

## Interpretation of Ecological Feminist in "To the Lighthouse"

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**Abstract:** Virginia Woolf described women and nature, women and men with skillful narrative techniques in *To the Lighthouse*. It begins with the traditional woman Mrs. Ramsay getting close to nature, and ends with the gradual integration of non-traditional female Lily Brisco into nature, in which the ecological feminism is clear and runs through the novel all the time. The use of a large number of female narrative voices and narrative techniques from a narrative perspective is helpful to the development of ecological feminism. Based on the author's study and thinking, this paper interpreted the ecological feminism from the contradiction and harmony between women & nature and between women & men. By comparing the emotional differences between the two sexes towards nature, this paper highlighted the close similarity between women and nature, and criticized the man's indifference to nature.

### 1. Introduction

*To the Lighthouse* is often regarded as one of the best novels written by Virginia Woolf, a famous British novelist. The concept of ecological feminism was first put forward by French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne in *Feminism or Death*, which aims to liberate women and nature, establish a balanced and healthy relationship between women & nature and between women & men [1]. *To the Lighthouse* is full of ecological feminism, which not only has a large number of interactive scenes between female consciousness and nature, but also describes nature in the second part of the novel. Her work not only highlighted the closeness of women and nature, but also showed the important position of women and nature [2].

### 2. Women and Nature

With the development of social life, people continue to develop and plunder natural resources, which leads to the destruction of ecological environment resources that depend on and develop with human society. Therefore, it is not only difficult to meet the needs of human society, but also poses a threat to the social life of human beings. The contradiction between human and nature is due to the fact that people think of themselves as the masters of the environment in the consciousness of thinking, and they can be obtained and controlled, so the nature can only be accepted passively. In the thinking consciousness of men, they not only have a strong desire to control nature, but also have the same idea to control women in the family, which can be called patriarchal system. Mr. Ramsay, the hero in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, is the representative of the patriarchal system. What he thinks about every day are his work and the achievements of his work, and he works hard to achieve greater success. In a man's consciousness of thinking, the goal of his life and continuous struggle are their success and social status [3]. For women living in family and social life, they have a lot of similarities with nature (silently giving, inclusive of all things outside the world). For example, nature, like human mothers, gives people the food and materials they need in life, but human beings do not know how to be grateful and satisfied, often wantonly destroy the demands of nature. However, nature has a indulgent attitude towards human beings. The spirit of nature and the confidence of mothers in human society have always continued, especially for women living under patriarchal system, which are easier to approach and selflessly contribute their personal strength to the family [4]. In *To the Lighthouse*, the author agrees with women that Mrs. Ramsay is a fruit tree

full of branches and leaves, full of red flowers. The author considered Lili, the guest of the family, as a flower, which transforms women into creatures in nature, showing that women have natural attributes and have the same characteristics as nature. Under the patriarchal system, men are destroyers of nature and women with the power of their own wisdom and ability, and even abuse the weak [5].

Human beings demand and destroy the ignorance of nature, lack of care for women, but nature and women do not care more, but naturally still provide people with the material materials they need in their material life, women pay silently for their husbands and families. Human beings seize and destroy nature with ignorance, lack of care for women. However, nature and women do not care more, but naturally still provide people with the material materials they need in their material life, and women pay silently for their husbands and families. In *To the Lighthouse*, Mr. Ramsay thinks deeply about human social life and civilization on the basis of Scott's novels, and thinks of this kind of individual, and feels that the civilization of human society can not be compared with the development and change of nature since nature will exist for a long time, but human society can only last forever.

### **3. Women and Men**

First, the antagonism of economic status. Men have a career and belong to society, but women have no job and belong to the family. Men have independent economic status, while women have financial dependence on men [6]. In the first part of the novel, we can see Mrs. Ramsay's awkward position in the face of money problems. The scene was mentioned three times in the novel ("fifty pounds for the repair of the greenhouse"). When she and her husband walked all the way, she felt that the particularly worrisome evil was already ambushed. By the time they were walking, her words had reached her lips - The cost of repairs is fifty pounds. But she didn't say that, since she lost her courage as soon as she mentioned the problem of money. The fifty pounds is clearly a metaphor for the non-independence of women's economic status, which inevitably determined traditional gender roles - Mr. Ramsay went out to work to support his family, and his wife was in charge of housework.

Second, the Ramsay couple's marriage reflected the antagonism between intelligence and beauty. Mr. Ramsay wrote books and said that he taught philosophy in universities and explained to students Locke, Hume, the French Revolution, and so on. He was a respected scholar and supported eight children by philosophy (intelligence). Accordingly, his wife had the brilliance of the torch, and she brought the torch of virtue to any room she entered [6]. Although she tried to cover it up with a gauze, her beauty was obvious. Beauty became her mark, and she realized it, and won a lot of praise and admiration for it, giving people a kind of "frank and simple relief."

Third, the couple embodied the antagonism between reality and fantasy. There is a good show on the question of whether you can go to the lighthouse tomorrow. At the beginning of the novel, when talking about the weather, the lady said, "Well, if it clears up tomorrow, I'll let you go." However, the husband immediately came up and countered, "But it won't clear up tomorrow." "He is telling the truth, always the truth, and he will not cheat, he never distorts the facts. Nor would he make a harsh remark a little more tactful and perfunctory in courting anyone." The lady comforted the child "But maybe it will clear up tomorrow - I think the weather will clear up." But the husband replied angrily, "It's impossible to go to the lighthouse tomorrow!" He thought it a lie to get his children to want something impossible to happen [7]. He stamped his feet with anger and scolded "Damn it". When the lady argued again, he vetoed again, believing that the pursuit of truth so impersonally and the wanton tear of the veil of etiquette was a great trampling on human dignity. She wanted to give the children a chance to fantasize so that they can be happy in their ideals. The couple's different views on reality and fantasy made them estranged.

### **4. Women's Harmony with Nature and Men**

In male's mind consciousness, the female is the opposite and the accessory, but in the female's

mind consciousness, the man is not only her husband who provide them with protection, but needs their own care, so that women, like nature, love their own and give him all their love. Women and men, woman and nature are interrelated and interdependent, and one side is rebellious., the changes are unacceptable and bearable [8]. When human society takes too much from nature, nature still gives its resource, but when the resources are exhausted, nature itself will lack a protective barrier, which will react with human beings, such as mudslides, floods and other natural disasters. The changes in human beings and nature are similar to those in men and women. In *To the Lighthouse*, Mr. Ramsay was constantly asking his wife, but after Mrs. Ramsay's death, Mr. Ramsay was alone, helpless, and fragile, showing his missing and attachment to his wife. From the perspective of dualism, in the society described in the novel, women are the appendages of men. Although referred to as a "second", women still have unique characteristics with their own actions and thoughts affecting men, known as "first". After the death of Mrs. Ramsay, from Mr. Ramsay's changes in the state of mind, the consciousness of thinking, we can see that both men and women are blended with each other, and that both sides are not only an individual but also a blend of the spiritual world and the life of the other. Therefore, the relationship between men and women is interdependent, and the two are interdependent and mutually beneficial to establish a harmonious and natural society and family, so as to promote the healthy development of human society.

Nature and human society interact with each other, so women should live in social life as an independent individual rather than as a male dependency. Taking the life of Mr. Ramsay's family as the main line, the author expounded the oppression of women in society, and expounded the importance of women to the family and society from the reaction of the hero after the death of the heroine [9]. In *To the Lighthouse*, the author expounded ecological feminism. In the author's ideology, women are not only their position in roles, but also the principles of women. The long-term patriarchal social system, the harmonious relationship between men and women has been destroyed, resulting in women in the status of domination and exploitation, in the social life of the ecological crisis [10]. Therefore, women should make full use of their own abilities, play their own values, and respect women. Men's respect for women is about to respect and care for nature, and only by identifying and conforming to hers, can man gain more material and love from both natural and women in order to be able to live better.

## 5. Summary

Ecological feminism is an opposition to the traditional thinking value system of women and nature, women and men. It advocates people to break the opposing ideological system and establish a family and social life with equal gender and ecological balance. In social life, human beings, especially men, should recognize the ecological balance, since the balance between men and women is necessary for the development of society. Only by establishing a harmonious and equal family and social life can we build a society of coordinated development.

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