

# *The Study of Humbert in Lolita from the Perspective of Freud's Psychoanalysis*

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**Abstract:** Written by the Russian-American writer, Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* is one of the most debated novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which portrays an incest story about a middle-aged European professor whose whole life is the appetite for a twelve-year-old schoolgirl, Dolores Haze. He named her Lolita secretly in his heart. The book is noted for the complicated personality of the protagonist, Humbert. There are many descriptions of Humbert's psychological activities which perfectly match Freud's psychoanalysis theory. This thesis intends to study the complicated personality of Humbert and find out his original motivation behind the criminal behavior from the point of Freud's psychoanalysis. Freud comes up with three concepts "Id, Ego, and Superego" in the psychoanalysis theory, he believes human's personality consists of those three parts and the personality is changing and developing throughout one's life. Id is based on pleasure principle, driven by initial desire. In the novel, Id controls Humbert, he falls madly in love with Lolita and uses a filthy way to take possession of her. His moral degeneration lies in the strong Id, he satisfies his evil desire and tries to escape the society by traveling across the United States with Lolita. Ego sticks to the reality principle, its purpose is to keep the balance between Id and Superego. During the elopement with Lolita, Humbert is tortured by the rational Ego all the time. On the one hand, he is obsessed with his little lover and wants to live with her forever, on the other hand, he knows clearly that his incest with Lolita violates the social law and moral regulation; and he would never be accepted by the society. Superego is the supreme part in the personality; which conforms to the morality principle. At the end of the story, Humbert's love for Lolita ascends to a higher level; he transfers from a greedy pursuer into a devoted father. Whatever Lolita becomes, she would still remain the embodiment of perfection love and beauty in his eyes forever. He totally accepts his identity of Lolita's father, and turns his abnormal relationship into deep love for his daughter. His superego consequently reaches the ideal of humanity. The analysis of the protagonist in this *Lolita* from the perspective of Freud's Psychoanalysis procures readers new insights and comprehensive understandings of this great work. Thus, we can explore richer connotation and value of this novel.

## 1. Introduction

*Lolita*, the representative work of the Russian American writer, Vladimir Nabokov, is considered

as the masterpiece of post-modern work of 20<sup>th</sup> century literature. It remains the center of both Chinese and foreign literature criticism for many years since its publication, but attracts the attention of the critics from different aspects. Chinese critics pay their attention to its post-modernity, narrative strategies and ethical problems, while foreign scholars begin to study the book in terms of cultural criticism, writing style, and comparative study. In terms of rhetoric devices, some scholars analyze the irony and parody used in *Lolita*; they think the major characters have totally different personalities from what they seem to have. As for comparative study, some researchers find that the plot in *Lolita* is quite similar to Goethe's *Faust*; they argue that *Lolita* is a rework of *Faust* in a form of American literature. They interpret the characters from fresh point of views and discuss the details and images of the book. Comparatively speaking, Chinese critics focus only a few aspects of Freud's psychoanalysis on this work, thus there are limited cultural documentary for us to obtain a more comprehensive and profound understanding of the character, Humbert in *Lolita*. This thesis intends to analysis the complicated personality of the protagonist Humbert in this controversial novel according to Freud's psychoanalysis theory.

If close attention be paid to this novel, we will discover that there are many descriptions of the narrator's psychological activities which can be interpreted by Freud's theory. Freud believes there are three parts in a complete personality of human beings; they are Id, Ego and Superego. They indicate different mental aspects of human being, Id is the primary part of personality which is initiative, inherited and natural, which only chases joy and instant satisfaction without restrictions. Based on the pleasure principle, Id chases happiness and seeks immediate gratification. Ego is the transitional zone between Id and the reality. It is an essential part of the personality which deals with the demands of Id and Superego. Based on the reality principle, it always consider the consequence of an action, it makes decision and controls action concerning the limitation of the reality. Its principal work is to keep the balance between Id and Superego, maintaining the mental health of the individual and help people blend in the society. Superego is the supreme part of the personality. It represents the rights and wrongs of the society. Based on the moral principle, superego controls one's impulses and helps people become morally correct. These three parts keep tight connection with each other and impact each other deeply. If these three parts keep a balance, the person will have a healthy psychology. On the contrary, the person would suffer mental disorder once these parts lose balance. If the Id and Superego become too much stronger or weaker, the person will have psychological problems. These three parts can perfectly interpret Humbert's psychological condition and behaviors. Since his Id gets too strong, Humbert lose mental balance and destroyed himself in the indulgence of chasing sex and desire greedily.

In this novel, the dominating figure, Humbert is a man characterized by psychoanalysis theory. Many depictions of his psychological world match Freud's personality theory perfectly. Humbert's mad passion for Lolita comes from his childhood experience with Annabel, his first lover. Under the control of id's pleasure principle, he seeks satisfaction from a 12-year-old girl, Lolita. However, the superego restrains the evil minds and strong desires of id; it tries to discipline himself by the moral regulation in the real society. But his id is so strong that ego can barely survive between id and superego. In the end, Humbert gets lost in the indulgence of pursuing Lolita without temperance. This thesis uses Freud's psychoanalysis theory to analyze the character and plot in *Lolita*, which can let people have a deeper understanding of the theme and value of this great work.

Through the analysis, we can dig out his original motivation and the essential cause of the tragedy of the story. As a result, we can uncover the profound essence and rich intonation of *Lolita*. Moreover, the new study perspective can give readers a unique comprehension of this great work. Besides, the research of the protagonist's distorted psychology alerts people to pay attention to the mental health of adults and children, which is beneficial to establish a harmonious and healthy society.

This thesis is divided into three major parts. First part is about the famous novel *Lolita* and its author Vladimir Nabokov. Second part is about the prestigious psychoanalysis theory and its creator Sigmund Freud. The last part presents an overall explanation of the complicated personality and criminal behavior of the narrator Humbert in *Lolita*.

## 2. Vladimir Nabokov and Lolita

Vladimir Nabokov is one of the most creative and productive writer of his era, he remains relatively unknown to the public after the publication of his representative work, *Lolita*. In fact, Nabokov is a versatile person. During his lifetime, Nabokov had many identities, such as language teacher, literature professor, writer, poet, novelist and lepidopterist. His novels, poems, essays all demonstrate his cosmopolitan wisdom. He is famous for his lyrical descriptions, unique narrative style and intricate plot which can be fully shown in his scandalous novel *Lolita*. Moreover, he also was a world famous lepidopterist. He and his wife gathered a great number of butterfly species, and he was the curator of Lepidoptera at Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology. Only after his death, his scientific position became to grow, once discredited, have been shown by genetic studies to be remarkably accurate.

*Lolita* is a highly controversial novel in American literature. It is about a middle-aged European professor's relationship with a twelve-year-old school girl. The book was first published in Paris in 1955 and then in New York in 1958. But some American libraries and French publishers banned it and considered it objectionable. However, the scandal made the book immensely popular. Later on, *Lolita* obtained a classic status, becoming one of the most-debated novels of 20<sup>th</sup> century literature. The name *Lolita* is used nowadays to describe a precocious and attractive girl. The novel was also adapted to several films and operas.

### 2.1. Vladimir Nabokov

Vladimir Nabokov is a Russian American writer, born in St. Petersburg. He immigrated to England because of the Russian Revolution 1917 and graduated from Cambridge University in 1920. Then he moved to the United States in 1940 and taught Slavic language at Stanford University. From 1942 to 1948, as a literature professor, he taught at Wellesley College. Meanwhile, he was also a research fellow in entomology at the museum of comparative zoology at Harvard University. Nabokov became an American citizen in 1945 and at that time he was a regular writer to well-known magazines. From 1948 to 1959, he became a professor of Russian literature at Cornell University. In 1960, he and his family moved to Monteux, Switzerland. Nabokov died in July 2, 1977, at the Palace Hotel in Monteux, Switzerland.

Nabokov is gifted in many ways; he is not only a writer, but also professor, translator, and lepidopterist. As one of the greatest novelists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Nabokov is really imaginative and productive. He has large volumes of poems, novels, essays and memoirs. His major work includes *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941), *Invitation of a Beulah* (1941), *Invitation of a Beulah* (1941), *Speak, Memory* (1951), *Invitation of a Beulah* (1957), and *Pale Fire* (1962). Nabokov's works embrace senses, imagination, intelligence and psychology; they are often sensuous, subjective and mysterious, full of lyrical descriptions and lively scenes. In *Lolita*, Nabokov uses a highly subjective narrative style to show Humbert's complex inner world. Meanwhile, he employs a sophisticated prose style to recall Humbert's fragmented memories. These writing skills used in *Lolita* can fully demonstrate Nabokov's unique writing style. Besides, he is a translator with a good command of Russian, English and French, his translation can accurately present the essence and ideas of the original work. Furthermore he is an influential lepidopterist in the field of entomology, he came up with a new method to distinguish butterflies and found a great number of new species of butterflies. In addition, he has some achievements in

the international chess field.

## 2.2. Lolita

*Lolita* is written by the Russian American writer, Vladimir Nabokov. It is considered scandalous for its controversial subject. The book was first published in Paris in 1955 and in New York in 1958. After its American edition came out, some libraries banned as the controversial subject criticized by many scholars. However, the scandal also helped the novel become popular. Critical comment because high praise after readers realized the deep value of this great work. It becomes one of the well-known novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century American literature. Recent pop culture has included the name Lolita to describe a sexually precocious and attractive girl. The novel is a confession of a white widowed male in the prison. The protagonist as well as the narrator, Humbert is a middle-aged European intellect who is obsessed with his landlady's little daughter, Dolores Haze. He loves her so much that he gives her a secret private nickname-- Lolita. In order to approach her, he pretends to marry the landlady Charlotte Haze. After Charlotte died in a car crash by accident, he gets the chance to possess the little girl. He starts a long road trip with Lolita across the America, and then in many motels, he achieves his greedy desires. Two years later, Lolita disappeared mysteriously. Humbert goes out his way to look for her but in vain, hence, he has to give up. After that, he meets a cute woman named Rita. He spends a happy time with Rita before Lolita sends a letter to him, saying that she gets married and is going to have a baby, she needs help. Humbert abandons Rita and sets off. He finally sees Lolita, but she is no longer what she used to be. Even though she becomes other people's wife, he still loves her very much. In his eyes, Lolita is the embodiment of love, truth and beauty. Humbert asked her to leave with him but she rejected, he left sadly and decided to dig out the man who took Lolita away from him. In the end, he found his enemy, Clare Quilty, an acquaintance of Charlotte's, the writer of the school play, the man Lolita claims to have loved. Humbert killed him without hesitation and he becomes a prisoner died of illness. And Lolita died of mogitocia. As one of the most controversial novel of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Lolita* portrays an incest story between a middle aged professor, Humbert and his twelve-year-old stepdaughter, Lolita. Some readers consider Humbert as a maniac and criminal without morality and conscience. Whereas others argue that he is not that bad, he tries to be good and kind. His complicated personality evokes a heated debate among different readers. This thesis is going to interpret Humbert's complicated psychology from the point of Freud's psychoanalysis so as to give readers a new insight and an overall comprehension of this figure and the great work.

## 3. Sigmund Freud and psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud was an Austrian neurologist as well as the founding father of the psychoanalysis theory. He changed how the western world consider human mind and behavior and was the first European to come up with the concept of unconsciousness.

Psychoanalysis was developed by Sigmund Freud in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the whole, psychoanalysis has five theories and they have deep influence on the western psychological development.

### 3.1 Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud is the founding father of the famous psychoanalysis theory. As an Austrian neurologist, he came up with this theory from his numerous experiences of the clinic cure of mental patients. His major works include the *Interpretation of Dreams* and *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. Freud proposed some psychological concepts, such as "Preconscious"

“Unconscious” “Consciousness” “Id” “Ego” “Superego” “Oedipus complex” “Electra Complex” and “Libido”. “Everything you and I do is out of sex urge or the desire to be good” Freud said. He believed human beings are driven by sex desire and the dreams can reveal their inhibited impulses.

Freud was born in a Jewish family in 1856 and he was the first of the eight children. The family settled in Vienna when Freud was young. When he was a schoolboy, he had already showed his superior intelligence. In 1873, he studied medicine in the University of Vienna. From 1882 to 1886, he worked as an assistant at the General Hospital in Vienna. During this time, Dr. Josef Breuer related to Freud how he had treated a young woman suffering from hysteria with “talking cures” while in a state of self-hypnosis. That is the prototype of psychoanalysis. Freud first used the term “psychoanalysis” for his new treatment in 1896. Some of his other famous works include: *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) and *Selected Papers on Hysteria and Other Psychoneuroses* (1909). In 1909, Freud was invited to Clark University to speak about his theories. In 1930, the city of Frankfurt awarded Freud its Goethe Prize for work that had “opened access to the driving forces of the soul” he was elected corresponding member of the Royal Society of London in 1936. The growing danger of anti-Semitism and Nazi persecution made it apparent that Freud would suffer the fate of other Jews if they stayed in Vienna. With the help of US government officials, Freud and his family left Austria. Since he liked smoking cigars every day, he died of oral cavity cancer in 1939. It was Freud’s wish to die in freedom, and so he did in his new home which is now Freud Museum.[1]

### 3.2 Psychoanalysis

There are totally five theories in Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis. They are spirit, personality, psychosexuality, defense mechanism and psychotherapy. According to Freud, human’s spirit is divided into three parts: Conscious, Preconscious, and Unconscious. Conscious is the part of the mind that holds what you are aware of. You can verbalize about your conscious experience and think about it in a logical order. Preconscious is ordinary memory. So although things stored here aren’t in the conscious, they can be easily brought into conscious. Unconscious was not directly accessible to awareness. In this part, Freud regards it as a waste container for impulses, feelings and opinions that are connected to misery anxiety, and clash. These thoughts have not vanished and according to Freud, they still exist, posing influence on our behaviors and our conscious awareness. This is where most of the work of the Id, Ego and Superego occur. The psychosexuality has five sexual psychology’s development periods. They are oral stage, anal stage, phallic stage, latency stage and genital stage. From Freud’s point of view, in order to release psychological energy, the infant is driven in his behaviors by the desire and instinct for sexual gratification from the moment of birth. According to the defense mechanism, when anxiety occurs, the mind would react by increasing problem-solving thinking, searching suitable means of escaping the bad condition. Once this is not useful, a series of defense mechanisms may be stimulated to work, in Freud’s opinion, these are strategies which the Ego takes place to help copes with the Id and the Superego. All defense Mechanisms possess two shared characteristics: one is that they always occur unconsciously. The other is that they incline to distort the reality. The last theory is psychotherapy which has several psychological terms: free association, dream interpretation, manifest dream-content, latent dream-thought, transference, positive transference and negative transference. All of them made great contributions to the psychological development in the world. This thesis tends to highlight the most popular theory, personality structure theory, and tries to interpret the personality of the protagonist, Humbert with the help of its three components, Id, Ego and Superego.

Freud comes up with three concepts “id, ego, and superego” in the psychoanalysis theory, he believes human’s personality consists of those three parts and personality is changing and



developing throughout one's life.

Freud contends that human personality is made of three parts: Id, Ego, and Superego. According to Freud, we are born with our id. The id is a vital part of our personality, because as newborns, it allows us to get our basic needs met. Freud believes that the Id conforms to the pleasure principle. In other words, the id wants something good, without concerning the reality of the situation. When a baby is hungry, the Id wants food, and as a result, the baby cries. The id doesn't care about reality, let alone the needs of anyone else.

Within the next three years, as the kid connects more and more with the outside world, the second part of the personality begins to develop. Freud called this part the Ego, which is based on the reality principle. The Ego is aware of that other people have needs, sometimes being wayward and selfish would do harm to us in the long term. It's the Ego's obligation to meet the needs of the id and the reality of the situation.

At the age of five, the Superego grows. The Superego is the moral part of personality and develops owing to the moral and ethical restraints imposed on us by the family and society. Superego demonstrates our belief of right and wrong.

According to Freud's theory, in a healthy person, the Ego is the strongest part so that it is able to satisfy the needs and desires of the id, not upset the Superego, and still take into consideration the reality of current situation. If the Id gets too strong, impulses take over the person's life. If the superego becomes too strong, the person would be driven by rigid regulations, would be stubborn and unbending in his or her communications with the world. The story between Humbert and Lolita can best illustrate the three parts of people's personality.[2]

#### 4. The Study of Humbert in Lolita

Humbert is the protagonist in this controversial novel, *Lolita*. He is a middle-aged European professor as well as a pedophile. Behind his glamorous appearance is a complicated soul. He was born in a rich family, but lost his mother in a natural disaster when he was a little boy. And his father was always busy with his love affairs and didn't care about his son. Moreover the death of his first lover took a heavy toll on him. As a result, he grows a strange affection for those little girls at the age of three to fourteen, he calls them nymphets. After he became a grown up, he tried to conceal his distorted inclination by pretending to marry a normal woman. But in fact, he did not love her at all, he keep chasing little nymphets during his marriage. However, his wife fed up with the fake marriage and run away with another man, leaving him angry and mad. So he moved to New England town in which he met his most beloved nymphet, Lolita. At the first sight of his landlady's little daughter, Dolores Haze, he felt badly in love with her. Not only did she resemble her little girlfriend who died of disease many years ago, but also she has some magic attractions to him. He loved her so much that he gave her a private nickname, Lolita. Since then, he could not control his strong love and did something immoral. He eloped with Lolita after the death of the landlady. Whereas, Lolita didn't love Humbert, what she loved most is the school play teacher Quilty. So she escaped with Quilty secretly, but later on she realized that Quilty is a bad guy, he didn't love her, just wanted to make her shot child pornography. Therefore, Lolita escaped and married a retired soldier. She suffered from poverty when she got pregnant, without choices, she wrote a letter to ask Humbert for help. Humbert came to see her as soon as he received the letter. At their reunion, Humbert asked Lolita to leave with him, but she refused. Even though he cannot stay with Lolita forever, he still inquired the person who took her away from him and planned a decisive revenge. At the end of the story, Humbert killed Quilty and became a prisoner. The whole story is just a white widowed man's confession of his incest with his landlady's daughter.

As the narrator of the novel *Lolita*, Humbert presents a distorted love story between Lolita and

him. Through many depictions of his psychological activities, we can see a middle-aged European professor who has a complicated personality.[3]

On the one hand, he is a spoony man who is obsessed with a little fresh girl and devotes all his life to her. To some extent, Humbert is pure and innocent; he has a great desire for love, beauty and truth. He can sacrifice his life for his most beloved one. In order to take revenge on the man who hurts Lolita, he has a fierce fight with him and kills him without a second thought. His selfless devotion and persistent pursuit leave an unforgettable impression on many readers. Besides, he is not bad in nature. Even though he once has a plan to kill Charlotte in the glass lake so that he could be with his little secret lover forever, his ethical conscience prevents him from committing a crime. Thus, we can easily find that he is not a totally bad guy. Furthermore, he tried his best to be a good father. He could give Lolita whatever she wanted and meet all her wayward needs. He sent her candy to the summer camp and bought her beautiful clothes on the trip. Humbert didn't allow anyone to hurt her, so after having known that it is Quilty who beguiled her and hurt her badly; he decided to take revenge on him at any cost. As a result, he killed Quilty but became a prisoner. In the prison, he confessed his crime and wished that his most beloved Lolita could live forever in his heart.

On the other hand, Humbert is indeed a criminal. He is a representative figure of moral degeneration, a mixture of cruelty and intelligence. He is infatuated with a twelve-year-old precocious girl Lolita but uses a filthy way to possess her. His incest violates the law. In order to escape from the punishment of reality and society, he takes her on a road trip across the United States and prevents her from getting close to other person. However, what he did only can make his ravished illusion last a little longer, his behavior still violates the law and he cannot be accepted by anyone. Moreover, Lolita never loved him at all, every night he could hear Lolita's sob in the hotel room. His appearance ruined a little girl's innocent childhood, Lolita could never live a simple life like other normal kids.[4]

#### 4.1 The embodiment of Id in Humbert

Id is the only element of personality that arise from birth. It is comprised of instinct and impulse of human being, which is the most original part of personality. Id includes sexual driving force and restrained trend. This aspect of personality is totally unconscious and demonstrates the instinctive and primitive actions. It sticks to the pleasure principle and chases happiness blindly. In Freud's opinion, the Id is the source of all psychic energy, making it the important constituents of human personality.

The unrestricted Id is so strong that it seeks mental satisfaction without concerning about the ethical regulations and social limits. The death of Humbert's first lover Annabel procured him a gentle and licentious affection inclination that the teenager girls have magic attraction to him. He called them "nymphet" and hid this secret desire in his mind. At the first sight of Lolita, Humbert's id began to swell. Lolita reminded him of his first little lover, Annabel. Moreover, she is more than Annabel. Lolita has all the attractive qualities that the nymphets have. She was precocious, wayward and beautiful. The description "She was Lo, plain Lo, in the morning, standing four feet ten in one stock. She was Lola in slacks. She was Dolly at school. She was Dolores on the dotted line. But in my arms she was always Lolita. Lolita, light of my life; fire of my loins. My sin; my soul. Lo-lee-ta." can fully demonstrate his psychological world. Humbert loved Lolita so much that he tried his best to give whatever she wanted. He bought her gorgeous clothes and sweet candies only to make her happy. He can satisfy all her willful requirements, when she laughed, he would feel happy. After the death of his wife Charlotte, he starts a long trip with Lolita. During this period, his infatuation of Lolita increased tremendously. As for Humbert, Lolita is

everything he wanted. The only meaning of his life is to stay with her. “She is mine, she is mine, keys in my hand, hands in my pocket, she is mine.” He just wanted to occupy her and never lose his little lover. Therefore, at the Fascinating Hunter Motel, he achieved his evil desire and possessed his most beloved girl. Besides, he forbade Lolita from getting close to all the female so that he won't lose her to anyone else. But he was wrong. Lolita didn't love him at all, just as she said: “You, Humbert just destroyed my life, but he, Quilty broke my heart.” As a result, Lolita ran away with Quilty and never came back. Sometimes he tries to constrain his strong desire of possessing Lolita. His Id and Ego have a fierce fight, however, eventually Id has the edge over Ego, and he is controlled by the strong Id. His sexual desire is wholly satisfied, but he knows clearly that his relationship with Lolita violates the social rule and moral norms, thus he suffers severe anxiety and misery.[5]

Five years later, Lolita became Dick's wife. When Humbert saw her, he still loved her deeply “I looked and looked at her, and I knew, as clearly as I knew that I will die, that I loved her more than anything I had ever seen or imagined on earth. She was only the dead-leaf echo of the nymphet from long ago but I loved her, this Lolita pale and polluted and big with another man's child. She could fade and wither- I don't care. I could still go mad with tenderness at the mere sight of her face.” Knowing that it was Quilty who cheated her and destroyed her life, Humbert turned his love into revenge. Driven by the strong Id, he became an irrational monster. He spared no efforts to find out Quilty and take revenge on him crazily even though Lolita prevented him. At that time, he was overwhelmed by strong id and killed Quilty without mercy.

Driven by strong Id, Humbert was obsessed with Lolita and eager to occupy her. It is also strong Id that makes him commit crime and get in the prison. From his behavior, we can see that Humbert's whole life is the lust for a little fresh girl, Lolita. Lolita is to him what light to life. Id's sexy desire possessed him totally and he could not escape from it. As a result, he destroyed himself.

## 4.2 The embodiment of Ego in Humbert

Ego is the middle part of personality; which is based on the reality principle. Ego knows that others have appetites and sometimes being impulsive would hurt people. It is Ego's job to keep the balance between Id and Superego. According to Freud, the Ego grows from the Id and ensures that the desires and needs of the Id can be satisfied in a way accepted in the society. The Ego influences the Conscious, Preconscious and Unconscious mind.[6]

The psychoanalysis theory is based on the analysis of the individual childhood life experience. A major point of this theory is that almost all the mental diseases can trace back to one's childhood experience. Ego aims at balancing the relation between id and superego. Unlike most kids, Humbert had a bad childhood experience. His mother died in a natural disaster when he was only three years old, and his father was busy with love affairs, did not care much about his mental condition. What's more, his first lover Annabel died of a disease, which took a heavy toll on him; as a result, he developed a distorted love psychology. When he becomes adults, he just gets interested in little fresh girl at the age of nine to fourteen who can stimulate his inner desire and bring him pleasure.

Many readers regard Humbert as a demon, but in his monologue, we can see that he has ethical consciousness and he tried to be a good man. He was tortured by the inner contradiction and conflict miserably, struggling between Id and Superego. On the whole, he had to inhibit and restrict the greedy desire. He knows it clearly, once his perverted love is noticed by the public, he would be condemned seriously and become a notorious person.

When Humbert becomes the tenant of Charlotte, he would get excited when he saw her daughter Lolita. Gradually, his hidden desire begins to grow. He kept diary to ease his misery and depression of unsatisfying desire. And on the whole, he managed to keep balance between reality and id under



the influence of Ego. Though Humbert didn't like Charlotte, he still got married with Charlotte for the purpose of getting close to his little lover, Lolita. He tried every possible way to stay with Lolita without Charlotte. His Id was so strong that he even managed to kill Charlotte so that he can become Lolita's step father and live together with her forever. Therefore, when he and Charlotte went out to the glass lake, he planned to drown her down in the lake, but his kind Ego stopped him. At the end, he didn't take action. His ego tried to make him have a balanced life by controlling the vicious Id and accepting the strict reality. He suffered from the misery of unsatisfying desire but driven by rational Ego, he didn't kill Charlotte. Even when Charlotte died in a car crash, he thought that it was his evil wish and plan that killed her. [7]

From this plots, we can see Humbert is not so notorious, he tried to be kind and normal. His ego always alerts him when his greedy Id controlled him and forced him to do something wrong. Even though he wanted to possess Lolita, he didn't take the initial. As a matter of fact, it was Lolita who seduced him at the Fascinating Hunter Motel. His ego takes the responsibility of making him keep the balance between evil desire and social limitation.

### 4.3 The embodiment of Superego in Humbert

The last constituent of personality to develop is the Superego. The Superego is the aspect of personality that presents all of our moral standards that we obtain from both family and society—our awareness of right and wrong. The superego provides guidelines for making judgments. According to Freud, the superego starts to emerge at the age five. As the highest level of human's personality, superego refers to the ideal of personality, showing ethics and kindness. It is characterized by moral principle and social norm. There are two components: ego-ideal and conscience. The main responsibility of Superego is to guide Ego and limit Id.[8]

In the novel, superego tries to inhibit the evil desires of Id and regulate Humbert's ideas and behaviors by social rules. At the very beginning, in order to hide his abnormal affection of little nymphet, Humbert married a woman whom he didn't love at all. He thought that the superficial marriage can give him a normal life of a middle-aged man, and he can be accepted and respected by the society. However, he was wrong; his wife got tired of the marriage without love and eloped with another man, leaving him angry and depressed. Meanwhile, Superego enabled Humbert to realize that his abnormal desire for Lolita was unethical, even though he released his appetite in the end, he still felt miserable. On the road trip across America, he felt nervous and distressed all day long. On the one hand, he was afraid of being taken to the prison for his criminal behavior. On the other hand, he was afraid of losing Lolita to some unknown person. The heavy burden of violating the laws and the fear of losing his most beloved person tortured him all the time. Humbert admits that he commits crime which means that he has realized his strong Id should be punished by the society. At the meantime, he strives to move towards the ideal of personality so as to obtain a good personality. He gets out of his way to protect Ego, but his Superego cannot restrict his strong Id. He cannot escape the severe consequences cause by his uncontrollable Id. Although Humbert commits crime, he still undertakes the responsibility of violating the law and confesses his guilty in the prison. That is how superego takes into effect.

In fact, Humbert is very clear that "what I possess crazily is not her but my own creature, another ideal Lolita which is much more real than Lolita" He knows clearly that Lolita is just the embodiment of love, truth and perfection. What he pursues all his life is not Lolita but his desire for perfection, there is no Lolita at all. The Superego is moralized Ego, it refers to consciousness and ration. As the supreme supervising publishing system, it helps Ego escape from the control of Id and take action based on social regulation and requirements. The main duty of Superego is to direct Ego and limit Id.

At the end of the story, Humbert's love for Lolita ascended to a higher level, he transferred from a greedy pursuer into a devoted father. However Lolita became, in his eyes, she was the embodiment of perfection. He totally accepted his identity of Lolita's father, and turned his abnormal relationship into deep love for a daughter. His superego finally achieved the ideal of humanity.[9]

## 5. Conclusions

Vladimir Nabokov portrayed a middle aged European intellectual Humbert in his representative work *Lolita*. Humbert has a complicated personality which can be explained accurately from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. As the narrator in the novel, there are tremendous psychological descriptions of Humbert from which we can have an overall understanding of this character. As a result, we can explore deeper meaning of this controversial work and raise human's awareness of paying attention to the mental health of children and adult.

According to Freud, human's personality was comprised of three parts, Id, Ego and Superego. Id is the basic level of personality; it is an energy system consists of instincts and desires. Based on pleasure principle, Id is unconscious and irrational. Ego builds on Id and is the middle level of personality. Its main function is to deal with the contradiction between Id and Superego. Based on reality principle, Ego on the one hand adjusts Id, on the other hand is restricted by Superego. Superego is the highest level of personality; it is the result of socialization. Based on morality principle, Superego inhibits the impulse of Ego, supervises Id and pursues the moral perfection. Id is an instinct part, Ego is a social part, and Superego is a moral part. They are connected together closely and influencing each other unconsciously. They keep changing and developing through out one's life time. If they keep a balanced relation, the person would have a healthy mental condition. Once any part becomes much stronger or weaker, the person would suffer mental disorder.

From the analysis of Humbert's ideas and behavior, we can find that the three parts of his personality could not keep in a harmonious condition, so that he suffered severe mental problems and did something immoral. His Id is too strong that he is driven by greedy id and pursues desires without taking the serious consequences into consideration. His Ego cannot keep the balance between Id and Superego. The Superego knows that his incest violates the law and could not be accepted by the society, but the Id is too strong to be restricted. As a result, he lost himself in the crazy pursuit of his most beloved Lolita and went to destruction.

Many scholars regard Humbert as a demon or maniac, however the study of Humbert in *Lolita* from the perspective of Freud's psychoanalysis presents a new interpretation of his criminal behavior. Thus we can have a better understanding of this much debated character and obtain much more values and meanings from this book. Moreover, through the psychological study of Humbert, we can make readers focus more on people's mental health and build a much more harmonious society.

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