



Analysis on Lolita's Tragic Fate and Self-Redemption From the Perspective of Sphinx Factor

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Abstract

Lolita's life is short and tragic. The teenage girl's Sphinx factor ties her fate to the fate of the three men around her. Based on ethical literary criticism, this paper analyzes the entanglement between Lolita and the fate of the three men in her life under the influence of her sphinx factor. Through the free will of the animal factor of the Sphinx factor, Lolita's fate is tragically interwoven with Humbert and Quilty's; through the rational will of human factor of sphinx factor, Lolita and Dick's destinies are intertwined. The different components of the Sphinx factor affect Lolita's fate. The existence of the animal factor leads to her tragic fate, but the human factor ultimately overcomes the animal factor and achieves the soul's self-redemption.

Key words: Lolita; Sphinx factor; Tragic fate; Self-redemption

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1. INTRODUCTION

Lolita, one of Nabokov's most representative novels, has been confronted with great artistic controversy since its publication. It is this artistic controversy that makes this great work flash with artistic glamor in different countries and times. "Ethical value is the most basic value of literature, which reflects the essential characteristics of all literary values." (Nie, 2014, p.13) Rereading this great

work and analyzing how Lolita's Sphinx factor affects her own destiny is of great ethical value in contemporary times. "The sphinx factor is really made up of two parts -- the human factor and the animal factor. Among them, the human factor is the higher factor, while the animal factor is the lower factor. Therefore, the former can control the latter, thus making people become people with ethical consciousness." (Nie, 2011, p.5) Under the influence of the Sphinx factor, Lolita's entanglement of the fates of Humbert, Quilty and Dick sketched out the short and tragic life of this charming teenage girl. Lolita's animal factor has chosen to enter into a complicated and tangled ethical relationship with Humbert through the domination of natural will; and then she could not resist the temptation of the mysterious Quilty. After leaving Humbert and Quilty, Lolita's rational will of the human factor makes her choose to marry Dick and have a child. Three men has a great influence on Lolita's life. The influence of the animal factor of Lolita's Sphinx factor shapes her tragic destiny. The ethical choice of Humbert and Quilty based on the free will of the animal factor brings her a miserable life. The human factor of Lolita's Sphinx factor makes her make the rational choices. The rational will in the human factor makes her choose to marry Dick and live a normal life. Although the animal factor dominates most of Lolita's life, her most human factor overcomes the animal factor, thus realizing her soul and ethical redemption.

2. TRAGIC FATE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ANIMAL FACTOR

"Free will, also known as natural will, is the embodiment of animal factor. Free will is mainly generated from human animal instinct, which is mainly manifested in different human desires, such as sexual desire, appetite and other people's basic physiological requirements and psychological dynamics. (Nie, 2011, p.8) The deformed feelings between Lolita and Humbert comes into being

slowly under Lolita's free will. This abnormal relationship transcends the normal ethical category, breaks the ethical taboo, and inevitably leads to a tragic end.

At first, Lolita regarded Humbert as a kind elder. Since Lolita is in a single-parent family, the lack of love from her young father makes her interested in Humbert, a fatherly man who suddenly arrives home. Lolita is in her mother's bedroom trying to get the dust out of her left eye. Humbert licks out the grains of sand with the tip of his tongue, which, though in some ways rekindle Humbert's desire and vexation for Lolita, is nothing more than an ordinary family event for Lolita. "She laughed, and brushed past me out of the room." (Nabokov, 2000, p.46) In response to Humbert's intimate act, Lolita reacts more like a difficulty solved with the help of a paternal role. "But the adolescent rebellion and the pressure of the real environment make them deeply restless, or they have the admiration and love for the handsome and promising young talents around them, or they have the attachment and admiration for the tender and caring middle-aged men." (Liu, 2016, p.104) At this time, Lolita's emotion towards Humbert is more of a fatherly emotional experience.

Humbert and Mrs. Haze were sitting on the porch one evening, talking. Lolita squeezed herself between Humbert and her mother. Humbert spoke more cheerfully of his expedition to the North Pole. Lolita listened intently, but often slipped her ballerina toy into Humbert's lap and kept moving herself. Her mother had to throw the doll back into the room. In this scene, Lolita seems to revel in a family with two healthy parents: joining in parents' chat, coquetry beneath parents' love. Lolita's feelings for Humbert are more like feelings for her absent father, rational and precious. " 'Don't tell Mother but I've eaten all your bacon' " (Nabokov, 2000, p.52) These trivial family matters reveal Lolita's true feelings for Humbert: an elder to lean on and a friend to trust. From this point of view, Lolita's animal factor is not initially dominant.

Mrs. Haze was driving down town to buy a present for her friend, and in view of Humbert's taste in textiles and perfume, she decided to ask him to go with her. As Humbert got into his car, Lolita shouted from the living room window, " 'You! Where are you going? I'm coming too! Wait!' " (Nabokov, 2000, p.53) It was like a playful little girl who was afraid her parents would sneak out without her. Then Lolita climbed quickly into the car, "shivering with glee." (Nabokov, 2000, p.53) In a way, Lolita has come to accept Humbert as her absent father. However, under the control of free will, Lolita's feelings for Humbert are also gradually changing. Lolita was about to close the car door the morning Mrs. Head took her to the campsite, when she looked up at Humbert by the window and hurried to Humbert's room. "in her Sunday frock, stamping, panting, and then she was in my arms, her innocent mouth melting under the

ferocious pressure of dark male jaws, my palpitating darling! The next instant I heard her - alive, unrapped - clatter downstairs. The motion of fate was slammed." (Nabokov, 2000, p.70) Lolita's intimate kiss farewell to Humbert breaks Lolita's inner moral restraint on Humbert being a substitute for the absent image of father. Lolita unwittingly treats Humbert as if he were her lover. This kiss is far more than an expression of the daughter's love for her father, but more like nostalgia for the lover who is about to leave.

However, The death of Mrs. Haze in a car accident brings great pain to Lolita and invisibly causes a change in Lolita's sphinx factor. The unaccompanied Lolita's feelings for Humbert gradually change. What started out as father-daughter affection gradually changes into something more intimate. Humbert picks up Lolita from Camp Q and hides the news of her mother's death. In the compartment between them, Lolita acts even more flirtatiously. "Hardly had the car come to a standstill than Lolita positively flowed into my arms. ... but she, with an impatient wriggle, pressed her mouth to mine so hard that I felt her big front teeth and shared in the peppermint taste of her saliva." (Nabokov, 2000, p.119) Lolita's emotional attitude towards Humbert has now been gradually replaced by her natural will. "The natural will is the most primitive will that approximates the animal part, such as the sexual instinct." (Nie, 2014, p.42) Lolita's affection for Humbert is beyond what a daughter should feel for her father, even her stepfather. Lolita even ventures to ask Humbert, " 'Say, wouldn't Mother be absolutely mad if she found out we were lovers?' " (Nabokov, 2000, p.120) Lolita's inner animality rises, and her free will gradually takes over her brain.

Humbert takes Lolita to different motels to hide the news of her mother's death. Humbert stayed at a motel called "The Enchanted Hunters" the night he picked up Lolita from Camp Q. "Then she crept into my waiting arms, radiant, relaxed, caressing me with her tender, mysterious, impure, indifferent, twilight eyes - for all the world, like the cheapest of cheap cuties." (Nabokov, 2000, p.128) Lolita is lustful for Humbert, even though she is an underage girl. Lolita had this experience when she was at Camp Q. What's more, Lolita agrees that the experience is " 'sort of fun' and 'fine for the complexion' ." (Nabokov, 2000, p.146) It can be seen that Lolita's free will governs her desire for Humbert: Humbert becomes her lover. This emotional experience is an unbalanced one. If a man gives in to free will, he becomes an animal, and the consequences of allowing his primitive desires to dominate his life are terrible.

In the absence of a father, and the unfortunate death of her mother, Lolita reduced to a homeless child. Under these circumstances, Lolita followed Humbert on an extensive tour of The United States. During this Pan-American journey, Lolita's relationship with

Humbert takes a complex turn. Lolita's emotional needs for Humbert are gradually dominated by a desire for possession. This natural will makes Humbert a slave to her own body, and Lolita begins a life with Humbert being her lover. Considering that Humbert wants to possess Lolita in the hotel at the very beginning and has to deliberately show his different ethical relationship of father and daughter, Lolita completely abandons her rational ethical restrictions on herself and shows Humbert's her free desire. In dealing with Humbert, we see Lolita's "influence of the free instinct and primitive desire on one's destiny." (Nie, 2010, p.19) Ignoring the constraint of moral will on self-behavior, free will takes the most primitive principle of happiness as the standard. Once the balance is broken on normal emotional needs, the result of free will will be tragic.

Similarly, Lolita, under the free will of the animal factor, develops an instinctive infatuation with Quilty. "The human senses that embody animalistic factors can generate strong desires and emotions, namely free will, so in the face of strong carnal desire, human's rational will is often powerless." (Nie, 2011, p.8) After leaving Humbert, Lolita begins a complex relationship with Quilty.

"Free will is the part that approaches rational will, as the conscious pursuit of a purpose or demand." (Nie, 2014, p.42) Lolita's infatuation with Quilty stems from her free will, which reflects Lolita's most primitive love and conscious pursuit of Quilty. Although Quilty was not directly involved in most of Lolita's life, he influenced her fate with a ghostly presence.

The depiction of Quilty in the text takes the form of a profile. In Humbert's excerpt: "Quilty, Clare, American dramatist." (Nabokov, 2000, p.33), and Mrs. Haze, referring to the dentist: "Our neighbor, in fact, Dr. Quilty. Uncle or cousin, I think, of the playwright." (Nabokov, 2000, p.66) And on the wall of Lolita's bedroom were posters that read, "A distinguished playwright was solemnly smoking a Drome." (Nabokov, 2000, p.73) and Humbert's first encounter with Quilty at The Enchanted Hunters: "Suddenly I was aware that in the darkness next to me there was somebody sitting in a chair on the pillared porch. I could not really see him..." (Nabokov, 2000, p.134) The profile of Quilty basically describes his character: dark, cunning and gives a negative emotional experience. Quilty appears as a hidden figure, but his presence has a huge impact on the fates of Lolita and Humbert.

Lolita had indirect contact with Quilty at a very young age. The posters hanging in her room, and Lolita's keen interest in drama, allude to a later fate connection to Quilty. Lolita's first contact with Quilty was at The Enchanted Hunters, "but visibly burning to point, at the lone diner in the loud checks, in the far corner of the room." (Nabokov, 2000, p.129) When Quilty's car followed Humbert's, Lolita made contact with Quilty. This leads Lolita gradually to the ethical choice of Quilty under her free will. "Free will is the outward manifestation

of human desire, and rational will is the outward manifestation of human reason." (Nie, 2014, p.42) As Lolita's love for drama and arts, Quilty, as a playwright, has a great attraction for her. Under the domination of free will, Lolita chooses to disappear from Humbert's world in favor of Quilty.

Lolita's infatuation with Quilty fades with his nasty behavior. Because of Quilty's dirty behavior, Lolita finally leaves Quilty. In the relationship between Lolita and Quilty, Lolita's feelings for Quilty are governed by free will. Quilty, on the other hand, lets Lolita make some weird, dirty porn. Lolita refuses to participate and is chased away by Quilty. But in Lolita's mind, Quilty was "was a great guy in many respects." (Nabokov, 2000, p.293) This fully testifies to Lolita's conscious love and free will for Quilty. But Quilty has no genuine affection for Lolita, whom he sees as a dispensable part of his erotic film. without any rational thinking and knowing of Quilty, Lolita chooses to stay with Quilty under her free will. After recognition of Quilty's true face, Lolita breaks free of free will, left Quilty, begins her life of rational will.

3. SELF-REDEMPTION UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF HUMAN FACTOR

"Rational will is the embodiment of the will of human factor, and also the embodiment of the will of reason." (Nie, 2011, p.8) Lolita's deformed love with Humbert and her blind love with Quilty are obviously choices made by free will under the influence of her animal factor. The animal factor dominated by free will does great damage to Lolita's body and mind. Under the final influence of human factor, Lolita leaves Humbert and Quilty and begins to lead a normal life under the control of rational will. "The rational will is the part that is close to the moral will, such as the standards of good and evil in judgment and choice, and the code of ethics." (Nie, 2014, p.42) Lolita's choice of Dick is based on the rational will, which reflects Lolita's inner judgment of good and evil and morality. In Lolita's eyes, Dick was the commonest, the simplest, the kindest man to be committed to life, unlike Humbert and Quilty. Dick takes a job with his mechanical major in Alaska and will move there with Lolita. At this time, Lolita is also pregnant, her future with Dick is full of hope, there will be a child and a completed family.

And Humbert suffers greatly from Lolita's disappearance. This leads Humbert to spend the next few years searching for Lolita until he hears from her. "I guess he'll come right for Christmas. This is a hard letter to write. I'm going nuts because we don't have enough to pay our debts and get out of here." (Nabokov, 2000, p.282) The letter mentions that Lolita, who is married and pregnant, is in debt and wants to borrow some money from Humbert to tide her over. At this point, Lolita, from a rational point of view, reunites with Humbert not because

of emotion, but because of financial difficulties. Due to the financial difficulties, they turned to Humbert for help. It was a huge message to Humbert that at least he would be able to see Lolita again. "I was again on the road, again at the wheel of the old blue sedan, again alone." (Nabokov, 2000, p.283) Humbert, excited and worried by the letter, followed Lolita's address to find her. At this time, Lolita's feelings for Humbert have no longer been dominated by free will, but out of the need of rational will. Also based on rational will, Lolita chooses to marry Dick rather than return to Humbert. Because Lolita's relationship with Humbert is deformed and unhealthy. Similarly, the feelings of Quilty, on the one hand, though full of Lolita's infatuation and love, but in the face of Quilty's unreasonable demands, Lolita finally breaks free of the shackles of free will, leaving Quilty.

Dick is a war veteran. "Arctic blue eyes, black hair, ruddy cheeks, unshaven chin... He had nice sad eyes with beautiful lashes, and very white teeth." (Nabokov, 2000, p.290) When Humbert met Dick, Dick was busy repairing the house. "in a rather primitive vista, a dark-haired young stranger in overalls, instantaneously reprieved, was perched with his back to me on a ladder fixing something near or upon the shack of his neighbor." (Nabokov, 2000, p.287) Compared with Humbert and Quilty, Dick is the only young man with a healthy heart and personality. And the only one who, ethically speaking, can live a normal life with Lolita. Lolita chooses to marry Dick and have a child based on her own rational will, which reflects her inner view of good and evil and morality. Dick is a hardworking man, and Lolita dreams of a bright future with him in Alaska.

Although Humbert eventually struggles to get Lolita back into his arms, Lolita's relentless refusal undoubtedly tells Humbert her inner choice: to live a hard but hopeful life with Dick rather than to live an ethically free life with Humbert or Quilty. This demonstrates Lolita's final growth and her ethical choice. It is an rational choice, a moral choice. Although She is pregnant and living a hard life, Lolita is happy in her heart. "Under normal circumstances, we are always happy with our physical pleasures. And in the process of returning to normal qualities, we even experience pleasure from the opposite, such as bitter things..." (Aristotle, 2003, p.219) Lolita's choice of Dick as her life partner is based on her rational will, which reflects the dominance of human factor over Lolita.

Under the influence of human factors, Lolita expects to live a normal life and have a happy family with Dick. Lolita grows up in a fatherless family from the start. From childhood to adulthood, she does not get the father's care and love. Lolita's mother falls in love with Humbert after meeting him and wants to send her to the camp so she can be alone with Humbert, without caring for Lolita's feelings. Lolita actually grows up in a family where both father and mother are absent or relatively deficient, which

also affects Lolita's psychology invisibly. For example, it appeals to something like Humbert's paternal and lover needs; the rebellious love of Quilty. Lolita eventually marries Dick, and although living on a tight budget, they will move to a new place, Dick will have a good job, and now Lolita is pregnant, they will have a truly completed family. This means something to Lolita: to live in love and hope. When Lolita resolutely rejects Humbert's last fantasy, Lolita's ethical choice was rational, and she is old enough to have the standards of ethical judgment. At this moment, Lolita is the rational Lolita with the most human factors in her heart, which was full of good and evil standards and has abandoned the domination of animal factors.

Lolita chooses Dick as her husband and is about to start a family. Her choice of Dick is based on the rational will, which accords with ethics and the standards of good and evil. She did not tell Dick about his relationship with Humbert, and Humbert was not allowed to ruin his and Dick's lives. In this sense, the human actor of Lolita's Sphinx factor completely dominates her, making her a rational being, an absolutely different Lolita from the one with Humbert or Quilty who is completely played with by the animal factor. Through the rational will of human factor, she finally bids farewell to her chaotic self under the control of free will and eventually realizes the self-redemption of her soul.

CONCLUSION

Lolita's life is one of constant domination by the Sphinx factor. She chooses Humbert and Quilty on the basis of the animal factor of free will. The abnormal relationship with Humbert and the irrational obsession with Quilty brought great harm to herself; under the influence of the rational will of human factor, Lolita finally leaves Humbert and Quilty and chooses to marry Dick and have a family. This is the result of rational will of Lolita's human factor, which is healthy and hopeful. It represents Lolita's ultimate rational and moral ethical choice. "Ethical choice is a way for people to choose good and reject evil and become a moral person." (Nie, 2014, p.6) Lolita has completed the transformation of herself through the free will of human factors, restrained the domination of animal factors, realized the final ethical choice. She has purified her soul, and completed the soul's self-redemption, although her life is short and tortuous.

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