

## **Feminist Criticism in Woolf's Novels and Philosophical Reflection on "Female Ideology"**

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**Abstract:** In the context of modern times, the contradiction of gender opposition in China has increased recently compared with the past, and the Philosophical Investigations based on feminism is becoming more and more important. In the philosophical contemplation of feminism in Woolf's novels, how to discuss the feminist value system and androgyny theory is a key issue. This article conducted a practical study of Woolf's feminist ideology, analyzed the established feminist value system and the proposed androgyny theory, and combined the feminist discussions in Woolf's "To the Lighthouse" and "A Room of One's Own" works. Based on the concepts of feminist criticism and female ideology, the following philosophical reflections were drawn on the formation process of Woolf's feminism. In the context of feminism, it is necessary to promote women's independent consciousness, advocate women to resist the oppression and slavery of the patriarchal society, and also abandon the consciousness of Binary opposition between men and women, It is believed that life has different ways of existence, and its value is to be found by people themselves, so that instant can achieve eternity, and eternity can also create instant.

**Keywords:** Woolf's Works, Feminist Criticism, Female Ideology, Philosophical Thinking

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Due to the continuous restructuring and construction of feminist ideology, its modern significance needs to be interpreted and analyzed through traditional literary works. Therefore, in the current situation of the resurgence of gender opposition in China, it is very necessary to philosophically contemplate the feminist criticism and "female ideology" in Woolf's novels. There are many research theories on feminist thinking. Vicinus M discussed and studied the first feminist conference held in Bloomington, Indiana in the spring of 1969, along with a famous quote from a friend about gender. He discovered many commonalities in feminist criticism under the wave of the times, and analyzed the reasons why the early stages of the women's movement allowed various extreme emotions to be expressed in public, as well as the subsequent impact. This resonated with the ideological work and political aspirations of teachers, graduate students, and all young women (Vicinus, 2019). Wadhwa S's reiteration of

the heterogeneity of mythological female protagonists in the novel led to a new understanding of feminism. Through the exploration of her life stories and philosophical ideas by famous figures in Indian mythology, he discovered independent forms of female consciousness through the analysis of their different identities and character spirits. At the same time, his study attempted to discuss three types of retelling of the story of Yasuda in response to the love and spirit of Buddhism. Finally, he believed that Yasuda's performance stems from giving her a non confrontational surrogate role as a female character (Wadhwa, 2021). According to feminist Literary theory, Rana M M supported literature and opposed the archetypal ceremony of patriarchy from the perspective of motherhood, thus questioning the text politics of dissolving women in literature. In terms of women's main judgments and female ideology, it breaks the traditional concept of gender inequality and gender politics for a long time. This theory sees women's thinking, women's ability and women's rights in literature, and analyzes the important view that feminist Literary criticism originates from feminism (Rana & Rashid, 2020). Kathy Weeks drew inspiration from the feminist criticism of the ideology of love and romance in the 1970s and developed a set of criticisms of "popular advice literature" based on this. By analyzing the love thoughts of employees under Heterosexuality patriarchal capitalism, he came to the conclusion that the basic purpose of this theory is to investigate and track the positioning of female characters in literature in terms of social and biological factors in different times since ancient times, compared with male characters (Hamilton, 2019). According to the feminist Literary theory, JIN Y C deconstructed the text from two different perspectives, that is, the text written by men and the text written by women. Based on the book "Differentiation Canon - Feminist Desire and Writing of Art History" by the famous British historian of Feminist art Griselda Pollock, he analyzed and discussed the constructive relationship between female art and ideology. Stanaliev N M. (Stanaliev, 2020) based on the portrayal of Aliya Moldagulova as a Soviet female hero in the 1985 film "Sniper", believed that her independence as a woman is a symbol of female ideology. His research discussed feminist criticism within the framework of socialist ideology, analyzed how to deconstruct the classics in art history from a new feminist perspective, and reinterpreted art history with the unique "art mother tongue", so that the history of Feminist art transcended the simple gender power struggle, and constructed the vision of post-modern female art history (Yuewen, 2023). The development of feminist ideology originated from the construction of feminism in Woolf's novels, and the

combination of the two prompted people to engage in new philosophical thinking on feminist criticism and feminist ideology (Feltman & Szymanski, 2018; Norwood et al., 2022). The practical analysis of Woolf's establishment of a feminist value system and her proposal of the theory of androgyny is a major focus of this paper. In this paper, through the feminist analysis of *To the Lighthouse* and *A Room of One's Own*, it is believed that it is necessary to carry forward women's independent consciousness, advocate women to resist the oppression and slavery of the patriarchal society, and also abandon the consciousness of Binary opposition between men and women.

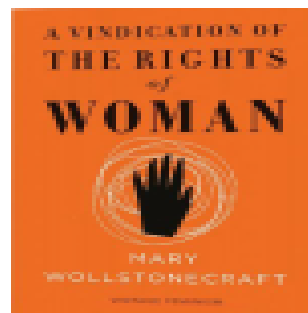
## 2. BACKGROUND OF WOOLF'S FEMALE CONSCIOUSNESS FORMATION

### 2.1 Feminist Criticism and Female Ideology

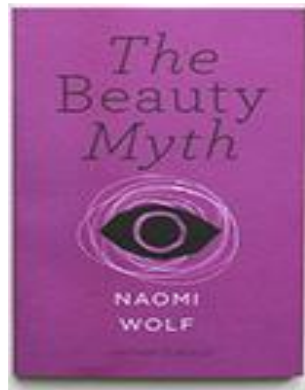
In recent years, the appearance rate of feminism has been increasing on a wide range of media and social platforms (Peng, 2020; Williams, 2021). Feminism is not simply a matter of gender opposition, nor is it the traditional idea of the weak attempting to become strong. Its purpose is to pursue gender equality and women's freedom. Feminism first appeared in France. First of all, women fought for the right to vote. Under the background of the 20th century, women in western countries basically fought for equal political rights, but women and men are still unequal in social Relations of production (Bardzell, 2018; Duffy, 2021). In the later ideological development, the female ideology has become the core of the western feminist Literary criticism theory. Its main connotation is that it is not their physiological conditions but politics and law that cause the obstacles to women's freedom, and it advocates to fight against the oppression and persecution of women by patriarchal culture. Therefore, throughout the development of feminist ideology, its related works and content are shown in Figure 1:



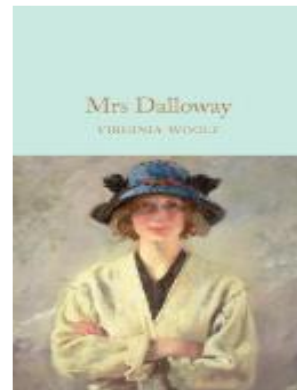
*The Second Sex* By Simone de Beauvoir In 1949



*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* By Wollstonecraft Mary In 1792



*The Beauty Myth* By  
Naomi Wolfe In 1991



*Mrs. Dalloway* By Adeline  
Virginia Woolf In 1925

**Figure 1:** Works Related to the Development Process of Feminist Ideology

From "The Defense of Feminism" in 1792, to "Mrs. Dalloway" in 1925, to "Second Sex" in 1949, and finally to "The Myth of Beauty" in 1991, all of these works that pursue women's equality reflect the philosophical thinking of feminist criticism and female ideology (Palai & Mishra, 2022; Thompson, 2019). The main overview of women's consciousness reflected in literary and artistic works with feminist Literary criticism as the main object is women's Political power to the real society, women's internal right of survival and development, women's external life experience and health protection. Therefore, the research on feminist criticism and female ideology is becoming the mainstream research trend of Egalitarianism in the future.

## 2.2 Formation of Woolf's Feminism

The above article analyzes the relevant process of feminist criticism and female ideology. Next, taking Virginia Woolf, a famous British writer, and her related Literary theory works as an example, her ideology as a pioneer of modernism and feminism in the 20th century is studied, and relevant philosophical thinking discussions are conducted (Clinnin & Manthey, 2019; King, 2021).

Woolf lived in the Victorian period in England. Due to the severe phenomenon of male superiority and female inferiority under the rule of patriarchal ideology during this period, and the fact that Woolf's father also showed a preference for men over women in life, she began to pay attention to feminism, and her father's communication with biographers and academic friends laid a stable foundation for her female literary creation (Locke et al., 2018; Vinci, 2022). The specific reasons for the formation of Woolf's feminism are shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Specific Reasons for the Formation of Woolf's Feminism

Reasons	Specifics
The Influence of Family Life	Educational Feelings of Family Injustice and Parental Character Contrasts
The Development of Feminist Thought	The Collapse of Traditional Beliefs in Britain and the Launch of the Women's Manifesto Initiative Movement
Influence of Bloomsbury Groups	Young Thinkers Gathering Gives Women as Equal a Voice as Men
Reflections on Experiencing Two World Wars	Philosophical Reflections on Patriarchy as the Source of World War Ideology

In summary, the main reasons for the formation of Woolf's feminism in the 20th century were family influence, the development of feminist thinking, the influence of young creators, and the contemplation of world wars. Based on this, Woolf boldly questioned tradition and dared to break conventions in the early stages of literary creation. The spirit of criticism and courage were fully cultivated under the influence of Mrs. Ethel's feminist ideas, and to some extent, through the unique power discourse of women deeply reflected in literary tradition, she achieved emotional self-expression. At the same time, she also encouraged women to bravely create other literary styles (Dube & Chakraborty, 2020; Locke et al., 2018).

### 3. FEMINISM IN WOOLF'S WORKS

#### 3.1 "To the Lighthouse" Feminism

After analyzing the formation of Woolf's feminism, in order to further research and discuss her philosophical thinking on feminist criticism and female ideology, this article takes Woolf's two famous works "To the Lighthouse" and "A Room of Her Own" as examples to discuss her feminist ideas. 'To the Lighthouse' is a quasi autobiographical stream of consciousness novel written by Woolf in the early 1930s. Taking going to the lighthouse as the central clue throughout the book, the novel mainly writes a life experience of the protagonist Ramsay's family and several guests during the World War I. This work is a perfect stream of consciousness work recognized by the literary community at the same time, rich in feminist symbolic philosophy. The protagonist Ramsey's clear gender differences, as well as the contradictory and complex emotions reflected in the family of single female artist Lily and Ramsey, express a feminist ideology that deserves careful consideration. The approximate image of the lighthouse in the work is shown in Figure 2:



**Figure 2:** Schematic Diagram of the Lighthouse Image in the Work

In 'To the Lighthouse', the heroes and heroines Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay are the archetypes of Woolf's parents. By abandoning the idea of binary absolute opposition between men and women, they seek the difficult problem of pursuing the lighthouse to find a way out of the dilemma, while ignoring gender differences to achieve binary dynamic equilibrium harmony, and finally reach the lighthouse in their hearts. This work mainly expresses that although men and women have different characteristics, they still come together in the end to achieve gender balance.

### 3.2 "A Room of One's Own" Feminism

In 1928, Woolf completed the creation of "A Room of His Own" in a small building he built, based on two speeches on the topic of women and novels at the Newham College of Women's College at Cambridge University, with the help of modifications, expansions, and mergers of the speeches. This work discusses and ponders the dilemma and ideal prospect of British women's creation in the Victorian period from the perspective of being in the matter by narrating from the thoughts of the subject, and is also regarded as a classic of feminist Literary criticism. The approximate image of the room in the work is shown in Figure 3:



**Figure 3:** Schematic Diagram of the Room Image of the Work

Woolf's gender criticism viewpoint is mainly voiced through the metaphorical system, and with the help of the theory of androgyny, it

reflects the voice that dominates society and reflects its own voice. This work has a unique understanding of the positive significance of artistic creation by means of "money" and "room", which shows that women writers rebel against the authority consciousness of Androcentrism and promote women's independent consciousness.

#### 4. PRACTICE OF WOOLF'S FEMINIST THOUGHT

Throughout her literary career, Woolf's establishment of a feminist value system and proposal of the theory of androgyny were her great achievements. When describing the ideal creative landscape, she weakened the concept of gender and purely demonstrated her almost natural literary and artistic talent as a consciousness school writer.

##### 4.1 Feminist VALUE SYSTEM

The feminist value system established by Woolf mainly includes four modules: the establishment of female outsider associations, the struggle for the traditional discourse power of women's literature, the finding of women's language to make a voice, and the proposal of feminist Literary criticism. Among them, feminist Literary criticism is the core of the whole sexist value system. The three propositions of Woolf's feminist Literary criticism and their contents are shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Three Propositions of Feminist Literary Criticism

Proposition	Overview	Purpose
The Angel and the Demon Woman	The women in male writers' texts are all distorted and repressed in different ways	Image Metaphor
Body Writing	After dismantling the image of women in male texts, feminism began to dismantle the image of women in female writers' texts	Returning to the feminine
Two Voice Words	It shows the rebellion of women writers against masculinity and the promotion of women's autonomy	Transcending Gender

To sum up, it can be seen that the proposition of feminist Literary criticism mainly focuses on angels and witches, body writing and dual voice discourse, and the ultimate main purpose is still to return to women's equal rights and demands to achieve dynamic equilibrium beyond gender.

##### 4.2 Bisexual Theory

The theory of androgyny was first proposed in Woolf's work "To the

Lighthouse". Unlike patriarchal societies where men and women present a state of opposition, Woolf proposed the concept of allowing men and women to cooperate. She does not always hold a negative and exclusive attitude towards men when looking at gender relations, but advocates women to resist the oppression and enslavement of women in a patriarchal society, which is a conscious state of transcending the Binary opposition between men and women and hoping to achieve the unity of mankind. The development process of Woolf's androgyny theory is shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Development History of Woolf's Androgyny

Perspectives	Content	Core
Theoretical Origins	The myth of "intersexuality" in the West Coleridge's idea of "intersexuality"	Western Mythology and Coleridge
The Opportunity of the Times	The Victorian Era and the Bloomsbury Cultural Circle The Victorian era brought about significant changes in the social status and lifestyles of men and women	The influence of the Bloomsbury cultural circle
Basic Connotation	The need to be both male and female in mind	The Duality of the Head

The development process of androgyny theory can be roughly and completely summarized from three perspectives, namely theoretical origins, historical opportunities, and basic connotations. Among them, the theoretical origins can be further divided into the historical origins of Western mythological stories based on "androgyny" and Coleridge's "androgyny" ideology based on ideological origins, both of which are the basis of the theory of androgyny. The opportunity of the times refers to the edification of Bloomsbury's Kulturkreis in the Victorian era and the promotion of the whole wave of feminist thought. The basic connotation refers to the androgyny of the diverse minds of both genders, and an excellent writer should possess both male and female characteristics in their minds. Woolf believes that it is absurd to blame any class or gender as a whole.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Against the backdrop of increasing gender conflicts in China, there is an increasing demand for research on feminism. The feminist criticism and feminist ideology aimed at equality in Woolf's novels have received great attention in the literary field. This article was based on feminist criticism



and theoretical analysis of female ideology. By analyzing feminism in "To the Lighthouse" and "A Room of One's Own", and deconstructing the reasons for the formation of Woolf's feminism, as well as analyzing the ideological practice of Woolf's feminism, it draws a philosophical reflection on gender cooperation and even androgyny. This article aimed to provide an accurate and profound research discussion on Woolf's feminist ideology and ideology through theoretical and practical research. Due to space constraints, there has been no further analysis of the limitations of Woolf's feminist thinking, and further exploration in this field would be conducted in the future.

## 6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper is a part of the key project of Hunan Provincial Department of Education, "Research on Virginia Woolf's Writing of Community of Destiny" (No. 21A0563), the project of Hunan Provincial Social Science Achievement Committee, "Research on the Ethics of Virginia Woolf's Novels" (No: XSP22YBC086), Hunan Provincial Department of Education's New Liberal Arts Research Project, "Research on the Reform and Development of Chinese Language and Literature Major in the Context of New Liberal Arts Construction" (No. 94, Xiangjiao Tong [2021]).

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