

Functions of Inner Monologue and Free Association in Andrei Bely's "Petersburg"

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ABSTRACT

"Petersburg" is a classic masterpiece by Russian symbolist poet and writer Andrei Bely. In this novel, Bely downplayed the plot of the story, subverting the traditional plot-based, straightforward writing style, and often used inner monologues and free associations to cleverly create the flow of consciousness. Starting from these two points, this article analyzes how the author skillfully uses the stream of consciousness creation skills to show the truth of the characters' hearts, reveal their rich inner activities, and dig out the grand theme in the works. The novel "Petersburg" is full of random associations, fragmentary memories, and time dislocations. Through the stream of consciousness creation technique, such as fragmentary memories and random associations, Andrei Bely created many colorful characters and showed the social background of the character formation, thus cleverly summoning the enduring issue of "the way out for Russia". Meanwhile, it is entrusted to the author's hope that religion can change the world.

Keywords: *"Petersburg", Stream of consciousness, Inner monologue, Free association.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The novel "Petersburg" was written in 1916. It is the representative work of Russian writer Andrei Bely. It is also the second book of "The East and West Themes" written by Bely. Bely tried to break the constraints of the linear narrative mode and structure of "flat and straight narrative" in the traditional Russian literature of the 19th century, abandoned the restoration and accurate reproduction of the details of historical events by realism, and updated the narrative strategy of literary writing in a brand new form to describe the dark history of the early days of the Russian Revolution in 1905. From a content point of view, this is a story about an accidental terrorist accomplice Nikolai Apollonovich who tried to kill his father Apollon Apollonovich with a bomb disguised as a sardine tin. This novel is an excellent work of Russian modernist literary works. It mainly does not rely on plot to win, but on form. The wide application of stream of consciousness is its important feature. This kind of writing is quite advanced, with a lot of inner monologues and natural descriptions interspersed in the novel, momentary impressions of the characters appear

frequently, and the memories and free associations of the characters interlaced in the constantly switching scenes.

The term "stream of consciousness" was proposed by American philosopher and psychologist James in 1890. He believed that the same feeling or thought would never appear twice. Consciousness flows continuously, and the emphasis on continuity is the main aspect of this concept. James also divided time into physical time (a common quantitative measurement of time) and time within human consciousness (the actual sense of time in human consciousness). He noticed the existing continuity of the sense of time. Another important theoretical basis for the phenomenon of "stream of consciousness" is Bergson's theory of psychological time. In his research, he also put forward the concept of "indivisible present": what a person says includes his past and his future at the same time. Therefore, the "indivisible present" is not only the perception of the past, but also the determination of the future. Freud found in his research that consciousness provides communication with the external world, while subconsciousness guides the progress of psychological phenomena, and human

consciousness is dominated by subconsciousness. People's real behavioral motivations, including irrational and neurotic motivations, are hidden in the subconscious mind. The "intermediate" state between consciousness and unconsciousness is not a mysterious category, but can be used as a category to be studied and controlled, and it can also be conveyed through artistic expression. The above three theories together constitute the foundation of stream of consciousness novels, and give writers a basis in science and philosophy to fully explore conscious activities, which not only changes the relationship between writers and conscious activities, but also broadens the way for writers to shape characters, which has affected the creation skills and expression methods of stream of consciousness novels. Stream of consciousness creation skills include: inner monologue, free association, time montage, space montage, multiple narrative perspectives, symbolism, etc. In "Petersburg", Bely used a simple story frame of a father-killer child to create a "flexible" flow of consciousness to observe the inner world of the characters, organize a rich spiritual picture, and build a maze of the spiritual world. By writing about the dynamic changes of a family from split to recombination, the novel shows the worries, fears and spiritual crises faced by an era. The author used the stream of consciousness technique to shift the focus from the macro external world to the micro character inner world, which can fully demonstrate the author's exploratory and experimental spirit, and also reflect the author's superb creative ability. This article will interpret the artistic charm of the novel "Petersburg" from two aspects: inner monologue and free association.

2. INNER MONOLOGUE

Inner monologue is a dialogue between the character and himself in his heart. The characters present their own feelings, impressions and subconscious inner activities to the readers through inner monologues. The narrator disappears, and the reader faces the characters face-to-face, and has a holographic immersive experience of the plot content and the psychological activities of the characters depicted in the novel. Therefore, inner monologue is an excellent means to show the emotions and inner experience of the characters in the novel. It is also an important creative technique to create a real artistic effect and present the original ecological consciousness of the characters at that time. Dudkin's inner monologue in the fifteenth chapter of the novel "Escape" is a model.

Dudkin went home alone after meeting with Nikolay. His inner monologue told his thoughts on Russia's history, reality and future. Dudkin walked along an empty street along the Neva River, and his thoughts flowed with it. In the distance, the statue of "The Bronze Horseman" stood quietly on the Decembrists' Square. "From the time when the metal knight galloping to the bank of the Neva was pregnant with consequences, from when he threw the horse on the grey granite of Finland, from now on, Russia has split into two halves", "You, Russia, like a horse! Two front hooves stretched out into the empty darkness, and a pair of hind legs-growing firmly on the granite foundation"[1]^{p164}, Peter the Great rode on the steed, the front legs of the steed soared, and the back leg trampled on the python. This horse is a symbol of Russia, and this heroic monument-like horseback riding statue shows that Peter the Great restricts the horse and the surrounding space with absolute authority. And the protagonist Dudkin "has hated Peterborough" [1]^{p31}. He denounced and criticized Peter the Great's reforms. He realized that the bloody reforms set off by Peter the Great with his own iron fist had caused the division of society and caused the upper class and the lower class to move to the contrary. As Dostoevsky said, "The people did not benefit from the reforms. The new system did not lighten their burdens. What they felt was the increase in oppression and the desecration of what was previously considered sacred." [2] Under Peter's rule, the people suffered terrible slavery, and life went from bad to worse, and the long-standing divisions and antagonisms between the upper and lower classes of Russian society intensified. At the same time, Peter advocated total Westernization in the reform, denied the Russian tradition, and blindly embarked on the development path of Western European civilization. What Peter's "excessive worship of European civilization and contempt for his own national tradition" [2] brought to the Russian people was the collapse and disintegration of traditional beliefs, morals and ethics, and cultural identity, which led to Russia's "difficult choice and confusion in determining the identity of its own nation in the face of the strong Western culture" [4]. Bely clearly recognized the many crises that European society was facing at the turn of the century. The Western civilization that advocated pure rationality, bureaucracy, and pragmatism was declining. "Where should Russia go" — this Russian "basic subject of national consciousness" and "basic subject of historical philosophy" [5] has been set in front of Bely. Next, Bely continued to show Dudkin's inner monologue. Dudkin asked the

horse, "Do you want to break away from the big boulder that holds you back, break up with your crazy sons like others break away from the foundation of a dam...". This inner monologue is full of logic and continuity, reflecting the characters' reasonable time and space thinking and sober rational knowledge. Dudkin here speculated on the possibility of Russia's future development path: the first is to "get out of the big boulder holding you"; the second is to "pounce forward, cut through the mist, and pass through the air"; the third is to "put up the front hooves", "face the grim fate...contemplation"; and the fourth, "stop the four hooves," "bring the great knights to the depths of the open plains where the untrustworthy countries are located". The five questions in a row in the original text are shocking and awakening, allowing readers to directly see the characters' complete inner activities and deep psychological state, and strongly feel Dudkin's accusations and questions against Peter the Great and the successors of his ruling will, asking them where they would like to take Russia. The words "big boulder", "crazy sons", "chaos of water", "severe fate", "smoggy north", "great knight", and "unreliable country" are full of irony. This series of doubts is not only Dudkin's inner confession, but also the inner voice of the author Bely. "Open plain" refers to the nomadic steppe of Mongolian Tatars, and "unreliable country" is the ancient countries of the East. In history, Ross and Mongolia have gone through the stage of war to alliance. The two-hundred-year rule of the Mongol Tatars has brought an indelible influence on Russia's national history, state power, structural forms and governance methods, as well as the spiritual characteristics and spiritual growth of the Russians, and it has severed the ties between Russia and the West, and deepened the civilizational opposition between Russia and Western Europe. This is what Bely referred to as the "big boulder" that "dragged" Russia by Dudkin, and its connection with Mongolia forced the Russian horse to "a pair of retreat-growing firmly on the foundation of granite" [1]¹⁶⁴. The unique oriental factors and characteristics of the Russian national culture exist objectively and cannot be obliterated. However, if Russia wants to get rid of its backwardness and move on to a path of modernization, it is bound to look to the West and learn from the West. Dudkin's inner monologue also shows the ambivalence of the Russian cultural elites in the Silver Age. Following the flow of Dudkin's consciousness closely, as far as people can see, it can be seen that: "There will be great turbulence; the land will be divided; the mountains

will collapse in the earthquake... Petersburg will be deserted... there will be a lot of quarrels — quarrels like never before in the world". In addition to the riots within the people, the serious threat from the East also worried the author. "A large number of yellow-skinned Asians will leave their long-dwelling places and turn the European wilderness into a sea of blood... The coasts of Europe will be covered by heavy Mongolian black spots". Dudkin yelled from the bottom of his heart: "It won't be like this!" The author Bely was also shouting with him, because they foresaw the disaster and the tragic consequences that the motherland was doomed to encounter. They looked forward to the "new sun" that symbolizes the motherland, Russia, to "shine all over the land of my hometown"[1]¹⁶⁵. When "a turquoise gap appeared in the sky" and "in an instant, everything burst into flames", Dudkin seemed to hear a weeping voice, "God, Jesus Christ! Save us, forgive us! [1]¹⁶⁶ After reading the following text, readers will naturally understand that this is not the true voice that Dudkin heard in real life, but Dudkin's inner voice after he "clearly saw the destiny of people." He eagerly called for the coming of Christ, because "Christianity is the synthesis of all religions in Bely's view, and it is the 'last religion'" [6].

Through the flow of consciousness of the character Dudkin in his pen, Bely reviewed the great turning point that Peter the Great's reforms brought to the Russian nation, and clearly showed the suffering that Russia would suffer in front of readers. The readers, like the drilling machine, directly penetrate into the character's mind, facing the character's description and thinking of their own existence. Dudkin's inner monologue at this time is clearly organized and slow in pace, which is in line with his identity, education and psychological characteristics. He was at the end of that long and exhausting day and night. Following Dudkin, people can in contact with the main characters of the story: Apollon Ableukhov, Lippanchenko and Nikolai Ableukhov. Dudkin received a parcel from the hungry unemployed, met Apollon Ableukhov on the Nevsky, met with Lippanchenko, and received a letter and parcel forwarded to Nikolai Ableukhov's instructions, then came to Ableukhov's house, completed the instructions, and had a long conversation with Nikolai. During the conversation, his whole life was revealed — past, present and future, his attitude towards life, philosophy of life, his views on the country and revolutionary activities, what he encountered, what he feared, what he believed in, etc. everything. From this

perspective, his inner monologue at this time is completely reasonable. His thoughts were directly presented on the "conscious screen", through his reveries, imaginations and speculations: thinking about the future destiny of the country, searching for the way out of the nation, and worrying about how the Russian national culture can realize its self-establishment in the Eastern and Western cultures. It fully demonstrates the "salvation" feelings of Russian intellectuals, and at the same time accurately conveys the key to solving Russia's future as understood by Bely. It is entrusted with the author's hope that religion will change the world and the illusion of Jesus' salvation, full of expectations for rebirth in the last days.

3. FREE ASSOCIATION

If the inner monologue is a screen, free association is the lines and pictures that flow and jump on this screen, and the sensory impression is the trigger point that produces these lines and pictures. The various artistic techniques of the stream of consciousness interact with each other to present a harmonious psychological world where the past and the present are intertwined, memory and imagination merge, and retrospection and prediction permeate, revealing the consciousness of the characters at various levels.^[7] Free association is also an activity of consciousness. The so-called association refers to the natural connection between the two contents of human consciousness (feeling, perception, imagination, thinking, etc.), which is manifested in that the appearance of one of the contents in consciousness causes the appearance of the other. Association is instantaneous and subjective. It is not controlled by rational thinking, nor is it bound by the usual logical sequence and natural time. At this time, the characters have relative freedom of inner consciousness. Memory, feeling, and imagination will all act on the free association of characters. In "Petersburg", there are many fragments of free association of characters.

For example, in the first chapter, Apollon Apollonovich Ableukhov, a senior government official and veteran politician, saw porcelain knick-knacks on display in front of him at his home. He was fascinated by the scene and remembered the good time he had spent 30 years ago with his wife Anna Petrovna walking on the beach and paddling a boat in Venice. Memories flooded like a tide, his consciousness continued to flow, his thoughts slid from the Venice rowing boat to other places, he noticed a piano in the house, and recalled the night

when his wife played Chopin's music. In addition, there is a similar plot in the second chapter of the novel. Apollon Apollonovich saw the Pompeii murals hanging at home and immediately thought that his wife who had run away hung them on the wall. This evoked him involuntarily sad. "The love for the plane geometry of the country" made Apollon Apollonovich an important position as "the head of an institution." At the same time, this powerful and harsh rule also squeezed his personal emotional space. Apollon Apollonovich's memories of his wife seemed sudden and unexpected on the surface, but it made sense after thinking about it carefully. His wife betrayed their marriage, abandoned their family, and walked away with other man. This has always been his heart knot, a fact that he cannot face but cannot get rid of. Although he appeared to be calm and calm on the surface, as long as he was stimulated by relevant conditions, he would involuntarily think of his wife. The stimulus of the objective world produced corresponding sensory impressions in his mind, which in turn caused a series of activities in his heart.

When looking at Nikolai Apollonovich again, in the first chapter of the novel, it can be learnt that Nikolai tried to pursue his friend Sergei's wife Likhutina, but he couldn't get the woman and was ridiculed as a "red harlequin"[1]^{p108}. After that, he felt deeply hit in love, so he wore a red domino cloak and a mask to track, intimidate, and avenge Likhutina. After the act of revenge was completed, he "jumped onto the road" and "rushed towards the bridge", his consciousness immediately dissociated from reality... His mind was full of all kinds of complex contradictory emotions. At this time, his feelings were also the inverted stream of consciousness, and his associations were free, flowing, and jumping. All kinds of scenes seen before him may trigger his association mechanism. The more he ran forward, more and more new things and sceneries appeared before his eyes, which could quickly make his consciousness "flash back" to the past, and at the same time, past events would also "flash back" to the present. He was running in this city under the background of the revolution in 1905, and his heart was filled with unclear and complicated moods, so everything in front of him also showed a fragmented form. The city at his feet reminded him of Peter I, the founder of the city. The fog, iron bridge, Neva River, islands, roads and other series of images in front of him reminded him of the current social situation, and then he thought of "those unquiet shadows" ...

chasing each other in ... the street". He looked at "the bridge flashing under the electric light", thinking that he had made a terrible promise at "a critical moment", "a night in September" [1]^{p90}. He was immersed in the freshness and panic brought by the terrible promise, and he was afraid that he would be turned into a shadow in the future. Nikolai's consciousness drifted around, thinking of freedom and randomness. Although it was "free", it was not an unreasonable delusion. The streets of Petersburg are a symbol of the Tsarist despotism and indifferent rule, and the shadow is the embodiment of the alienation of life by the autocratic system. The streets will inevitably lead the shadow to chaos, riots and revolution. Nikolai realized that it was "the cruel tormentor" and "the ghost of restlessness" Peter I who had brought the country to the abyss of divided fate and pain. Apollon Apollonovich was the successor of the Tsarist despotism and the defender of the state apparatus, and he was also the incarnation of Peter the Great after degenerative changes. Nikolai's hostility towards his father and his intention to kill his father are just a manifestation of his dissatisfaction with the reality of the autocratic system. From the perspective of the whole work, although Nikolai's resistance was influenced by Neo-Kantianism and Nietzsche's "Superman" theory, it was essentially individualistic. The red domino cloak made Nikolai show the brilliance of the red flag of revolution. He had a sense of justice, but he was never a revolutionary. Here, the free-associative stream of consciousness presents Nikolai's mental journey, bringing readers into Nikolai's inner world. The churning and conflicting emotions experienced by the characters are the key to revealing their spiritual life.

4. CONCLUSION

In the novel "Petersburg", inner monologues, free associations and other means of stream of consciousness are intertwined, vividly showing the truth of the characters' psychology, portraying the irreconcilable conflicts between the characters and the external environment, and exposing all kinds of contradictions and crises in the society. Through the stream of consciousness creation technique, Bely used this to cleverly summon the theme of the novel, the question of where Russia is heading, and the question of Russia's way out is a grand proposition with a long history. The predicament that Bely faced is an excellent portrayal of the times. He created the surprising experimental work "Petersburg" to respond to the legacy passed to him

by history, put forward his own ideas on how to solve Russia's spiritual and cultural tasks, and aroused readers' further thinking. In the novel, Bely deliberately downplayed the plot, the rise and fall of career, the separation and reunion of love, and the grievances between people disappear, leaving only the flow of consciousness of the characters. Such creative skills have greatly deepened and expanded the research on the inner life of the people in the novels, as well as the narration of the individual thoughts of the characters, and played a pivotal role in revealing the theme of the novel.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This article is independently completed by Zhao Wei.

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