

An Analysis of the James's Tripartite Personality in *Everything I Never Told You* from the Perspective of Psychoanalysis

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ABSTRACT. Sigmund Freud is the originator of psychoanalysis school with making many contribution, including the theory of personality structure. *Everything I Never Told You*, a novel of Celeste Ng, has attracted public attention and gained great success in the world. The novel is started from the death of a 16-year-old girl in an interracial family in 1970s. With the investigation into the case is being conducted, the family members recall their life, their personality in which are revealed through the description of various experiences. This paper is aimed at analyzing the id, ego and superego of the protagonist James from Freud's theory of personality structure.

KEYWORDS: Psychoanalysis, Triple personality, *Everything i never told you*

1. Introduction

Celeste Ng is a contemporary Chinese American writer, whose parents are both scientists. Her debut book *Everything I Never Told You* was recognized by Amazon's editorial team as "The Best Book" of Amazon's online retailer's list of 2014 and was awarded as "the Best Book" of US National Public Radio. *Everything I Never Told You* tells a story about the life of an Asian-European family living in a small town in Ohio in the 1970s. Based on the tragedy of the death of a 16-year-old girl Lydia, this novel is incorporated thoughts on issues such as racial prejudice, identity crisis, female discrimination, interracial marriage, inter-generational conflict, and growth crisis. One of the main reasons for Lydia's tragedy was her father's oppression and experience of discrimination. The father imposed his desire of getting rid of racial discrimination on his daughter. The author expresses her core idea through the growth story and tragic fate of the protagonist Lydia, that is, people will find their true self in their life. Lydia's father James is an American born Chinese and wants her to be the center of every party and one person with busy social life. Lydia's mother Marilyn wants her to study hard to become a doctor. Both parents hope Lydia to fulfil their never-realized dreams.

2. Freud's Model of the Psyche

Psychoanalytic criticism may focus on the writer's psyche, the study of the creative process, the study of psychological types and principles present within works of literature, or the effects of literature upon its readers. Sigmund Freud is one of the major figures in psychoanalytic theory. This is not only because Freud created the psychoanalytic theory, but also because he devoted his life to expounding, spreading, and applying psychoanalytic theory. Freud's theory of personality structure is based on the theory of unconsciousness. It consists of the id, ego and superego. People are born with id, which is the most primitive, most vague and most difficult part of personality. It is filled with strong impulses of instinctive desires in id. It has no moral concepts, and follows the "happy principle." Ego is between the id and the outside world, it is a part of the id. Ego is an instinct pertaining to reality and it follows the "reality principle." Ego is a rational thinking which can regulate the id and superego inside people in dealing with some things in reality. Superego is developed on the basis of id and has moral features. It guides the ego of people to limit the instinctive impulses of the inside id, follow the social moral evaluation criteria, so superego follows the "moral principles." Freud believes that human behavior and personality are largely a manifestation of psychological power that people are hard to realize. The theory of triple personality structure is applied to analyze people's spiritual activity patterns not only from the depth of human nature, but also from the essence of human beings, therefore, it has been favored by the literary and art circles since its proposition. This theory can be also applied to analyze the symbolic elements that represent the personality of character in literary works. Based on Freud's psychoanalytic theory, this thesis is attempted to

analyze the character image of the protagonist James from the perspective of triple personality.

3. The Analysis of Id, Ego and Superego of James

3.1 The Id Makes James Self-Contemptuous and Uninhibited

When people are born, id is the only component of personality. Therefore, personality is built on the basis of the id. Id is unconscious and the carrier of instinct and desire. It provides energy for the entire mental activity of human but does not follow moral standards. The requirement of id is to be happy both inside and outside, so as to avoid the existence of pain and sadness. Id is the most primitive self and includes the basic desires, impulses and vitality required for survival. Although James was born in the United States and was educated with local culture, he feels that he is the other of this grand society because of history and identity restrictions. Although he had obtained the US green card, he did not get a sense of security as the owner of this society. The strong desire of Chinese people to adapt to the mainstream society makes them strive to become an American. James is one of them. When James was student, his classmates always studied him because his color and identity. In every class, every day that first week, the other students studied him: where had he come from. His father in school would be called in to loosen a squeaky window, replace a light-bulb, mop up a spill. When his father did these in his classroom, he would bend his head over his book so close that his nose nearly touched the page, until his father left the room, which reflects the primitive id in his mind. He was afraid that people know his family background and he even did not tell his wife about his parents. The reason why he hid the identity is that he wanted to get rid of pain of being the other of this society.

When Marilyn took him into her arms, he suddenly felt that this country had began to accept him. Even if he had a white wife, he can't have a real American family. His sense of inferiority and appearance remind him that he did not belong to this society. After Lydia died, his marriage crisis became more serious. When a Chinese is not accepted by this society, he will unconsciously choose to find comfort from person who is same-race partner. Louisa will not regard him as a different person. Therefore, James began to have this improper relationship with Marilyn. Although his daughter found that James was with another woman one time, James ignored Lady's outrage and did not realize that there was something wrong. Obviously, superego did not defeat the id and strong desires of James during this period.

3.2 The Ego Makes James Face to Life

The ego is to meet the requirements of the id, superego and the outside world and strive to adjust the contradiction among them. The function of the id is to protect the entire body from harm. The id is following the reality principle.

When Nath was young, James took him to swim. When Nath was teased by the children in the swimming pool, James recalled his same experience in childhood. He wanted to appease his son and wanted to tell him to understand his feelings---the humiliation of being teased, the frustration of being unable to be gregarious, but he didn't do anything. The "ego" seems to warn him that he can't do this. He can't told the "stain" of his childhood. Therefore, when they arrived home, Marilyn asked why her son was depressed. James just said that some children teased Nath and Nath needed to learn to accept jokes, which completely deviated from his original intention to comfort his son.

At Lydia's funeral, her brother Nath believed that Jack has unshirkable responsibility for Lydia's death. He was discovered by James when Nath questioned Jack on the funeral. The id of Jame would like to encourage him to comfort and hug his son, but the ego of his personality believed that Nath couldn't provoke Jack at the funeral, so he left with his wife and daughter and punished Nath with leaving him alone.

3.3 The Superego Makes James Return to Family

Superego is formed by internalizing moral standards and social and cultural values in the process of one's growing up. It follows the "moral principles." Superego, as a model of self, is a kind of conscience and guilt. Its function is mainly to supervise power and control one's behavior. Superego is the ideal state of self, the highest part of the regulatory position in the personality structure.

When Marilyn found Jame's appropriate relationship with Louisa, she quarreled with James. James had been thinking about the mistake he made on the road to driving to home. "This is how he finds himself driving not

back to Louisa's, but across town, right past campus. Only when a sign-*Toledo 15 miles*- flashes wide and green overhead does he realize how far he's gone,^[1] which shows that the superego began to work at this moment. At this moment, he can think only one thing how was it possible he wonders to have been so wrong, which reflects that he wanted to go home and return to his family to admit his mistake to his wife. James bravely admitted the mistake, he chose to reconcile with his wife. Marilyn chose to forgive her husband. When time was gone and every mistake can be forgave, their love encouraged them to go ahead. The superego in James's body had made him return to the family and regain happiness.

4. Conclusion

Through the interpretation of James's triple personality in the novel, it can be seen that no matter how many mistakes have been made, they will finally be made up if people strive to be sincere to solve the barriers along the road of life. Using Freud's personality structure as a theoretical framework, people can get a new interpretation of *Everything I Never Told You*. In fact, many people may be just like James. Under the urging of the id, they may harm the people around themselves for their own self-esteem and interest. However, as long as they face the past life, they will have the courage to be sincere and brave to face the true self. Ultimately, they will gradually save themselves from the past, realize the superego in the true sense, get rid of the expectations of others and find the true self to grow rapidly on the road of life.

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