# An Appreciation of Western and Eastern Streams of Consciousness in One Rainy Evening and the Mark on the Wall

Zhang Yingxin

Fujian Normal University, Fujian, China
Email: 18636364310@139.com (Z.Y.X.)

*Abstract*—**Stream of consciousness literature is a literary phenomenon that appeared on the Western literary scene at the beginning of the twentieth century. Stream of consciousness can be seen as a product of the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung and Alfred Adler. The inner monologue is a technique used in novels to express the content and process of a character's conscious activities. The analysis of the inner monologue in Shi Zhecun's novel One Rainy Evening and Virginia Woolf's novel A Mark on the Wall shows the characteristics of the stream of consciousness between the East and the West. One Rainy Evening adopts a linear association in time and space, while A Mark on the Wall adopts a dispersion of consciousness with a dot as a node. There are similarities and differences between the two novels in the expression of stream of consciousness.**

*Keywords*—**stream of consciousness, one rainy evening, a mark on the wall, inner monologue**

## I. THE EMERGENCE OF STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS FICTION

The term "stream of consciousness" was first coined as a phrase used by psychologists by the American philosopher and psychologist William James in his book The Principles of Psychology. The French philosopher Henri Bergson, building on James work, developed the doctrine of "duration", in which he saw "states of self-consciousness" as the "duration" formed by constant change. According to Bergson, "consciousness" is not a state of affairs, but a mental activity in constant motion, a continuum of consciousness. It is not a connection of fragments, and is not limited by time; it is a river or stream that changes instantaneously. Bergson's ideas have had a great impact on modern novelists, pushing them to explore them in their minds and to express them consciously. The orderly depiction of time and space has been replaced by the "stream of consciousness" outside of time.

In addition, Sigmund Freud, the founder of the psychoanalytic school, provided a lot of theoretical basis for the creation of "stream of consciousness" novelists in his study of "consciousness", "unconscious", "preconscious", "id", "ego" and "superego". These theoretical foundations have helped the novelists to open up new horizons of expression and writing techniques. Although the emergence of "stream of consciousness" in modern novels has caused many debates, it has now been brought into the mainstream of Stream of consciousness as a technique.

## II. AN ANALYSIS OF THE INNER MONOLOGUES OF ONE RAINY EVENING AND A MARK ON THE WALL

Firstly, Shi Zhecun's One Rainy Evening is used as a model to show the characteristics of "stream of consciousness" in China. One Rainy Evening is Shi Zhecun's masterpiece of psychoanalysis, reflecting the psychological whirlpool generated by the collision between traditional culture and urban culture. It tells the story of a man who chooses to walk home after work on a rainy day and encounters a woman without an umbrella on the way. He gives the woman a ride with his umbrella, and a series of associations arise. Unlike Eileen Chang's Sealed Off, in One Rainy Evening, the author only analyses the inner layers of the man's mind, giving a sense of elegance and haziness.

### A. The Structure of the "Unconscious"

Introducing a passage from One Rainy Evening to analyse: "It was said that it was for fear that their clothes would get wet, but I distinctly saw that those who held umbrellas in their hands and those who wore mackintoshes on their bodies also stumbled a little. I think at least this is a kind of unconscious strife." Shi Zhecun implanted Freud's theory of psychoanalysis in his novel, and here can be seen as the first exposure of psychoanalysis in One Rainy Evening [1]. Freud divided the structure of the "unconscious" into "conscious", "unconscious", and "preconscious". Freud pointed out, "This division of materials with these qualities is neither absolute nor permanent. We already know that without any interference on our part, the preconscious can become conscious; and the unconscious, through our efforts, can become conscious." In One Rainy Evening, consciousness is presented in this very uncertain state. "My" consciousness is active in such a way that it is "accessible to consciousness" or "preconscious" .

It then effortlessly transforms from an "unconscious" to a "conscious" state. For example, "I was walking and looking at North Sichuan Road in the rain, and I felt that it was hazy and somewhat poetic. But what is meant by 'feeling' here is not really a specific thought, and there is no realisation of anything in my mind other than "I should turn here." And after the tram came, it transformed into "entering into consciousness", "I've lived in Shanghai for a long time, I know the rules of walking. Why didn't I walk to the docking when this could have gone through? I didn't know." Then it was no longer "conscious" [2], "I counted the passengers who got out of the first class car. Why not the third-class ones? There is no deliberate selection here." The consciousness jumps repeatedly between them in a fluid manner, not limited by time or space.

### B. Id and the Pull of the Ego and Superego

In Freud's terminology, the "id" is "a state of chaos", "a pot of boiling passions". "There is neither organisation nor unity of will in the 'Id' but only an impulse to have instinctive needs satisfied according to the pleasure principle." In One Rainy Evening, the "id" of "me" is somewhere in direct contact with somatic processes, in this case somatic processes such as "My nose was close to her hair, a scent". The protagonist receives the instinctive need for sex from his various encounters with women, be they real encounters or imaginary possible encounters within himself. This instinctive need manifests itself psychologically in the fact that "I" walked on the right side of the woman, holding the umbrella with my left hand, but in order to allow the woman to hold it a little higher, "my" arm became empty. Therefore, "my" arm is sore, but "my" psychically does not feel the pain, but rather has a harder time finding the beauty of the lady.

"I" noticed that the woman resembled the girl I had first loved, a classmate, a neighbour. The image of her that came to "my" mind was still stuck in the last day of our separation seven years ago. Although "I" did not see her grow up, but her appearance in "my" mind did not stay in the teenage years, because "I" often in the heart of the conception. Many philosophers assert that time and space are essential forms of our mental behaviour, but Freud sees an exception to this assertion in the "id". "In the 'id' there is nothing corresponding to the idea of time, the passage of time is not recognised, and the passage of time does not cause a change of mental processes." The image of first love is repressed in "my" mind for a long time, even for seven years [3]. "I" claim that this image is "not only...in my mind almost every day". but that "from time to time, in my dreams, sleeps or daydreams, I have seen her growing up. I have myself formed her to be a beautiful maiden of twenty years of age. She had a good voice and gesture, and often by chance, when sad, she would be in my visions a woman, or even a young mother." The repressed feelings of first love do not change with the passage of time ; in fact, "my" longing for first love is a factor of benefit closely linked to the principle of pleasure, without good or evil or morality. This longing is projected onto the woman I meet as an instinctive outburst seeking a way out.

The pleasure principle of the "id" comes into play first when it meets a woman. "She took refuge under the roof of a wood shop," and "I retired under the roof." But the "ego" not only has to serve the "id", it also has to serve the outer world and the "superego". Therefore, the "ego" is quickly bound by the demands of the outer world and the "superego", and the "ego" longs for the woman's sexuality. "Although the tram had already left and the road was empty, I could have passed through. But why did I not go through and take the road home? Was it because of any attachment to the girl? No, there was no sense of such attachment."

The demands of the "id", the external world, and the "superego" on the "ego" are often diametrically opposed. The "ego" struggles to balance their demands: "But this is by no means for the wife who is waiting for me to go back and have dinner together under the lamp at home. At that time, I didn't even have the thought that I had a wife. In front of me was a beautiful object, and I was in a difficult situation. Standing alone and looking at this plum rain that forever, forever falls. It is only for these reasons that I unconsciously moved my feet and stood beside her." At this point, it can be said that under the supervision of the "superego", the "ego" has still satisfied the demands of the "id" to a certain extent and has also become the loyal servant of the "id" .

### C. Direct to Inner Monologue

*The Mark on the Wall* is an early work of Virginia Woolf, a British "stream of consciousness" writer. There is almost no plot or character portrayal. It can be said that the entire novel is the inner monologue of the protagonist alone. If there are other characters, they also appear in the protagonist's spiritual world. The only thing that allows readers to feel reality is the "mark".

This kind of inner monologue belongs to direct inner monologue. "When describing such a monologue, there is neither the author's intervention nor a hypothetical listener." Woolf's consciousness is directly presented to the readers. There are no guiding signals similar to "thought" or "pondered" [4]. We can directly enter the unconscious and deep-seated thoughts. However, since this kind of direct inner monologue has no hypothetical listener, we are extremely likely to get lost in the outpouring of the author's consciousness. Therefore, Woolf uses the "mark" to connect the monologues that are in different places and at the same time and have interlaced time and space.

### D. Strong Sense of Fluidity

At first glance, *The Mark on the Wall* may not seem like a neatly organized novel. There are many places with ambiguous logic. Although this is Woolf's early work, the writing technique of "stream of consciousness" in this work has become mature. It must be admitted that "consciousness" can only be the material for poets, and it is difficult for them to make "consciousness" fully enter their works. There are two reasons for this: 1. The nature of "consciousness" itself is erratic and the degree of logical connection is weak; 2. As mentioned earlier, "consciousness" is not a definite state but a ceaseless psychological activity.

First of all, "my" consciousness very typically shows the characteristic of continuous flow. "If this mark is the trace left by a nail, then it is definitely not for hanging an oil painting but for hanging a small portrait—a portrait of a noble lady. The noble lady in the painting powders her curly hair and adorns her face with rouge, and her lips are as delicate as red carnations. Of course, this portrait is undoubtedly a fake. The previous owner of this house would only choose this kind of painting—an old house should be matched with old-fashioned portraits. They are such a family—a very interesting family." There is no connection at all between the nail and the very interesting family [5]. It is the continuous flow of consciousness that forms a chain between them: nail—portrait—fake—interesting family.

Secondly, "my" consciousness cannot feel time intervals. That is to say, in personal consciousness, one will not feel them as an interval. For example, in the previous paragraph, consciousness is still freely flowing: "However, the mark on the wall is not a small hole. It is probably a deep black circular object. For example, it is a masterpiece of a rose petal

preserved in summer. Because I am not a very vigilant housekeeper—look at the dust on the fireplace. That is the evidence. Rumor has it that Troy was firmly buried three layers by such dust. Only some fragments of jars cannot be destroyed by them. This is completely convincing." Immediately after, in the next paragraph, "I" am interrupted by the branches outside the window gently tapping on the glass. "I hope to be able to think leisurely and quietly without being disturbed, without having to get up from the chair. I can easily think of one thing after another without any opposition or hindrance. I hope to stay away from some surface facts and be able to sink deeper and deeper continuously. Keep myself steady so that I can catch the first fleeting thought... Shakespeare... Right, it doesn't matter whether it's him or someone else." Quoting W. James' view: "Even if there is a time interval in consciousness, the consciousness after the interval feels that it seems uninterrupted from the consciousness before the interval. It is still a part of the same self. [6]" So even if consciousness is interrupted by branches and the quality and content of thinking are interrupted, it does not prevent returning to the self again. "My" consciousness flows to Shakespeare.

### III. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF "STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS" IN ONE RAINY EVENING AND A MARK ON THE WALL

#### A. The Similarities between One Rainy Evening and a Mark on the Wall's Stream of Consciousness

##### 1) Both of them contain elements of fantasy

In One Rainy Evening, "I" regard the girl as my first love and conduct a series of speculations to outline a fantasy world. "I" was unable to be with my first love when I was young, so the first love has always remained in my heart. It is a fantasy evoked by the wish to be with my first love [7]. After "I" ask the girl about her surname and find out that the girl's surname is "Liu" and she is not my first love. In this way, my wish is not fulfilled, so I have the fantasy that my first love does not want to recognize me to correct the reality that does not satisfy me.

Looking at The Mark on the Wall again, the author directly presents the fantasy. "The long-lost illusion reappears. Countless red-clothed knights are galloping up the side slope of the black cliff like a tide. The bright red flags are fluttering in the wind on the tower of the castle vaguely. That illusion is old and an unconscious fantasy. Probably it germinated in my childhood." This is a daydream, which contains traces of reality and childhood memories in itself.

##### 2) Both of them use the montage technique

In One Rainy Evening, on the way to escort the girl on a rainy day, "I" thought this girl was my first love. While I was speculating in my heart whether she had already got married, "my" wife appeared from the preconscious. "I casually glanced at the roadside and saw a woman leaning on the counter of a store, looking at me with melancholy eyes, or perhaps looking at her. Suddenly, I seemed to find that this was my wife. Why is she here? I was surprised". When I got home and heard my wife's voice, I thought it was that girl again. When I entered the door, I found that I could no longer find the phantom of that woman on my wife's face... This

series of alternating fantasies of the images of the girl and the wife, forming an overlap of images, and the collision between beautiful fantasies and reality and morality, reveals the protagonist's melancholy inner world to us. *In The Mark on the Wall*, when "I" was smoking in the room, I fell into imagination. "I" remained motionless in space. The past, present, and future were threaded on a rope, and consciousness freely bounced back and forth on it [8].

#### B. The Fundamental Difference between One Rainy Evening and A Mark on the Wall's Stream of Consciousness

First of all, the ways of consciousness connection are different. One Rainy Evening shows the inner world of the characters by means of linear association. On careful examination, all the information presented by the author can be traced [9]. However, *The Mark on the Wall* uses "the mark" as a node to connect very erratic consciousness and gushing thoughts. Secondly, the story structures are different. One Rainy Evening has a preset scene of an encounter on a rainy day, and there is also a lot of foreshadowing before meeting the woman. The Mark on the Wall directly enters consciousness without a story background, forming a "spider web-like" structure centered on "the mark".

### IV. CONCLUSION

In the in-depth comparative analysis of the stream of consciousness in the two works, we have unearthed many significant similarities between them, which demonstrate the internal consistency and commonality of stream of consciousness literature in different cultural contexts. In terms of the application of fantasy elements, both works show rich imagination and outstanding creativity. In "One Rainy Evening", during the encounter with the woman, the protagonist mistakes her for his first love and thus constructs a fantasy situation full of emotional entanglements and beautiful yearnings in his mind. His regret for the unfulfilled first love and his persistent longing for beautiful love are vividly presented through this series of fantasy plots. In "A Mark on the Wall", the author shows the fantasy elements to the readers in a more direct and bold way. Descriptions of magnificent fantasy scenes such as red-clothed knights galloping along the black cliff and bright red flags fluttering on the tower of the castle are like a sudden dream journey, instantly taking readers into a conscious world full of fantasy colors and mysterious atmosphere. The application of these fantasy elements not only enriches the content and emotional layers of the works but, more importantly, deeply reflects the infinite creativity and the tendency of the spiritual pursuit beyond reality in the process of human consciousness's free association, enabling readers to temporarily break away from the shackles of the real world and enter a spiritual territory full of infinite possibilities along with the thoughts of the authors and the protagonists.

In addition, both works skillfully use the montage technique in their creative methods, creating unique artistic effects and aesthetic experiences by carefully splicing and combining different pictures, images, or emotional fragments. In "One Rainy Evening", the author constructs a multi-dimensional and multi-layered psychological space by means of the alternating emergence and overlapping of the images of the

woman and the wife in the protagonist's heart during his escort of the woman, as well as the intense collisions between fantasy and reality, emotion and morality. This technique not only vividly shows the protagonist's inner contradictions and struggles but also enables readers to deeply understand the complexity and richness of the character's emotions during the reading process. Similarly, in "A Mark on the Wall", Virginia Woolf combines and splices the fragments of the protagonist's consciousness in different time and space and emotional states freely. For example, it switches instantaneously from the realistic observation of the mark on the wall to the distant memory of historical events and then to the hazy vision of the future world, making readers feel as if they are in a multi-dimensional space composed of fragments of consciousness. Each change of perspective can bring new visual impacts and spiritual shocks. The application of this montage technique effectively breaks through the linear logic and time-space limitations of traditional literary narration, greatly expanding the expressive force and artistic tension of literary works and enabling readers to experience infinite imagination space and emotional depth within the limited textual expressions.

However, due to the differences in Eastern and Western cultural backgrounds, literary traditions, and the individual creative styles of writers, there are also obvious differences in the presentation of stream of consciousness in "One Rainy Evening" and "A Mark on the Wall". In terms of the way of consciousness connection, "One Rainy Evening" mainly adopts the method of linear association. The author follows a certain logical thread and emotional clue in the creative process, enabling readers to sort out the trajectory of the protagonist's conscious flow relatively clearly. For example, from the protagonist's initial observation in the rain to the psychological changes after meeting the woman and then to the precipitation of thoughts after returning home, the whole process presents a relatively orderly linear development trend. Although the protagonist's consciousness frequently jumps among different emotional and memory nodes, these jumps are not without rules. Readers can gradually penetrate into the protagonist's inner world and perceive his emotional fluctuations and psychological dynamics in specific situations by following the clues carefully laid by the author. In contrast, "A Mark on the Wall" adopts a radial consciousness connection method with the "mark on the wall" as the core node, and its consciousness has more prominent jumpiness and uncertainty. The author seems to deliberately break the traditional logical framework, making the protagonist's consciousness like a stone thrown into a calm lake, instantly arousing countless ripples that spread and intertwine layer by layer. These ripples symbolize the flashes of consciousness of the protagonist at different moments and on different levels. There may be no obvious logical connection among them, but under the action of the core attraction of the "mark on the wall", they jointly form a complex and unique conscious network. This way of consciousness connection poses a higher challenge to readers' reading habits and thinking patterns, and at the same time brings readers a more free and open reading experience, prompting readers to give full play to their imagination and creativity and explore independently in the conscious maze

constructed by the author.

In terms of story structure, the two works also show completely different characteristics. "One Rainy Evening" has a relatively clear preset scene and plot framework. The whole story unfolds around the protagonist's encounter on a rainy evening and through the delicate rendering of the environmental atmosphere and the ingenious foreshadowing of the protagonist's psychological state before the encounter, a solid foundation is laid for the development of the story. This structural pattern makes the work have stronger narrativity and readability, enabling readers to integrate into the story situation more easily during the reading process and follow the protagonist's experiences to feel the emotional fluctuations and spiritual touches. [10] On the other hand, "A Mark on the Wall" completely abandons the traditional story background and plot structure and directly takes the protagonist's stream of consciousness as the core content of the work, forming a structure similar to a "spider web". In this structure, the "mark on the wall" becomes the only central focus, and all the conscious fragments unfold and intertwine around it, just like the silk threads carefully woven by a spider on the web. Each thread represents a flash of the protagonist's consciousness at a certain moment, and the connections and collisions among them generate rich meanings and emotional resonances. This structural method emphasizes the autonomy and independence of consciousness, making the work more like a free poem composed of consciousness, not bound by any external narrative framework, and fully demonstrating the subversive and innovative spirit of stream of consciousness literature to traditional literary structures.

In conclusion, "One Rainy Evening" and "A Mark on the Wall", as classic examples of Eastern and Western stream of consciousness literature, present the diverse features and infinite potential of stream of consciousness literature in all aspects with their unique artistic charm and profound ideological connotations. In the current global literary context, the in-depth study, inheritance, and development of Eastern and Western stream of consciousness literature will help promote the exchange and integration of literature among different cultures, stimulate the innovative vitality of literary creation, and promote the continuous progress of the literary cause to new heights.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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