

A Study of Authorial Voice in *To the Lighthouse* from the Perspective of Feminist Narratology



Jingyi Xu¹, Jingdong Zhong²

^{1,2} School of English, Zhejiang Yuexiu University, Shaoxing, China

ABSTRACT: The history of Western literature since the 18th century has witnessed some excellent works by women writers, however, due to stereotypes and the authority of male discourse, these writers still endured great pressure from society in the creative process. To break the authority and gain recognition, female writers gradually formed a narrative voice belonging to themselves. In her novel *To the Lighthouse*, Virginia Woolf uses a great deal of interior monologue and free indirect discourse to cleverly construct her narrative authority. This adequately denotes the essence of feminist narratology, which is the combination of feminism and classical structuralist narratology, and a way to study feminist works as well. Concerning feminist narratology, this paper investigates the concept of feminist narrative voice, three types of which are personal voice, authorial voice, and communal voice. In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf mostly employs authorial voice. To gain a further insight into this, the paper discusses the origin and concept of feminist narrative voice, and then examines Woolf's writing techniques adopted in *To the Lighthouse*, the use of authorial voice and the construction of female narrative authority in the novel. The study concludes that the use of authorial voice in *To the Lighthouse* contributes to a shift in women's marginalization and the struggle for male dominance narratives, and demonstrates fully Woolf's feminist thinking throughout the work.

KEYWORDS: feminist narratology, authorial voice, narrative authority, Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*.

I. INTRODUCTION

The literary creation of Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) was influenced by her family a lot. She was treated unfairly because of her gender from childhood, though she was born in an elite and intellectual family. She could not get rid of all kinds of prejudices in the patriarchal society. In the late 19th century, education was seriously divided along gender lines. While boys were sent to school, girls only received education from their parents or tutors. Woolf could only pursue higher education until 15. She attended the Ladies' Department of King's College London, where she came into contact with early reformers of the women's rights movement. Gender injustice made Woolf become a feminist and she embodied her feminist thoughts in her works, including *To the Lighthouse*.

As one of her best-known works, this novel revolves around the Ramsay family and their visits to Scotland between 1910 and 1920, and is noted for Woolf's unique writing style, which makes it one of her most experimental works. The technique permits Woolf's characters' subjective thinking processes to define the narrative's objective content. Many readers of *To the Lighthouse* find the novel bizarre and difficult. Its language is dense and the structure is unorganized. *To the Lighthouse* appears to have a little action in comparison to other novels since practically all of the events take place in the characters' minds. Due to her writing style, Woolf's unique writing skills have been a significant topic in literature for a long time.

This paper will study the novel from the perspective of feminist narratology. Narratology is a branch of literary criticism that originated in France. With the development of literary criticism theory, the concept of narratology as the subject of story-telling and receiving has been accepted and transformed by feminist narrative theory. Feminist narratology primarily studies female narrative literature, such as novels, poems, and letters. Susan Snider Lancer (1986) put forward the theory of "feminist narrative voice", and it can be divided into three types. Among them, authorial voice is mainly used in *To the Lighthouse*. Woolf employed this feminist narrative voice, according to Lancer, to articulate her feminist beliefs and build narrative authority throughout the novel. This will be examined more thoroughly in the study, which includes a detailed introduction to feminist narratology (especially authorial voice), a textual analysis of the two writing skills used by Woolf, and the construction of her own narrative authority.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Feminist narratology is a concept that refers to the study of narratives from a feminist perspective, taking into account the impact of gender on narrative patterns. This concept originated among debates on the shortcomings of the concept of narratology. Susan

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Snider Lancer (1986, p. 341-363) first put forward this theory in her pathbreaking paper "Toward a Feminist Narratology" in which she charges narratology with ignoring the question of gender. Lancer notes that narratological study has an intrinsic limitation produced by its male-centered field of investigation. She thinks that classical narratology cannot adequately account for women's narratives. Therefore, she combines these two concepts and created an original kind of narratology, feminist narratology. After that, Lancer's book *Fiction of Authority: Woman Writers and Narrative Voice* (1992) was published, which explored patterns of narration in a wide range of novels by famous female writers in the west from the 1740s to the present, drawing on narratological and feminist theory. In this book, Lancer mentions that narrative structures and women's writing is determined by complex power structures and the authority of a text is produced by social and rhetorical properties. She also shows how "feminist narrative voice" can be used as a narrative strategy and a way of gaining social power. Feminist Narrative voice is classified into three categories in the book. Among other things, authorial voice, Lancer regards as "a heterodiegetic, public, and potentially self-referential" voice. She claims that the structural and functional position of authorship is created by authorial voice. Lancer finds innovative strategies that challenge the conventions of Western narrative. In her opinion, Woolf uses authorial voice in most of her work. However, she pays attention to Woolf's background information, ignoring a more specific analysis of *To the Lighthouse* and the writing techniques Woolf has used.

Lancer is no exceptional in studying female writers. In the book *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), Elaine C. Showalter establishes a tradition of women's literature in England by studying the works and lives of female authors from 1840 to the present. This book opens up a new field of literary study by revealing the rich but underappreciated heritage of female writers in England. Thus, notably in the third chapter, this book presents thorough information on the double standards experienced by Victorian female writers, as well as the challenges faced by female writers at the time. This chapter goes into great length about the social pressures that female writers faced, particularly from male literary authority. Showalter demonstrates the motivations behind female writers' attempts to create unique female writing styles, as well as the challenges they face in doing so. Still, Showalter focuses on the overall conclusion of those female writers' feminism but neglects the analyses of their texts and their signature writing techniques.

In *To the Lighthouse* and other Woolf's work, interior monologue is one of the most representative skills. Anna Snaith (1996, p. 133-148) studies this stylistic strategy in her research "Virginia Woolf's Narrative Strategies: Negotiating between Public and Private Voices". She makes a brief introduction to interior monologue and takes examples from Woolf's novels where the skill is widely used such as *To the Lighthouse*. Snaith analyzes a character in the novel: McNab, and points out "through interior monologue, she is given her own voice, at which point the narrator's perspective comments are subverted", which indicates that this technique helps Woolf express her own thoughts under the cover of McNab. Interior monologue, she concludes, is one embodiment of Woolf's public-private discussions, which allows her to shift between public and private, as well as between different points of view. This conclusion also proves Lancer's point: by expressing her own views indirectly through characters, Woolf skillfully constructs her own special narrative authority. Although interior monologue is not the only technique Woolf uses in *To the Lighthouse*, this research still provides a precise example for this thesis.

III. OVERVIEW OF FEMINIST NARRATIVE VOICE

In 1986, Susan Lancer published a paper that first proposed the concept of feminist narratology. Lancer proposes that the texts formed by classical narratology are often the works of male writers: "If the texts of female writers and the interpretive experience of female readers are taken into account, narratology and even the entire literary history need to be revised" (Lancer, 1986, p. 341) After raising this point of view, Lancer elaborated on feminist narratology in her book *Fiction of Authority: Woman Writers and Narrative Voice* (Lancer, 1992).

Narrative Voice

Narrative voice is the perspective the story is told from. It is an extremely important tool in stories. It allows the reader to see everything through the narrator's point of view, including their feelings and experiences. Including many narrative voices and perspectives in a story will alter how readers perceive the overall story and help them comprehend the motivations and desires of other characters. There are three types of narrative voices: the first, second, or third-person perspective. A character in the story tells the story in the first person. I, me, my, and we are some of the most common personal pronouns. The story is recounted in the second person from the viewpoint of the audience. The story is recounted in the voice of someone who is not a character in the story, which is known as the third-person perspective. She, he, and they are the most common personal pronouns used. The third-person view can also be separated into two types: limited third-person perspective and omniscient third-person perspective. The omniscient third-person narrative voice allows the narrator to follow various characters in the story and tell it from multiple perspectives. Based on the concept of narrative voice, the feminist narrative voice is formed.

Feminist Narrative Voice

Feminist narratology was born around the discussion of the concept of voice. On this concept, narratology is aimed at the study of writing techniques, while feminism has a social nature and political implications. In narratology, voice means "teller", which distinguishes the writer and non-narrative characters in the narrative. When feminists talk about voice, they refer to "the behavior

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of actual or fictional persons and groups who assert woman-centered points of view" (Lanser, 1992, p. 4). For example, feminists evaluate a female character who resists oppression, while narratology theorists discuss the character's expression in the text. In this regard, Lanser (1986, p. 341) points out that in narratological terms, the concept of voice ignores gender issues. "A narratology that cannot adequately account for women's narrative is an inadequate narratology for men's texts as well" (1986, p. 346), Lanser combined these two concepts and created feminist narratology.

Lanser thinks (1992, p. 5) that both narrative structures and women's writing are defined by complicated and evolving conventions that are formed in and by the power relations that entangle writer, reader, and text, rather than by intrinsic features or isolated aesthetic imperatives. Lanser assumes that a combination of social and rhetorical features produces the authority of a specific voice or text, linking social identity and narrative structure. Lanser (1992, p. 6) points out another concept: "narrative authority", by which the intellectual credibility, ideological validity, and aesthetic value are claimed by a work, writer, narrator, character, or textual practice. Since in the past narrative authority was dominated by educated white males, the status of the narrator became a major factor in constituting narrative authority. Faced with the oppression of narrative authority from men, female writers have faced many limitations in establishing the feminist narrative voice. They have to face the contradiction: on the one hand, they question the male-dominated literary tradition and strive to criticize male authority; on the other hand, to be included in the mainstream text, they have to adopt the traditional narrative voice (Deng, 2010, p. 123). Thus, female writers began to create the feminist narrative voice, subverting the traditional male-dominated literary narrative with women's unique writing methods.

Lanser (1992, p. 15) thinks that "each mode represents not simply a set of technical distinctions but a particular kind of narrative consciousness". She divides feminist narrative voice into three categories: Firstly, personal voice refers to narrators who are telling their own narrative, with the protagonist being the "I" who recounts the story. As a result, this feminist narrative voice appears to be more real than authorial voice in telling someone else's story, but less authoritative in developing narrative authority than authorial voice. Secondly, authorial voice identifies a narrative situation that is heterodiegetic, extradiegetic, public, and potentially self-referential. In narratology, "heterodiegetic" usually means that the telling does not follow the course and thread of the story itself. "Extradiegetic" refers to the narrator telling others' stories. Feminist criticism often associates the narrative effects of authorial voice with the status and authority of female writers. The authority of authorial voice lies in its dominance over the narrator. Thirdly, communal voice is a collective of voices that share narrative authority, in which narrative authority is invested in a definable community. People from underprivileged and vulnerable groups frequently use it. These three types of feminist narrative voices represent three different narrative authorities. Meanwhile, Lanser (1992, p. 22) believes that women writers must develop these three kinds of authority if they want to occupy a place in the history of western literature.

IV. AUTHORIAL VOICE IN *TO THE LIGHTHOUSE*

Authorial Voice

The term "authorial voice" can replace the term "third-person narrator," which refers to a character who does not exist on many text levels. The word "authorial" "does not imply an ontological equivalence between narrator and author but suggests that such a voice reproduces the structural and functional situation of authorship" (Lanser, 1992, p. 16). Authorial narrators have greater authority than characters since they exist outside of fiction. But the feminist narrative voice is influenced by social factors. Women's participation in public discourse has been limited; it's one thing for women to simply tell stories; it's another for their narrators to present themselves as authorities (Lanser, 1992, p. 29). Women did not have the right to talk about social topics during the historical period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the Victorian era, for women, their work was about working for others. To do writing means to be self-centered, which is not allowed (Showalter, 1977, p. 22). At first, women were not allowed to write, except for letters. In the mid-nineteenth century, there was a phenomenon of female writers writing under male pseudonyms, for example, George Eliot. Such an approach may have profited individual writers or texts, but that has surely also reinforced the androcentrism of narrative authority (Lanser, 1992, p. 17). But if female writers reveal their feminist narrative voice, they may be rejected and criticized by the public. The usage of authorial voice mixes the text's ideology with the writer's thoughts and intentions, implying feminist views about female writers seeking to make their voices heard in a particular social context. Authorial voice can exist outside of the tale and expose the writer's thoughts, allowing the feminist consciousness of the writer to pervade the entire text. Thus, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and Toni Morrison have constructed authorial voice against the narrative and social conventions of their time and place (Lanser, 1992, p. 18).

Woolf uses interior monologue and free indirect discourse; these two writing skills play an important role in the construction of authorial voice in *To the Lighthouse*. Interior monologue is the writer's narrative intervention, that is, the narrator's voice outside the character's specific discourse. Interior monologue tells the character's approximate thoughts not using the exact wording of that thought (Snaith, 1996, p. 134). Interior monologue is frequently related to streams of consciousness, in which the majority of a novel takes the form of the main character's thoughts. Many writers, like Virginia Woolf, allow readers to develop a deeper connection with the characters of the story by using this technique. Readers are able to know what a character is thinking or feeling which helps readers better understand the novel itself. Another writing technique is the free indirect discourse, which is a

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third-person narration style that combines some third-person traits with the core of first-person direct discourse. Free indirect discourse is a strategy for conveying a character's voice partly mediated by the writer's voice, with the voices effectively combined. With this technique, the writer can "roam from viewpoint to viewpoint" instead of being fixed with one character or with the narrator.

There is no first-person narration in any of Woolf's works. But "this does not mean that Woolf sought to 'efface' subjectivity from her writing but rather that the subjectivity she sought to represent was not personal but authorial" (Lanser, 1992, p. 108). Woolf uses a less evident and more global technique in her works, making the characters extensions of the narrative voice. This dispersal of narrative authority is accomplished through characters with different identities, who have a semantically common voice (Lanser, 1992, p. 114).

Authorial Voice and Writing Techniques

Some critics believe that Woolf's abandonment of the omniscient narrator is the complete extinction of the narrator (Deng, 2010, p. 122). In fact, on the surface text, the narrator is absent, but in the deep text, the narrator is everywhere. In *To the Lighthouse*, the focus of the description is not the characters' thoughts but the narrator himself. In the novel, the narrator makes a comprehensive observation and authoritative comment on the character's words and deeds, and finally captures the original voice of the character. The narrator even transcends the limitations of time and space, observing what happened at different times and places, showing readers the world in the novel. In this sense, the novel breaks the limitations of the narrator's observation angle and cognitive ability in classic modernist novels and acquires the ability that the narrator of classic realist novels has (Xiao, 2007, p. 93). For example, in the first part of the novel, when Ms. Ramsay is measuring James's leg, Woolf describes a lot of the character's inner activities unrelated to measuring in the description: she reminds a lot of books that she has not read yet "Croom on the Mind and Bates on the Savage Customs of Polynesia²⁹ ('My dear, stand still,' she said) – neither of those could one send to the lighthouse" (Woolf, 1992, p. 113), and pays her attention to the doors that are opening "But it was the doors that annoyed her; every door was left open. She listened" (Woolf, 1992, p. 114), and even other's sound appears "But she's no more aware of her beauty than a child,' said Mr. Banks" (Woolf, 1992, p. 117). After measuring James's leg, Ms. Ramsay finds that the socks are too short, then a sentence appears: "Never did anybody look so sad (Woolf, 1992, p. 116)." Mrs. Ramsay and James are the only ones in the room. Those are obviously the narrator's sentences, not those of other characters.

In the first and third parts of the novel, the narrator freely travels around the inner worlds of characters with various identities, backgrounds, ages, and mentalities in the first and third portions of the novel, conducting multi-angle observations and authoritative judgments on their inner actions, words, and deeds. The narrator continues, however, to mix direct and indirect thought and thereby embed past-tense comments (Lanser, 1992, p. 127). For example, the narrator enters the inner activities of Lily Briscoe at times and travels into James' inner world at other times. The narrator is thus able to learn what James and Lily are really thinking. When reading the novel, the readers can go directly past the narrator into the inner world of the characters. Characters' thoughts are more frequently rendered in free indirect discourse and the past tense: "nothing was simply one thing" (Woolf, 1992, p. 366); and Lily's understanding: "love had a thousand shapes" (Woolf, 1992, p. 378). Such philosophical insights and aphorisms are expressed in the past tense. This difference in tense distances the novel's narrative from the characters and distance implies narrative authority.

Authorial voice also reflects the feminism of Woolf. For example, the inequality between males and females: men are at the core of culture, the creators of culture, while women are at the periphery of culture, or even excluded from it. The novel also reflects the very different social statuses of men and women: men have a career and belong to society; women do not have a job and belong to the family. Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay embody this disparity. They must bear the social norms placed on them by society and inherit the traditional gender roles as representatives of a traditional married family: Mr. Ramsay works and supports the family, while Mrs. Ramsay runs the household and raises the children. The two personalities thus present very different traditional gender characteristics: the husband is wise, thoughtful, and practical; the wife is beautiful, virtuous, and fond of fantasy (Shu, 2001, p. 61). There is also a difference in the way Ramsay approach things. The novel begins with a conflict about the weather. James wants to go to the lighthouse, but the weather seems not good. Mrs. Ramsay says to him: "Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow" (Woolf, 1992, p. 1), while Mr. Ramsay disagrees with her: "it won't be fine" (Woolf, 1992, p. 2). Mrs. Ramsay comforts her son continually, "But it may be fine, I expect it will be fine" (Woolf, 1992, p. 3). Mr. Ramsay turns to be angry now, he says "there wasn't the slightest possible chance that they could go to the lighthouse tomorrow, the wind often changed" (Woolf, 1992, p. 120). Mr. Ramsay thinks his wife's thought is "the extraordinary irrationality" and "the folly of women's minds" (Woolf, 1992, p. 121). Mrs. Ramsay considers her husband to be very insensitive and without manners. This depiction reveals the reason for the formation of the conflict and disconnection between the Ramsey: the different perceptions of the world by men and women.

The narrator's voice is hidden behind the characters' voices in Woolf's authorial voice, and the characters' voices become an extension of the narrator's voice. Thus, the narrator of *To the Lighthouse* manage to be nowhere by being everywhere, for if several characters are speaking the narrator's words, then the narrative also revises classic realism's stake in a superior, unreproducible authority (Lanser, 1992, p. 117). Woolf achieves exceptional implicit narrative power by establishing an intimate

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link between the characters and the narrator through heavy use of interior monologue and free indirect discourse. By constantly changing the narrative angle, using writing techniques, assigning the same awareness to characters of different identities, allowing them to use the same language style to create an authorial voice, thereby expressing Woolf's standpoint and thoughts (Tang, 2007, p. 76).

Authorial Voice and Interior Monologue: The interior monologue is used frequently enough in the novel to give it the unique quality of seeming to be always present in the minds of the main characters. Interior monologue is relatively flexible, allowing the narrator to shift from one character's consciousness to another. Woolf uses her unique writing techniques, combined with authorial voice to shape the characters. For example, Woolf uses this writing technique to show the Ramsay's married life to the readers:

He was always uneasy about himself. That troubled her. He would always be worrying about his own books – will they be read, are they good, why aren't they better, what do people think of me? Not liking to think of him so, and wondering if they had guessed at dinner why he suddenly became irritable when they talked about fame and books lasting. (Woolf, 1992, p. 205-206)

This passage is taken from the end of the first part of the novel. Mrs. Ramsay guesses the complaint in Mr. Ramsay's mind: he is worried about his book, worrying whether the book will be successful or not. Even Mrs. Ramsay is caring about her husband, she still doesn't want to talk to him.

One ought not to complain, thought Mr. Ramsay, trying to stifle his desire to complain to his wife that young man did not admire him. But he was determined; he would not bother her again. Here he looked at her reading. She looked very peaceful, reading. (Woolf, 1992, p. 208)

In this passage, Mr. Ramsay wants to pour out his complaint to his wife, but Mrs. Ramsay seems "very peaceful", which makes he cannot reach her mind. That's why he chooses to "stifle his desire to complain".

Mrs. Ramsay raised her head and like a person in a light sleep seemed to say that if he wanted her to wake, she would, she really would, but otherwise, might she go on sleeping, just a little longer, just a little longer? She was climbing up those branches, this way and that, laying hands on one flower and then another. (Woolf, 1992, p. 209)

The true thoughts that cannot be communicated between Ramsay are caused by the conflicts between them. They realize the estrangement: they can't share their inner worlds, and neither can do anything about it. They know what the other person is thinking, but they are reluctant to communicate with each other. This avoidance makes Ms. Ramsay's mind start to drift, and she is distracted by "branches" and "flower" in the book she is reading.

The analysis of the texts shows that the way to show interior monologue in *To the Lighthouse* is to combine the inner monologues of characters. The narrator alternates between the narration of the character's words and the narration of the characters' consciousness when reciting the conversation between the two. Such a structure reminds readers: that what the couple says is not what they really feel. In their seemingly harmonious conversation, the hearts of the two did not reach true communication. Woolf enriches the characters' imagery by showing readers other sides of the personalities through interior monologue. Through inner monologue, Woolf constantly shifts the narrative perspective, thus making the narrator ubiquitous and constructing authorial voice.

Authorial Voice and Free Indirect Discourse: The use of free indirect discourse is one of the most frequently used narrative forms in the "stream of consciousness" technique. Free indirect discourse is characterized by these features: The lack of an introductory expression such as "she says" or "she thinks". The character's words can be conveyed more directly through free indirect discourse than through standard indirect discourse. When deictic pronouns and adverbials are employed, they refer to the originator of the speech or thinking rather than the narrator's coordinates. It can be seen in the following:

When she looked in the glass and saw her hair grey, her cheek sunk, at fifty, she thought, possibly she might have managed things better – her husband; money; his books. *But for her own part she would never for a single second regret her decision, evade difficulties, or slur over duties.* (Woolf, 1992, p. 80. Italics added)

The italicized sentence is in free indirect discourse. She and her refer to the thinker (Mrs. Ramsay), and the verbs in this sentence are in the past tense. It's also worth mentioning that the personal pronoun she is also employed to allude to the thinker's point of view. The following occurs when Mrs. Ramsay is thinking about Lily:

With *her* little Chinese eyes and her puckered-up face she would never marry; one could not take her painting very seriously; but she was an independent little creature, *Mrs. Ramsay liked her for it, and so remembering her promise, she bent her head.* (Woolf, 1992, p. 97. Italics added)

In this passage, Mrs. Ramsay is thinking about the picture of Lily, who is posing for her painting. Italicized she and her refer not to the thinker (Mrs. Ramsay), but Lily from Mrs. Ramsay's point of view, and the verbs are in the past tense. In this example, until the expression "Mrs. Ramsay" appears, it is as if the voice came out from the thinker herself rather than the narrator because there is no definite personal pronoun referring to Mrs. Ramsay (Asaka, 2008, p. 4). This not only saves the tediousness caused by too many introductory words but also avoids the clumsy language of the narrator who frequently switches between the characters' words and the inner world. It also helps readers to focus on the presentation of the character's heart.

In free indirect discourse, the characters' inner activities, including subconsciousness, are well preserved without the interference of the writer's discussion, and the reader inadvertently empathizes with the novel's characters and further identifies

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with the writer's thoughts. In Woolf's authorial voice, the narrator's voice is hidden behind the character's voice, and the character's voice becomes an extension of the narrator's voice. Woolf establishes a close relationship between the characters and the narrator through the use of free indirect discourse, and in doing so, gains a special implied authorial authority. common voice (Lanser, 1992, p. 114).

Woolf's Narrative Authority

Woolf's narrative authority in *To the Lighthouse* is constructed by expressing her feminist ideas and authorial voice. Woolf was born at the end of the 19th century, a time when the human mind was experiencing emancipation. During this period, women are also seeking their own world. Woolf was born into an intellectual family, which is good for her thought development. Even in such a family, however, overcoming the prejudices of a male-dominated culture was tough. For example, unequal treatment in education. While her brothers successfully received the best education and completed their studies at Eton, Oxford, or Cambridge, Woolf, and her sisters could only be taught at home by tutors or through self-study accumulation of knowledge. As a female writer, Woolf has pointed out a truth: the world treats male and female writers very differently. Male writers are welcomed to write almost anything they want, while female writers are usually discriminated against and criticized when they want to write something. The unequal treatment received in real life inspired Woolf's feminist ideas. Before Woolf, there had been many outstanding female writers in Britain, such as the Brontë sisters, Jane Austen, George Eliot, and so on. These female writers' works all feature female characters, however, the feminist ideas inherent in these female writers and their works remain hidden beneath the surface. Their perspectives on women's social status and the causes of inequality are fragmented. When Woolf writes, she frequently begins by exposing the societal phenomena of gender disparity, then delves further into the phenomenon to discover the reasons for it. That's why people call her a feminist writer.

Woolf argues that women began to become more independent and explore a way of portraying women that they had never had in the past. At the same time, she points out that the image of women in literature is still mostly created by male writers, so female writers must create a different image of women that is different from the idea of male writers. Woolf believes that for a long time, the patriarchal society, based on men's values and values, has suppressed the normal development of women, resulting in women's low socioeconomic status, lack of educational background, and insufficient life experience. In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf conveys her ideal female image through the role of Lily Briscoe. Lily is the representative of the new women of the post-Victorian era. Woolf describes Lily as a critic of the patriarchal society from the beginning. Lily does not accept patriarchal definitions and myths as given but views them as constructs (Daugherty, 1991, p. 296-297). As a painter, she chose a completely different path from traditional women. More than just writing, the painting was once considered a male prerogative. But Lily is not afraid of worldly vision, chooses to become a painter, and refuses marriage, in order to resist the role "customized" for women in the patriarchal society. Woolf also creates a traditional female image, Mrs. Ramsay, and contrasts with Lily, reflecting the gap between the excellent woman recognized by society and the women with self-awareness in the value and spiritual world.

Woolf's feminist ideas are not only reflected in her philosophy, but also in her works. A comparison of writing techniques in the middle of the century in realist novels written by men and female writers shows that certain narrative strategies dominate texts according to the writer's gender (Warhol, 1989, p. 17). In the traditional narrative method centered on male writers, the plot of the story is emphasized and the characters are shaped through the story. Feminist critics often assume that "female writers have always strained against convention, subverting the expected or traditional literary codes" (Warhol, 1989, p. 17). Woolf believes that female writers must create a sentence style that distinguishes them from male writers. In Woolf's novels, especially in *To the Lighthouse*, there is almost no storyline, and the only clue running through the text is "to the lighthouse". Woolf also does not describe characters through specific events, and the shaping of characters is done through the psychological description. The efface of character is a great mockery of traditional man-centered writing. The language in *To the Lighthouse* also embodies so-called femininity: the sentences are loose and fragmented.

The development of the feminist narrative voice is to create the narrative authority of female writers, as feminist narratology is a blend of feminist critique and narratology. Woolf's authorial voice is a satire of omniscient narrative and a critical strategy. Woolf portrays the narrator of the novel as an omnipresent image, but the narrator's identity is illegible. This undoubtedly exposes the limitations of omniscient narrative and contrasts with the traditional narrative voice dominated by male writers with a feminist narrative style. Thus, Woolf's narrative authority is established.

CONCLUSIONS

Firstly, the author provides strong theoretical support for the thesis through a detailed introduction to the origin of feminist narratology and the concept of feminist narrative voice by referring to studies abroad and at home based on books, journals, and other related materials and combining other researchers' ideas with the author's own comprehension. Secondly, the author analyzes the use of authorial voice in the novel and conducts a detailed textual analysis of Woolf's two unique writing techniques, interior monologue and free indirect discourse, showing the important role of writing techniques in the construction of authorial voice and the main characteristics of Woolf's authorial voice. Finally, the author analyzes the process of Woolf's narrative authority construction from the perspectives of Woolf's feminist thought and authorial voice. This allows the conclusion that

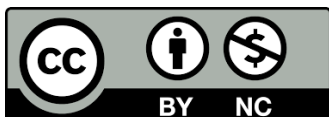
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authorial voice is the way Woolf constructs her female narrative authority, and feminist narrative voice is the way female writers create their own narrative style.

This paper is not only a study of the novel *To the Lighthouse* but also of Woolf and her narrative strategy. The author hopes to show the efforts and contributions made by female writers to change the marginalization of women and strive for the right to speak through this thesis. Besides, the author hopes to provide some improvements for other literary or artistic works as well. From the author's perspective, future research should be devoted to the study of feminist narratology on female writers in English literature, which will provide more comprehensive research to academia.

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