

**Across the Gender and Age Divide:
The Strange Case of Women and Children in Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*
and Nabokov's *Lolita***

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In his Cornell lectures, Vladimir Nabokov compared the Jekyll-Hyde transformation with a metamorphosis from larva to butterfly. A similar unsettling pattern of transformation structures *Lolita*. In their cross country journey across the United States, Humbert Humbert and Lolita stop to see Robert Louis Stevenson's footprint on an extinct volcano. Later, while chasing Lolita, Humbert Humbert actually identifies himself with Mr. Hyde when he almost knocks over a dropsical dachshund. It is no accident that the "little" Mr. Hyde's first witnessed crime is against a little girl of maybe eight or ten, and that Hyde serves as an avatar for Humbert Humbert in his testimony of a crime against a child/woman. This paper will examine how and why Stevenson carefully embeds women and children in his presentation of gentlemen in late Victorian London, and discuss how Nabokov in turn explores and develops this link in his representation of love and lust in the United States of the mid-20th century.