《微暗的火》中的戏仿

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《微暗的火》中的戏仿

Parody in Pale Fire

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Abstract

Regarded as one of the world's most distinctive writers, stylists and critics of the 20th century, Vladimir Nabokov has written a large number of works during his life-long literary career. His works include novels, poems, plays, short stories, translations, essays and literary reviews, among which the English novels, such as *Lolita*, *Pnin* and *Pale Fire*, have established a world-wide reputation for him. Generally speaking, Nabokov's novels concentrate on the exploration of the fictional essence of reality and the ways to manifest such fictional reality to the readers. Among all the best novels that Nabokov has ever written, *Pale Fire* is the most intricately designed and the most uniquely structured one. Since its first publication in 1962, the heated debates and various criticisms on it have never stopped. In this thesis, Nabokov's employment of various parodies in *Pale Fire* is chosen as the topic of a detailed discussion, since it is just through the employment of parody that Nabokov's creative ideas and his conception in viewing the world are perfectly expressed.

The structure of this thesis is divided into five chapters besides the introduction and conclusion parts. The introduction part offers a general survey of Nabokov's life, works and a brief literary review. Then the thesis begins with a chapter which introduces the process of parody's development in the literary history, its rediscovery by the postmodernists in the 20th century and the reasons for which it becomes the perfect technique for Nabokov to express his creative ideas and various opinions in his works. The second chapter is a detailed discussion of the intertextual aspect of parody manifested within the novel itself, including the intertextuality of the two subtexts, the intertextuality between the characters and the intertextuality of the "pale fire" images in the novel. While Chapter Two's focus is within the novel, Chapter Three discusses Nabokov's employment of parody in a comparatively wider sense, namely the parody of other literary genres in the novel. In this part, the parody of poetry, detective fiction, biography, drama and literary commentary are discussed

respectively, which reveal Nabokov's general strategy in using the technique of

parody in his novels. On the one hand, he makes use of the different literary genre's

general rules to construct the main characters and the plot of the novel. On the other

hand, he deconstructs their conventions and fixed elements, which indicates to the

readers that the reality in fiction is nothing but subjective illusions. As a well-know

anti-Freudian, Nabokov's parody of the psychoanalytic criticism could be easily

distinguished in most of his novels and *Pale Fire* is just a case in point. His parody of

the Freudian psychology of the double personality and the parody of the Oedipus

complex are the discussion focuses of Chapter Four. The last chapter of this thesis

concentrates on Nabokov's self-parody in Pale Fire. Through the parody of himself,

Nabokov expresses his everlasting pain and lament for losing his homeland and

Russian language in an implicitly literary way.

The last part is the conclusion. Based on the above analysis, it is natural to say

that parody is everywhere in Pale Fire and it is one of the most frequently-used and

best techniques employed by Nabokov to express his views on art, literature, and even

on everything in this world through his works.

Key Words: *Pale Fire*; Nabokov; parody

II

摘要

作为二十世纪最出色的作家、文体家和文学评论家之一,弗拉基米尔 • 纳博科夫一生中创作了大量的文学作品。其中包括长篇小说、诗歌、戏剧、短片小说、翻译、散文和文学评论。但纳博科夫主要还是以长篇小说闻名于世,如《洛丽塔》、《普宁》、《微暗的火》等都无疑已成为文学史上的经典佳作。总体来讲,大部分纳博科夫的小说都着重于探讨一个共同主题,即现实的虚构本质以及作家向读者揭示这一本质的艺术方法。在这些经典小说中,《微暗的火》是设计布局最为精巧、结构最为奇特的一部。自 1962 年面世以来,关于这部小说的热烈探讨和各方评论就从未停息过。因此,本文以纳博科夫在《微暗的火》中对戏仿的运用为突破口,分析了其文学创作理念以及对现实的看法在其小说作品中的体现。

除引言和结论外,本文包括五个部分:引言简要介绍了作者的生平、他的作 品以及评论界对其作品的评述。论文第一章对戏仿这一文学形式在历史上的发展 演变过程进行了简要的梳理,并着重论述了在二十世纪后现代主义思潮下,戏仿 被重新挖掘并回归其本源维度的经过。而纳博科夫作为后现代主义文学最重要代 表人物之一,他的文学创作理念则与戏仿的形式下所表达内涵有着极大的共通 性。论文第二章具体论述了互文性作为戏仿最重要的特征之一在《微暗的火》中 的体现。这其中包括两个潜在文本间的互文、小说人物间的互文以及"微暗的火" 这一意象在小说中形成的多层次互文。相对于第二章对于小说内部互文性的探 讨,第三章则转向小说与其它文学形式间的互文关系,即纳博科夫在《微暗的火》 中对其它文学体裁的戏仿。小说中作者对诗歌、侦探小说、传记、戏剧以及文学 评论的戏仿都将得到较为详尽的分析,我们从中可以看出纳博科夫运用戏仿的基 本策略。一方面,他利用不同文学体裁的基本要素来完成其对小说情节和人物的 构建:另一方面,他又在不断地解构文学体裁中固有的要素。通过这样的方式, 纳博科夫向读者揭示了小说中的现实是不存在的, 它只是主观幻象而已。此外, 作为众所周知的反弗洛伊德派人物,纳博科夫对于弗洛伊德心理分析学说的戏仿 在他的大部分小说中都随处可见,而《微暗的火》也不例外。纳博科夫在《微暗

的火》中对于弗洛伊德双重人格和俄狄浦斯情结的戏仿则是第四章的讨论重点。 本文最后一章集中论述了纳博科夫作为戏仿大师在其作品中对自身的戏仿。通过 这一特殊方式, 纳博科夫表达了他对于失去祖国和他挚爱的俄语无尽的遗憾和惋 惜。

文章的最后一部分是结论。基于以上的分析可以认为, 戏仿在《微暗的火》中可谓无处不在; 通过对戏仿的广泛、多层次运用, 纳博科夫小说的文本与其文学创作理念形成了最深刻的默契。

关键词:《微暗的火》 纳博科夫 戏仿



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Introduction

Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov, novelist, poet, critics and lepidopterist, is regarded as one of the world's most distinctive literary masters of his generation. In 1998, the editorial board of the Modern Library released the result of a poll on the greatest English-language novels of the twentieth century, on which list two of Nabokov's novels were included, namely *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* (Connolly 1). Numerous important writers in American literary history, including John Updike, John Barth, and Thomas Pynchon have paid homage to Nabokov directly or indirectly in their works. In the last fifty years, the distinctiveness of Nabokov's artistic reputation has attracted the attention of thousands of critics and readers. While people are continuously debating about the controversial issues about Nabokov and his works, such as the writing nationalities, the literary schools he belongs to, and the problem of morality in his works, a brief review of Nabokov's legendary life experience is helpful and necessary.

Nabokov's life experience is unlike that of any other American writers. In his autobiography, *Speak Memory*, Nabokov compares his life stages as the different arcs in "a small ball of glass":

This is how I see my own life. The twenty years I spent in my native Russia (1899-1919) take care of the thetic arc. Twenty-one years of Voluntary exile in England, Germany and France (1919-40) supply the obvious antithesis. The Period spent in my adopted country (1940-60) forms a synthesis – and a new thesis. $(SM\ 215)^1$

In addition to the last phase spent in Montreux, Switzerland (1960-77), Nabokov's life could therefore be roughly divided into four "arcs", according to his own term.

1

¹ Nabokov, Vladimir. *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, INC, 1999. p. 215. Subsequent quotations from the same edition will be marked by abbreviation *SM* and page number only.

The first arc, the innocent happy childhood, was spent in Russia. Born in St. Petersburg on April 23, 1899, Nabokov was raised up in an old aristocratic family. Both his parents have exerted great influences on him. His father was one of the founders of the pre-revolutionary Liberal Constitutional Democratic Party in Russia who was very fond of Pushkin's poetry and loved the works of Flaubert, Balzac and Dickens, while his mother could speak several languages and was good at painting and music. Thanks to the wealthy and liberal family environment, young Nabokov was exposed to three different languages when he was 6 years old. As he once said to an interviewer in 1964, "my head says English, my heart, Russian, my ear, French" (SO 49)¹. In the family library, the work of Robert Browning, Edgar Allen Poe, Flaubert, Tolstoy and hundreds of other literary giants' masterpieces accompanied him for days and nights, which established a solid foundation for the writing career in the later stage of his life. In 1916, Poems and Problems, Nabokov's first book of poetry was published in Russia, when he was only 17 years old. This book, as the young poet once said, is an attempt "to express one's position in regard to the universe" (SM 66).

One year after the publication of Nabokov's second book, *Two Paths (1918)*, the whole family moved to England due to the outbreak of the Soviet Revolution in Russia. There in the foreign country, Nabokov enrolled in the Trinity School of Cambridge University, studying ichthyology at first. However, he switched to French and Russian literature soon and did research on Proust, Flaubert, Gogol, Pushkin and Tolstoy. After his graduation in 1922, the Nabokov family moved to Berlin, the center of Russian emigrants in Europe. Under the pseudonym Sirin, Nabokov began his professional writing career, during which period of time all his works were written in Russian. He published the first novel, *Mashenka (Mary)* in 1926, which won him the recognition as the hope in the younger Russian émigré writers. Two years later, the second novel, *Korol'*, *dama*, *valet (King, Queen, Knave)* appeared, followed by *Zashchita (The Defense)* in 1930, *Podvig (Glory)* in 1932, *Kamera*

¹ Nabokov, Vladimir. *Strong Opinions*. New York: Random House, 1990. p. 49. Subsequent quotations from the same edition will be marked by abbreviation *SO* and page number only.

obskura (Laughter in the Dark) in 1933, Otchaianie (Despair) in 1934, Sogliadatai (The Eye) and Priglashenie na kazn' (Invitation to a Beheading) in 1938. During the 15 years spent in Berlin, two important events happened to the young writer. One is his marriage to his beloved wife Vera, a Jewish. The other is the assassination of his father by a reactionary rightist when the senior Nabokov tried to protect another man. The later event has great influence on Nabokov for his whole life, which is shown as his frequently appearing theme of mistaken assassination in his novels.

After the Nazi gained power in Germany, Nabokov went on the road of exile again with his wife and their son, Dmitri Nabokov. They lived for three years in France where Nabokov met James Joyce and several other important English writers. Gradually realizing the importance of getting more people to accept his works, Nabokov began to write in English, which marked a turning point of his professional literary career. In 1940, the whole family took on board a ship for New York, the United States of America, three days before Paris was taken by the Nazi army, which marks the end of the second "arc" of Nabokov's life and the beginning of his American years.

The early days in the United States were quite tough. Nabokov had to earn living by coaching tennis and tutoring Russian. In 1941, he obtained a position of teaching Russian literature at Wellesley College. At the same time, he worked as a research fellow at the Museum of Comparative Zoology. However, the hardness of life never stopped Nabokov's passion for writing. It is during this period that his first English novel was published, namely *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941). In 1947, the second one, *Bend Sinister*, was published, followed by *Pnin* in 1957. One decade after becoming a professor of Russian literature at Cornell University in 1948, Nabokov's astonishing novel, *Lolita* (1958), finally appeared and won great popularity in America, which brought him great fame as well as financial security.

Ending the decades of exile and unstable life, Nabokov resigned from Cornell and could, at last, focus on the two activities he loved best, "writing and butterfly hunting" (SO 3). In 1961, the Nabokov couple settled down in Montreux, Switzerland, where he finished four novels, Pale Fire (1962), Ada or Ardor: A

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