

Obsessive Love

Obsessive love is a form of love when one person is emotionally obsessed with another. This condition creates a longing in a person that often leads them to act in self-defeating ways. John D. Moore wrote the book Confusing Love with Obsession, in which he shows the stages that these people can go through by explaining his obsessive love wheel. This wheel has four stages which end with destruction, showing how detrimental this idea of false love can become. Obsessive love is a delusion that can lead to dangerous consequences such as stalking, rape, suicide or murder. Somerset Maugham's Of Human Bondage and Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita both describe and show many of the detrimental effects that obsessive love can have on a person's life. These effects can accumulate upon each other and range from devastating one's loved ones, diminishing one's money to destroying one's soul.

Obsessive love is seen through the words and actions of the main characters within the two works, Lolita and Of Human Bondage. These intense feelings that they show for another person are barely, if at all, returned. However, different from normal couples who are in love with one another, these two men are so madly and obsessively in love with another person that the idea of the feelings not being returned is not most prominent in their minds. This fact is even bluntly stated from the main character, Philip Carey, in Of Human Bondage. "But when all was said the important thing was to love rather than to be loved; and he yearned for Mildred with all his soul" (394). Obsessive love is hard for realistic people to grasp such as the readers of

these works. The thought that there is a condition where someone can be so madly in love that they completely destroy their own life is shocking to many, but believable and real to Philip and Humbert Humbert, the love obsessed, main character in Lolita.

In Lolita, adult Humbert is obsessively in love with a twelve –year old girl, Lolita. Humbert tells us his only wish is to be with Lolita, his love, forever. “Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul.” (1) His strong feelings lead him to do unruly things such as marry Lolita’s mother only to get closer to Lolita. His thoughts become filled with Lolita, leading Humbert into compulsive thoughts of nothing but her. Humbert’s wife, Charlotte Haze, now Charlotte Humbert, is truly in love with Humbert only to find out that he is in love with her young daughter. When Charlotte realizes where Humbert’s heart really belongs she is devastated, shocked and hurt. “You’re a monster. You’re a detestable, abominable, criminal fraud... I am leaving tonight. This is all yours. Only you’ll never see that miserable brat again” (96). In her frenzy to get away from the one who has hurt her, Charlotte gets hit by a car and dies. Humbert’s wish comes true, but he has ultimately destroyed the one person who actually loved him.

Devastating loved ones is a common theme within obsessive love wheels. Within Philip’s twisted love cycle with Mildred, he meets a very caring, interesting and smart woman. This woman, Norah, brings light to Philip’s life and honestly falls in love with him. Just as all is going well, Mildred reappears into Philip’s life, leaving him once again, utterly obsessed and unable to cope without her.

While she (Norah) talked he thought that she was worth ten of Mildred; she amused him much more and was jollier to talk to; she was cleverer, and she had a much nicer nature. If

he had any sense he would stick to Norah, she would make him much happier than he would ever be with Mildred: after all she loved him, and Mildred was only grateful for his help. (394)

These statements spoken by Philip himself would lead the reader to believe that his brain would get the best of him, and he would realize what a mistake going back to Mildred would be, but it doesn't. Philip goes on to state that it doesn't matter how horrible Mildred was, "He would rather have misery with one than happiness with the other" (394). Philip breaks Norah's heart just to satisfy his own, but this satisfaction doesn't seem very healing to anyone especially since it only leads to even more detrimental effects in Philip's life. This horrible condition leads readers to wonder how someone could put themselves through such misery; but it doesn't stop there.

People's minds become so consumed with the longing and yearning for their 'loved ones' that many and most of their values get thrown out the window, even the idea of money and being able to support themselves get pushed to the side. The only thing on their minds is their 'Lolita'. Humbert's only weakness is Lolita, and she knows that she can get whatever she wants out of him. Many parts in the book show Humbert throwing away large amounts of money just to see Lolita smile. At just one stop during their cross-country journey, Humbert bought Lolita,

Four books of comics, a box of candy, a box of sanitary pads, two cokes, a manicure set, a travel clock with a luminous dial, a ring with a real topaz, a tennis racket, roller skates with white high shoes, field glasses, a portable radio set, chewing gum, a transparent raincoat, sunglasses, some more garments – swooners, shorts, all kinds of summer frocks. (141-142)

These people who are dangerously in love do not even witness their money diminishing, because they are so blinded by their loved one's smile.

In the aspect of money, Philip takes his love to an even deeper extreme than Humbert. He flowers Mildred with money that he cannot afford to spend without depleting himself of his own human needs such as food. Even when Mildred crushed Philip's heart, completely ignored him and stated that she did not love him, he was always still there for her. He bought her food, housing, clothes and even paid for her baby (which was not his) to be taken care of. After she disappeared from his life he realized that his money was depleted, but even then his love obsessed mind knew the truth. "Now and then he thought of the future with panic. He had been a fool to spend so much money on Mildred; but he knew that if it were to come again he would act in the same way" (448). Eventually, because he was so consumed with Mildred and her expenses, Philip gets himself into a bind and loses every dollar he had. He becomes homeless and hungry all because of his obsessive love with Mildred.

These men find themselves in major dilemmas, as people in this predicament often do, after their one and only leave them. The detrimental effects of basing their lives around one person and cherishing every detail about them, especially when the feelings are far from mutual, often leaves people feeling depressed, unsure of what to do and/or mentally unstable. When the one that their world revolved around walks out, a part of themselves walks out with her. A part of their souls leave forever.

Humbert was mentally unstable before Lolita came into his life. From the time that he was young, when he met his first love Annabel and she died, he had always had a longing for her; a longing that he replaced with Lolita. When his prized possession was again 'taken' away

from him, Humbert could not help but feel utterly lost, crazily unstable and willingly murderous. "It occurred to me that if I were really losing my mind, I might end by murdering somebody" (229). And with that thought, he placed a gun in his pocket. His delusions of being with Lolita forever left him so distraught that his only thought was to kill. It did not matter if his life got taken in the process, because without Lolita, he had no life. This idea that love can overtake one's mind so thoroughly that his life has no meaning is ludicrous to many but relevant to some, Humbert and Philip being two of them.

Readers may believe that with insanity in close reach, these lovers who speak of murder may see the ones they loved so dearly as the ones who need to die, but this is not the case. "I could not kill *her*, of course, as some have thought. You see, I loved her. It was love at first sight, at last sight, at ever and ever sight" (Lolita 270). Even though the women choose to leave, the men still yearn for their love and would do anything to get it back. Often in their delirious minds death seems to be the most viable option to replace the hole that exists because of their missing loved one.

The hole causes pain to those who have to endure it. And each person must find a way to cope with pain or to make the pain go away. Philip found the pain to be so unbearable that he did not see a reason to go on with life. "The pain he was suffering was horrible, he would sooner be dead than endure it; and the thought came to him that it would be better to finish with the whole thing: he might throw himself in the river or put his neck on a railway line" (446). Thankfully, although Philip was irrational in thought, he had not broken into the insanity mode and because of this he decided that suicide was not the best option for him. This destructive form of love causes one's soul to be destroyed. The very essence of the person's life

seems to go spiraling downward all because of one person. This type of love is not healthy and often leads to a devastating ending; luckily for Philip, he overcame it. Humbert did not.

In the end, while thoughts of murder swirled through Humbert's mind, his brain did not get the best of him. His mind was tangled by the torment that Lolita had left behind. Without Lolita Humbert was left twisted. His murderous intentions were followed through with, and because of the depth of despair that Humbert was in after losing his long sought after Lolita, Humbert's life was over. His obsessive love led to the downfall of his life, which he spent the rest of in prison. After being in the psychopathic ward Humbert sat in seclusion and awaited his trial. As he sat, he thought he could use his notes on Lolita at his trial, "to save not my head, of course, but my soul" (308). Through all the love and all the heartache, Humbert had no soul anymore, but he wanted to find it. Lolita stole everything away from him but not purposefully; Humbert forced his love upon her, therefore forcing her to leave him with nothing.

Through all these detrimental effects, these grown men would still do anything to obtain their sought-after loved ones. "I would shed all my pedagogic restraint, dismiss all our quarrels, forget all my masculine pride – and literally crawl on my knees to your chair, my Lolita!" (192). Being emotionally obsessed with another person will more often than not lead to one person being self-defeated. No person is at fault except the one who expected to force their undying devotion onto another.

Moore's obsessive love wheel which ends in destruction demonstrates the most likely outcome of obsessive love. This is seen in Humbert's destructive ending to his life and Philip's contemplation of destructively ending his own life. "He did not know what it was that passes from a man to a woman, from a woman to a man, and made one of them a slave" (OHB 447).

Maybe no one will ever know what type of connection could make someone fall so deeply and obsessively into love that he would forget about all others who loved him and give up all personal values just to be with that one person who might not even love him back.