/all rules that govern the society are hoaxes or mistakes or the results of chance through which we see through the ideology, in that, we realize that it is ideology, and not some sets of timeless values and eternal truths, that has made the world as we know it; this experience, according to Lacan, is the *Real*. The *Real* is the uninterpretable dimension of existence; it is existence without the filters or buffers of our signifying, or meaning-making systems (Lois Tyson, 32). It's beyond all our meaning making systems, lies outside the world created by the ideologies that society uses to explain existence. So far we have elaborated those Lacanian concepts intended to be applied to the three main characters in Nabokov's *Lolita*, namely: Lolita (the 12-year-old girl), Charlotte Haze (Lolita's mother), and Humbert Humbert (Lolita's stepfather). Now we cast light on the ulterior motives and innermost reasons lie behind and beneath their behaviors and interactions with each other through the lens of these concepts.

Discussion:

1. Lolita

In the course of the novel, in pursuing her desire to achieve unity, complete security, and ultimate meaning, Lolita goes through three stages. First, she revolts and riots against her mother who is the complete embodiment of the *Symbolic Order*. Lolita tries to squirm free from the yoke of these 'Dos' and 'Don'ts', since she has been besieged in and constricted by social norms and ideologies which are the very essence of control. As a result, she displays a high level of recalcitrance.

Her mother's quiet voice announced in the dark: "And now we all think that Lo should go to bed."

"I think you stink," said Lo.

"Which means there will be no picnic tomorrow," said Haze.

"This is a free country," said Lo. (Nabakov, 28)

Consequently, she intends to evade the *Symbolic Order*, because all these norms differentiate her as a separate entity which is bereft of its prior unity and consequently its total control. The ulterior reason for her circumvention is that she likes to control rather than to be controlled which is the exact essence of the *Symbolic Order*. Second, in the hope of achieving security, unity, total control, and above all, ultimate meaning of life, she turns face and takes refuge to Humbert and inevitably succumbs to his amorous desire. Because she thought there was something in Humbert that she was after, that could soothe and satisfy her, but after a while she realized its being hollow and fake, so she grew to despise it.

She had entered my world, umber and black Humberland, with rash curiosity; she surveyed it with a shrug of amused distaste; and it seemed to me now that she was ready to turn away from it with something akin to plain repulsion. (Nabakov, 116)

Because she had been deprived of her general right to communicate with other boys of her age, and consequently got fed up the ongoing affairs, she blatantly expressed her aversion to the affair and her intention to get rid of it at any cost.

Lolita: (addressing Humbert) "I would sleep with the very fellow who asked me and you could do nothing about it." (Nabakov, 145)

Lolita comes to the conclusion that this affair is inexorably ruining her, so she envisions no promising future.

Humbert continued, "There's no point in staying here."

"There's no point in staying anywhere," said Lolita. (Nabakov, 173)

Lolita's aversion to her affairs with Humbert can be construed in the following statement addressing Humbert:

You revolting creature. I was a daisy-fresh girl, and look what you've done to me. I ought to call the police and tell them you raped me. Oh, you dirty, dirty old man. (Nabakov, 99)

And finally, she finds marriage the only proper way, and it is at this point that she seems to find solace and tranquility and inexorably, in her own idea, the ultimate meaning. Because, after an interval of her two-year disappearance, Humbert finds her whereabouts and implores her to revert to her former life with him, but she turns it down persistently due to her complete satisfaction with her present conditions. Lolita is satisfied with her present condition: married, pregnant and in dire financial constrict. However, she prospects a promising future through this condition. This is apparently reflected in her letter to Humbert:

Dear Dad,

How's everything? I'm married. I'm going to have a baby. I guess he's going to be a big one. I guess he'll come right for Christmas. This is a hard letter to write. I'm going nuts because we don't have enough to pay our debts and get out of here. Dick is promised a big job in Alaska in his very specialized corner of the mechanical field, that's all I know about it but it's really grand. (Nabakov, 190)

This shows the profound and penetrating influence of what Lacan called "*Name-of-the-Father*" on her appreciation of the world and her understanding of its meaning, that is, her perception of life, happiness, and ultimate goal in

life and the way she feels about them. The ideologies of her society are so highly ingrained in her that have made her feel more comfortable and satisfied with her present situation (being married) than with her prior condition (being with Humbert). Although the present situation is so inferior to the previous one in many respects (e.g. her current dire financial constraint; her new husband's lack of affection; and finally, her present husband's physical frailty), she is aloof to abandon her present situation.

So, for what is she so happy with her present situation? The reason underlying her appreciation of the present situation is not the result of her unique thinking and personality, but the aftermath of what she has been taught to be or to think, that is, social ideologies. It exactly reflects Lacan's idea when he says: "the desire is always the desire of others". Hence, despite her amorous affairs with Humbert, Lolita nonetheless experiences feelings of quandary, apathy and even aversion to her ongoing relationship with Humbert. So, these pieces of evidence cast light on the penetrating and uncontroversial influence of what Lacan calls "*Name-of-the-Father*". And this is what Lacan means by the relationship between the signifier and the signified. According to Lacan, the relationship between a signifier and a signified is various, and even contradictory, from person to person, and even can and will change in a person from time to time. As an evidence, Lolita's mother's and Humbert's perceptions and definitions of concepts like joy, (ultimate goal of) life, etc. are at odds with one another. Another fact that substantiates this is that Lolita's own perception of these concepts changes in the course of time that's why different steps are taken by her to gain security, unity and complete control, as mentioned above.

2. Lolita's mother (Mrs. Haze)

She wants to control Lolita throughout the story and all the time complains about her behavior and mood. She describes Lolita as follows:

Of course, moodiness is a common concomitant of growing up, but Lo exaggerates. Sullen and evasive. Rude and defiant. (Nabakov, 29)

Or, on another occasion, when Lolita was teasing Humbert playfully, Mrs. Haze strolled and said indulgently:

Just slap her hard if she interferes with your scholarly meditation. (Nabakov, 35)

In the end, when she got disappointed with her decorum, she demanded to send Lolita to camp in order to make her behave and feel in accordance with the ideologies of the society. She justified her intention as follows:

Camp will teach [Lolita] to grow in many ways, health, knowledge and temper. And particularly in a sense of responsibility towards other people. (Nabakov, 42)

1. Humbert

On the other hand, Humbert gets stuck in and preoccupied with what Lacan mentions as "*the Real*". Like Lolita, Humbert is after unity, security, and control, but contrary to Lolita, he is not in search of the ultimate meaning in life, since he finds it elusive and even impossible to attain which, according to Lacan, is the very essence of "*the Real*".

He perceives that there is no ultimate reality, or if there is one, it is beyond his logic and out of his depth to comprehend, and inevitably he is in an eternal vertex of apprehension, what Lacan dubs "*trauma of Real*". He has come to the point that he can see through the ideologies and realizes that these highly revered ideologies do not present perpetual values and principles. But those are some sets of beforehand prepared rules for his control in action and thinking. In one of his meditation, Humbert claims that taboos "strangled" him. This duly accounts for the fact that, after his short-lived affairs with Lolita, he did not have a guilty conscience, so he continued to covet for her return and for reviving those halcyon days. This lack of even a tinge of guilty conscience in him originates from the fact that he has already known that the values of the society are all but fabrications and hallucinations. So, he loses faith in adhering to them. Humbert lacks respect to and obedience of society's ideologies. In that, these ideologies cannot prevent him from, in his society's words, going astray.

Gentlemen of the jury! I cannot swear that certain motions pertaining to the business in hand – if I may coin an expression – had not drifted across my mind before. My mind had not retained them in any logical form or in any relation to definitely recollected occasions; but I cannot swear – let me repeat – that I had not toyed with them (to rig up yet another expression), in my dimness of thought, in my darkness of passion. (Nabakov, 46)

Humbert accepted to marry Mrs. Haze with the intention of being near to Lolita.

I imagined (under conditions of new and perfect visibility) all the casual caresses of her mother's husband would be able to lavish on his Lolita. I would hold her against me three times a day, every day. All my troubles would be expelled, I would be a healthy man. (Nabakov, 47)

Humbert catered to Lolita's every desire. He did things that were hardly appropriate to his age. He states: I preceded to the business center of Parkington and devoted the whole afternoon to buying beautiful things for Lolita. (Nabakov, 74)

Humbert never felt ashamed of his affairs with Lolita. Instead, he got steeped in his unbridled amorous desires. As he mentioned once about his sexual intercourse with Lolita:

I would relax after a particularly violent morning in bed. (Nabakov, 111)

Humbert's obsession with Lolita in this novel can be accounted for on another ground. He is haunted with the concept of nymphet for which Lolita is simply a representation. He is enchanted and bewitched with a given signified that Lolita, just as a signifier, is its embodiment. He claims in different parts of the story the following statements:

Inly, I was consumed by a hell furnace of localized lust for every passing nymphet whom as a law-abiding poltroon I never dared approach. (Nabakov, 8)

Ah, leave me alone in my pubescent park, in my mossy garden. Let them play around me forever. Never grow up. (Nabakov, 9)

The irrefutable evidence to support this statement is that, prior to his encounter with Lolita, Humbert had got entangled with such an obsession, his tragic childhood love for Annabel Leigh. So, he is not engrossed in (a) certain pubescent 14-year-old girl(s) in the outer reality, rather he has immersed in some fanciful, enigmatic concept which has an indissoluble link to its outer representation in the real world, Lolita and to a lesser degree Annabel Leigh. This experience is exactly what Lacan referred to as "*the object a*", both as the object and the cause of desire, simultaneously represents "the pure lack, the void around which desire turns, as such causes the desire, and the imaginary element which conceals this void, renders it visible by filling it out" (Žižek, 2005). Humbert's following statement asserts Žižek's idea:

I would like to describe her face, her ways – and I cannot, because my own desire for her blinds me when she's near. I am not used to being with nymphets, damn it. (Nabakov, 27)

The *object a* "is both the void, the gap, and whatever object momentarily comes to fill that gap in our symbolic reality" (Sean Homer, 88). What is important to keep in mind here is that *object a* is not the object but the process of filling that gap. In other words, no sooner are the prohibition and boundaries of something set and defined to us than the desire to it penetrates and permeates in us. It is a lost object that never existed prior to being lost, so drives Lacan's concept of desire as something that is always impossible to satisfy.

Hence, Humbert steeped and drowned in "*the Real*". The baffling situation resulted from frustration and consequently aloofness due to perceiving the illusion- or better to say the hallucination-of social ideologies, ethics, etc. as not being absolute. When Humbert perceived Lolita's growing aloofness towards their affair, he terrorized her and managed to establish a background of shared secrecy guilt.

Finally, let us see what happens if you, a mirror, accused of having impaired the morals of an adult in a respectable inn, what happens if you complain to the police of my having kidnapped and raped you? Let us suppose that they believe you. A minor female, who allows a person over twenty-one to know her carnally, involves her victim into statutory rape, or second-degree sodomy, depending on the technique; and the maximum penalty is ten years. (Nabakov, 104)

So, both, Lolita and Humbert, unconsciously escape from and eschew the *Symbolic Order*, the epitome of which, in their propinquity, is Lolita's mother. She is a woman of decorum who is devout in her faith, adherent to ethical codes, highly liable to achieve and make others achieve a moral perfection. On the other hand, Humbert and Lolita

are partially or completely free from the labyrinth of rules and regulations-the world of reality, Dos and Don'ts, prohibitions, constrictions and limitations-of the society.

Conclusion

In this novel, it was attempted to shed some light on the seemingly abnormal actions and interactions of the three main characters in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* based on Lacanian concepts.

This novel combines the elements of ambiguity, uncertainty, and romance with its characters' desires, repressive thoughts and expressed personalities. In other words, psychological rather than external forces are the prime movers in this world where individuals could be sure neither of others nor themselves.

As mentioned earlier, Lolita drowns into what Lacan called the *Imaginary Order*, the world of unity, immediate possession, and absolute control, in order to evade the *Symbolic Order*, a predefined, highly meditated relations, since she wishes to control rather than to be controlled, which is the essence of the *Symbolic Order*. However, while indulging herself into the world of infinite possibilities and taking advantage of all its accompanying euphoria, Lolita perceives its pernicious effects on her views, not because of her unique personality or thinking but due to what Lacan called "*Name-of-the-Father*", some sets of given principles, rules and regulations, and broadly speaking, ideologies foisted upon her to make her think, wish, look, and expect in a way that she is taught and required to be or to think.

Charlotte Haze, a widow and Lolita's mother, is the impeccable example of what Lacan mentioned as the *Symbolic Order*, "the world of predefined social roles and gender differences, the world of subject and object, and the world of language" (Habib, 589), which evolves from and spins around one centric gist, and that is all but control. Through the novel, she never fails to impel control on the people in her immediate environment, Lolita and Humbert. She requires them to follow the predefined strict codes of decorum and social behavior, because, according to Lacan, she is a subject as "the slave of language," whose place is already "inscribed at birth" (*Écrits*, 148). So, what she desires is what she is taught to desire.

Humbert's actions, feelings, thoughts, and points of view in the course of the novel were accounted for by what Lacan referred to as "*the Real*", which is "something we can know nothing about, except to have the anxious feeling that it is there. We sense that ideologies like a curtain upon which our whole world is embroiled, and we know that behind that curtain is the Real, but we can't see behind the curtain" (Lois Tyson 32). He is not in search of ultimate meaning in life, since he finds it elusive and even impossible to attain which, according to Lacan, is the very essence of "*the Real*". From another perspective, he is not obsessed with Lolita, but with what is stated as "nymphet" in the course of the novel, for which Lolita is only a representation. This is what Lacan called "*object a*". As Parveen Adams writes:

The object is not part of the signifying chain, it is a 'hole' in that chain. It is a hole in the field of representation, but it does not simply ruin representation that it mends it as it ruins it. It both produces hole and is what comes to the place of lack it over. (1996a: 151). That is why he used to have a childhood love for Annabel Leigh, who was another representation for his *object a*. So, he is not preoccupied with certain pubescent girls in the outer world, but with his *object a*, for which specific girls in reality are representations and signifiers.

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