

Humbert humberts intention essay example

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



\n[toc title="Table of Contents"]\n

\n \t

1. [Introduction](#) \n \t

2. [Body](#) \n \t

3. [Conclusion](#) \n \t

4. [Works Cited](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

Introduction

Vladimir Nabokov's "Lolita" is a highly controversial, although very popular novel, as it recalls the memories of a widowed white man, who uses the pseudonym Humbert Humbert (H. H.) for confessing his crimes: homicide and pedophilia. The novel represents a self-analysis of Humbert Humbert's mind, who addresses a jury, appealing to their understanding for his actions. This essay discusses about how Humbert Humbert's uses the confessional mode in "Lolita", for triggering the compassion of a jury by exploring the side of them that would tolerate his crimes, because they too could or might have experienced similar ideas, feelings, sensations and behaviors in relation to which, unlike the jury members, H. H. acted upon.

Body

During the time he wrote the book, H. H. was imprisoned for murdering Clare Quilty, a famous dramatist of his time, who kidnapped Lolita while she was in the hospital and seduced her away from him. Quilty was involved in creating movies that exhibited children pornography and he lured Lolita into casting one playwright in the school she attended, and later, as she kidnapped her

from the hospital under the pretext that he was her uncle and was taking her home, he proposed Lolita to become an actress in such movies. Lolita refused and soon met a young man whom she married, but being kidnaped by Quilty separated her from H. H. for a long time.

When finding out this story from Lolita herself, as she wrote him a letter asking for money, Humbert Humbert decided to kill Quilty, as he considered the dramatist responsible for sweeping Lolita away from him. The entire novel is in fact, an explanation for why he had to murder Quilty, relieving the full history of his love for Lolita with frenetic passion, sometimes hysteria and madness crises, mingled with descriptive passages where he relates his pervert actions of seducing and manipulating Lolita into having sexual relations with him.

He confesses his story to the “winged gentlemen” (Nabokov 125), believing that they must understand his actions, because they too feel the same about nymphets and considering that they might have fantasied about having adventures with children as Lolita. The manner in which H. H. describes the way that Lolita was his, the erotic reproduction of his feelings and sensations as seeing Lolita naked “except for one sock and her charm bracelet” (Nabokov 125) is meant to bring out the fantasies of all the males in the jury and to make them accomplice to H. H.’s pedophilic acts, as he, H. H. was acting in the name of all these men, who are now living through him, what they only pictured.

He addresses the “frigid gentlewomen of the jury” (Nabokov 132), explaining how in fact Lolita seduced him and not the other way around, describing in detail how she woke up one morning and allured him into

having sex. He uses the epithet “ frigid women” in antithesis with the sexual vivacity, sensuality and the intense libido of a 12 years old girl, considering that they can never feel what Lolita felt that morning when she rolled over him and kissed him, inviting him to have sex with her. The accurate description of that scene is directed precisely at the “ frigid gentlewomen of the jury” (Nabokov 132) for letting them know what sexual desire looks like, how it feels and how it manifests. This scene, and the dedication to the frigid women members of the jury seem to be intended to mock these women for their impossibility of sensing the joy and the passion of sexual desires but in the same time seems to be Humbert Humbert’s attempt to transpose these women into that twelve years old girl who throws herself in the arms of an adult man. The desired effect is to suggest to the women members of the jury that he knows that secretly they would like to be possessed just as Lolita was possessed and that they would like to have the libido and sexual freedom that Lolita expressed. Through his confession of the guilty pleasure of seducing and accepting the seduction of a twelve years old girl, Humbert Humbert attempts to connect the “ frigid gentlewomen of the jury” (Nabokov 132) with their sexual fire, with their libido, with the intent to make his deeds (pedophilia and the homicide) less serious, as the pedophilia served the greater purpose of following the sexual desire and the homicide was necessary because Quilty, deserved to be murdered because he interrupted the passionate love affair between him and his nymphet.

Again, Humbert Humbert addresses the female members of the jury, this time appealing to their sensitive side as he calls them this time “ sensitive gentlewomen of the jury” (Nabokov 135), attempting to plead for his

innocence to have committed a pedophilia, arguing that in Cincinnati girls mature at the age of twelve or that the Church has adopted the Roman Law that stipulates that girls may marry at twelve but most importantly, suggesting that he is not to be considered guilty of “depriving her of her flower” because he “was not even her first lover” (Nabokov 135). He makes this explanation calling to the women’s sensitivity, so that to shade a negative light on Lolita as she was with another man before him, even if she was only twelve, suggesting her immoral behavior that the “sensitive gentlewoman” (Nabokov 135) must sense. This confession indicates his repulsion at the thought that his Lolita was touched by another man, but also his strong belief that nothing he did in relation to Lolita was abnormal, although in other occasions he refers as himself as to a monster (Nabokov 61, 124) and condemns his actions “Jurors! () my only regret today is that I did not quietly deposit key ‘342’ at the office, and leave the town, the country, the continent, the hemisphere,-indeed, the globe-that very same night” (Nabokov 123).

Appealing to the jury, regardless of their gender indicates Humbert Humbert’s appeal to human nature, who is exposed to failures and errors, but who is also forgiving. Deliberately modulating the gender of the jury indicates H. H.’s appeal to either the women’s characteristics (frigidity or sensitivity) or to men’s fantasies about nymphets, aiming for capturing their understanding for his crimes, and for diminishing the seriousness of his acts.

Conclusion

Using the confessional mode for telling his love story for Lolita, Humbert Humbert advocates for himself, therefore, the entire novel seems to be built

on a sensitive, passionate yet insane and pervert plead for excusing the crimes that H. H. has committed out of desire and love for a twelve years old girl. Readers of the book, acting also like the jury of H. H.'s actions are responsible for giving their verdict, therefore, Humbert Humbert's crimes should be judged by individual readers. Personally, I consider that although Humbert Humbert's intention of using the confessional mode was to bring the readers on his side, his crimes are in fact crimes that have the single merit of being related artistically, otherwise my perception of his crimes does not change.

Works Cited

Nabokov, Vladimir, *Lolita*, New York, Random House, Inc. 1955. Print.