

HUMBERT'S COPING METHOD IN "LOLITA" BY VLADIMIR NABOKOV

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ABSTRACT

Humbert-Humbert in "Lolita" is portrayed as a man who admired young girls in his life due to his lack of affection during childhood. In order to fulfill the absence, Humbert has developed particular personality, which was being a well-mannered person. However, this personality was merely his way and Ego to interact with society. In addition, this personality was Humbert's method to cope and negotiate with his deepest passion since his individuality was bound with morality rules in his society. This paper applies descriptive-analytic method and adopts McLeod's ideas on Id, Ego and Superego to identify how Humbert coped with his deepest desire. From the discussion, this current research found that he managed himself by being a literature professor as well as a husband in order to fulfill his Id yet being tolerated with his superego. Thus, this particular personality was apparently projected as his coping method and his way to be a so-called good person in his society.

Keywords: Coping method, Ego, Id, Negotiation, Superego.

INTRODUCTION

Human is inherently embedded with the structure of psyche which is consciously and unconsciously possessed (Freud, 1923). This structure of psyche is known as Id, Ego and Superego which are also called structure of mind—not in physical brain—and related to mental functions. The mental functions can work properly and naturally to some individual, while to some people, it might not function properly when they have to face problems. This incapability will give impact on their psychology. Some people are successfully handling their psychological problems by getting involved in particular activities with their families and colleague, participating in therapy session, or even creating a contradictory ID. ID is one of the structure of psyche which is not in physical areas of the brain, but it is a conceptualization of important mental function (McLeod, 2013). This means that a person has an ability and authority to alter his personality in order to deal and interact with society. It is possible to do since personality has a clear relation with mental function and how the person receives and processes his reality.

The problem of psychology triggered by the structure of psyche is also found in a novel entitled *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov. The problem of the structure of psyche is experienced by a character named Humbert-Humbert. Humbert-Humbert has admiration and desire to young girls due to his lack of attention from his parents during childhood. This unfulfilled affection has developed into a problem related to his mental function when he grew up. In fact, the social environment and the law of moral in society where

Humbert lived did not allow an adult man to have admiration and desire to young girls, especially children. The incompatibility between his desire and admiration with moral law existing in society raises the problem on the psychology of Humbert. This issue becomes the main focus of this research. This research discusses the way Humbert managed his desire, which is id, while he did not violate the rules and moral law prevailing in his social environment—superego, or it is also called as Coping Method.

According to Sigmund Freud (McLeod, 2013), there are three kinds of structure of our psyche. There are Id, Superego and Ego. The Id is the definition of mind includes our basic instinct since birth. It is disposition or composed of biological instinct drivers and it is totally human's unconsciousness. Thus, Id is the undetected deepest desire. Even though the Id is associated with unconsciousness, in this novel Humbert-Humbert was aware of his Id—the desire of a young girl.

Unlike Id, Superego is moral ideas which a person could learn within the family and society. Superego is knowledge and ideology of people which are shaped from the rules, values, and norms existing in society (McLeod, 2013). Therefore, Superego is associated with the way people morally act and behave in society. The act and behavior are used to maintain someone's existence in society. The last structure of our psyche is Ego. Ego operates according to the reality principle that is attempted to help the Id get what it want without disturbing Superego (McLeod, 2013). The Ego is a person's act and behavior in accordance with the morality rules which are learned by Superego. Even though Ego is in line with Superego morality rules, Ego is trying to fulfill the need of Id with a proper and socially acceptable—Superego.

METHODS

This research adopted a qualitative-descriptive method to collect and analyze the data. The qualitative method is used to present the real meaning within the text with close-reading method to bring out the finding issues (Setiawan 2010). Whereas, the descriptive method is used to connect the finding issues in the text with the visible facts—the theory (Nawawi, 1995:63). Futhermore, the qualitative descriptive method is adopted to analyze Humbert's Ego resulted as Id and Superego negotiation. It is seen through the Structure of Humbert Psyche—Structure of psyche.

The data source was obtained from a novel entitled *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov. This novel specifically tells the story of a man named Humbert-Humbert who explicitly described his life and desire to young girls. Besides, the data source of this research is also obtained from articles and journals of Sigmund Freud theory which correlated with the research. To know about structure of Humbert's psyche, this article uses Sigmund Freud's theory which was explained through McLeod's ideas.

RESULTS

Humbert-Humbert negotiated his Id and Superego, resulting his Ego rose when he knew about his Id. In the meantime, his Superego knew that his Id was wrong. It happened because in his society, it is uncommon for a man to admire young girls. The reason of his admiration is because his lack of attention from his parent when he was a child.

Table 1. Humbert’s coping method

Number	Dialogue
1	<i>“My very photogenic mother died in a freak accident (picnic, lightning) when I was three, and, save for a pocket of warmth in the darkest past, nothing of her subsists within the hollows and dells of memory...”</i> (1955: 4)
2	<i>“until at last, twenty-four years later, I broke her spell by incarnating her in another”</i> (1955: 8).
3	<i>“I was consumed by a hell furnace of localized lust for every passing nymphet whom as a law-abiding poltroon I never dared approach.”</i> (1955: 10).
4	<i>“While my body knew what it craved for, my mind rejected my body's every plea.”</i> (1955: 10).
5	<i>“Then I took advantage of the acquaintances I had formed among social workers and psychotherapists to visit in their company various institutions, such as orphanages and reform schools, where pale pubescent girls with matted eyelashes could be stared at in perfect impunity remindful of that granted one in dreams.”</i> (1955: 8)

DISCUSSION

The quotations from the previous section demonstrate Humbert’s unfulfilled love in Humbert’s childhood. It is shown that he lost his mother when he was three. As a matter of fact, a three-year-old child certainly needs a parent figure – both mother and father – and attention to fulfil their Psychosexual Development. Psychosexual Development during childhood is important to a person because it gives influence to the personality and behavior in someone’s future live when he/she grows up (McLeod, 2008). Humbert never had his Psychosexual Development because his father did not give him a lot of attention since his mother passed. He did not have a lot of memory about his mother before her mother passed, which is shown from *“save for pocket of warmth in the darkest past”*. Not to mention, he became sexually obsessed with young girls due to his unfinished love to his childhood friend, Annabel Leigh who died young from typhus.

Freud in McLeod (2013) explained that Id is unconscious psychic energy, yet in this novel, Humbert was conscious about his Id, which is shown by *“until at last, twenty-four years later, I broke her spell by incarnating her in another”* (1955: 8). It was presumed that at first, he was unaware of with his Id. However, after he lost Annabel, he

realized that he had something wrong in himself. He exactly knew his Id, he knew what he wanted, but he did not want the society to know about it. *"I was consumed by a hell furnace of localized lust for every passing nymphet whom as a law-abiding poltroon I never dared approach."* (1955: 10). This quotation shows that he exactly knew that his Id was not allowed by the law in his society in that time. The norm in his society stated that it was controversial if a 30-year-old man fell in love with a 12 to 14-year-old girl.

Another excerpt from this novel is *"As a law-abiding poltroon he never dared approach"*. This shows that he was afraid to break or to across the law in his society. From this quotation, his Id and Superego negotiate to create his Ego *"While my body knew what it craved for, my mind rejected my body's every plea."* (1955: 10). He knew what he wanted, yet, his Superego rejected his Id. He tried to think about the way he helped his Id without disturbing his Superego. This is the negotiation between his Id and Superego which has created his Ego.

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The quotation shows the chosen way of Humbert's Ego to treat his Id without disturbing his Superego. In other words, he treated his Id without making his society knew about his secret—his deepest desire. The first step of his Ego is *"Humbert-Humbert tried hard to be good."* (1955: 11). Humbert tried very hard to become a good person in his society. Thereby, he could keep his secret properly. The way he chose to press his Id and success in becoming a good person are studying, teaching, writing some books, making paperwork, and getting married.

At first, he wanted to have a degree in psychiatry, but then he realized that something wrong with him was more than he has learned to. Thereby, he changed from psychiatry to English literature. When he was in English literature, he wrote some books, made some journals and paperwork to express his feelings and to cover his desire through the text. He had a job as a teacher, and he taught English to a group of adults and boys in school. Other than that, he was also married to a woman to cover his Id. Interestingly, his marriage could fulfil both of his Id and Superego. He could unleash his Id to his step daughter, Dolores Haze, without disturbing his Superego. Those kinds of Ego has helped him, he became a good person in his society and the Ego also helped him treat his Id in reality. This was the way how he treated his Id without disturbing his Superego. It means the only way to cope his Id was creating a contradictory personality.

CONCLUSION

According to the discussion above, Humbert's Ego is resulted from his negotiation with his Id and Superego. This is his coping method so that he did not break his Superego and society would not be able to see his real Id. He created his Ego because he exactly knew what he wanted, yet he did not want to break the law and rules—Superego—in his society. Next, He created his Ego to help his Id has what it wanted without disturbing his Superego. Finally, his Ego actually has helped him maintain his Id without making people think negatively about him.

Thus, Humbert's Ego as a well-behaved and intellectual person has succeeded to keep his desire for young girls. He could treat his desire and successfully become a good person for society where he lived in. No one in his society knew that there was something wrong with him, which was his desire to young girls – except his wife, Charlotte Haze. Yet, Charlotte died before someone else knew his desire. Furthermore, the society knew about his desire through his book which he wrote when he was in the jail.

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