

The Commonalities of Ecofeminism Writing Between Hemingway and Faulkner

-- Based on the Interpretation of *Hills Like White Elephants* and *There Was a Queen*

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Abstract: Based on specific text analysis about Ernest Hemingway's *Hills Like White Elephants* and William Faulkner's *There Was a Queen*, this paper adopts the perspective of ecofeminism and specifically elaborates from the three aspects of the intimacy between nature and women, the alienation between nature and men, and the imparity between men and women, with the intention of exploring the commonalities in the ecofeminism writing wisdom of the two literary creators, who are identical representatives of loss of generation but shares adverse writing styles.

Keywords: Ecofeminism; Commonalities; Hemingway; Faulkner

1. Introduction

Hemingway is well-known for his refined and enigmatic iceberg theory, while Faulkner is a typical representative of stream-of-consciousness literature known for its obscurity and complexity, thus there is no denying that they have extreme discrepancies in terms of writing styles. However, as the representatives of the loss of generation in the 1920s, both of them, in the field of literary creation, must possess commonality in many aspects based on the specific background of that time. Therefore, this paper pivots upon one of those commonalities, namely ecofeminism writing, analyzing and categorizing it with the aid of the representative works of each of the two literary creators, so as to explore the potential common wisdom of the two in terms of ecofeminism writing.

Hills Like White Elephants is a masterpiece of Hemingway's dramatic revelation of his characters' psychological outlook through everyday dialogues. The existing studies are mostly centered upon the novel's narrative techniques, discourse studies and linguistics^{[3][4][5][8]}. Few scholars have explored it from the ecofeminist perspective. Accordingly, the other novel selected for analysis is Faulkner's *There Was a Queen*. It appears that this distinctive short novel, which stands out greatly without any male characters, has long been neglected. The number of related studies is comparatively small, which are mostly from the feminist perspective^{[2][9]}. Although there are fewer extant studies on this novel, a thorough reading of the novel reveals that some of the imagery interpretations and characterizations may also offer up evidence for extracting Faulkner's ecofeminism writing wisdom.

In conclusion, this paper starts from the distinct interrelationships among men, women, and nature, delving into the embodiment of each type of relationship and the causative factors for the formation, so as to categorize the two literary masters' commonalities in ecofeminism writing from the three aspects.

2. The Intimacy between Nature and Women

Subtly linking the destinies of nature and women, ecofeminist scholars argue that the two, as the Other under the logic of patriarchal domination, are able to empathize with each other and potentially establish an intimate relationship. By reading the two works of Hemingway and Faulkner, it is evident to ascertain that they excel at highlighting the typical representations of nature, such as mountains, countryside and flowers, which consistently appear in conjunction with the female characters. Both of them implicitly function as a community of destiny. Moreover, rich ink is used in both novels to depict the physical and psychological blows that the female characters in the "lost generation" endure, and in order to alleviate their melancholy and bitterness, they turn to nature to seek spiritual solace and an outlet for their emotions.

Ernest Hemingway dramatically constructs an intimate connection between nature and women in his ecofeminism writing. The novel throws the light upon the conversations between Jig and her husband, Hemingway devotes to describing the natural surroundings outside the

train, which is frequently coupled with Jig's psychological and emotional transformations. Initially, Jig follows her husband in his wandering life. His negative attitude towards her pregnancy makes Jig feel extremely disturbed. Sitting on the train, her eyes wander to the far-off mountains. At this moment, the nature represented by the countryside presents a dry, brown and dead scene of decay, just like Jig, who is overwhelmed by her wandering life and repressed emotions, is full of sorrow and melancholy. The natural environment externalizes her inner conflicts, and the two serve as mirrors, reflecting one another potentially forging a tacit link. However, despite her terrible circumstances, Jig manages to convince her husband to grant her wish to have a child instead of giving in to ceaseless depression. In her optimistic vision at present, the mountains remain appearing stunning through the trees, who represent the pure land unspoiled by mankind. Gazing upon the vibrant vista, Jig cannot help but envision a better life down the road when she has kids. She believes that much as the green fields in the mountains add charm, the imminent arrival of children will also bring optimism and hope into her life. But when there exists no agreement, her hopefulness eventually gives way to disillusionment, then turns to helpless obedience. She gazes at the far-flung valley, which has been dried up by human trampling. While sympathizing that human interference is gradually robbing nature of its vitality, she is also similarly sympathetic to her own incapacity to preserve the fetus in her womb. Hence, the desolation of nature is both a consequence of anthropocentrism and an externalized manifestation of patriarchal domination over women.

In *There Was a Queen*, nature imagery similarly accompanies the appearance of female characters. The most distinctive feature of this novel is Faulkner's skillful portrayal of three widows or the total absence of the father, which is rare in the writing of a male author. A frequent companion of Aunt Jenny, who is the archetypal woman, is the jasmine in the courtyard, an imagery that Faulkner deliberately emphasizes in the novel. The jasmine was carried by Aunt Jenny from the distant Carolinas for over fifty years. Transplanted from the Old South, jasmine not only represents a long tradition of the Old South, but has also been a part of the Sartoris family for a long time. Aunt Jenny, also from the Old South, possesses the power of similar traditions, and like Jasmine, she has taken root in the male-dominated Sartoris family, gradually rising to the position of head of the patriarchal household. Wrapped in the symbolic trappings of fatherhood, Aunt Jenny is forced to impose her suffocating desire for conquest and oppression on the young women of that family. In her case, she herself is perhaps conflicted and helpless. Therefore, in her long life, Aunt Jenny has been lonely and put her youth and emotional value on the jasmine flowers in the courtyard, in order to seek the power of healing from them, and to bring a ray of light and solace to her contradictory, gloomy and depressing life.

Women's proximity to nature supplies each other with healing power while progressively dissolving men's strong sense of domination and control. Despite being part of the "lost generation", the women can also take the initiative to build an intimate connection with nature, feel the changes that occur in it with all of their hearts, and are adept at utilizing nature to effectively soothe their low moods. On this basis, women and the nature are able to converse, empathize, and truly find peace. In a similar vein, Faulkner constructs the Sartoris family in the absence of men, and his female character grows up in the course of time to become the symbolic father. And nature, represented by the jasmine flower, offers inexhaustible comfort and spiritual support to the tormented and repressed woman throughout her long career. Being equally responsible for the role of nurturer, women and nature are inevitably intrinsically linked. The construction of the tacit relationship between women and nature reflects their shared wisdom in ecofeminism writing.

3. The alienation between Men and Nature

A contrasting understanding of men's state of being with nature is equally essential as the focus on women's intimate connection with it. Plumwood asserts that anthropocentrism and machismo are tightly linked with a rationalism that defines human beings themselves as male, while feminine, animal, and natural traits are seen as opposed to rationality, irrelevant to the nature of human beings, and rejected^[6]. As a result, traditional patriarchal societies have therefore endeavored to exploit the resources of nature that can serve their own development and growth. The following consequence are the increasing expansion of human desires and the scarring of the natural world. In this long-term relationship of subjugation and oppression, the marginalization of nature becomes increasingly apparent. As Beauvoir points out, in patriarchal societies, both women and nature appear as the Other.^[1] The indifference and detachment of men themselves become more and more evident. Therefore, a closer look at the alienating attitudes reflected in both works may provide another effective evidence for the construction of the ecofeminism writing wisdom of both masters.

In *Hills Like White Elephants*, the husband's overall attitude toward nature, as represented by the mountains and the countryside, is one of apparent unremittingness and indifference. As opposed to Jig's frequent sights of the far-off mountains while the train is traveling, the husband's primary concern is constantly convincing Jig to consent to an abortion, and he will cease at nothing to make this occur. It is clearly seen that the husband always prioritizes his own needs over those of others, and ignores the stunning natural scenery outside the window. Even when Jig compliments him on the surroundings, he merely accepts it with a nonchalant pass, which demonstrates how he marginalizes the nature. The man's direct gaze reflects his indifference to and subjugation of women and nature alike, and the negative attitudes that the

wife and nature endure from the man are mirrored. Hemingway's depiction of the barren landscape of the mountains and the indifference of the men is equally the outward manifestation of the patriarchal subjugation of women.

Concentrating on women's existential predicament at the intersection of the old and new eras, *There Was a Queen* highlights women's intimate relationship with nature while also contrastingly reflecting men's active seclusion from nature. Unlike the female characters' immersive experience of nature, the men almost completely withdraw from it. The novel initially explains that Aunt Jenny's father and husband were sacrificed on a tragic battlefield. When it comes to war, the negative consequences that spring to mind are more of the waste of manpower and resources, whereas these impacts are entirely driven by human self-interest. It is hard to acknowledge that, to an incalculable extent, war additionally implies a persecution of nature. The resources of war are taken from nature, but nature cannot provide a constant supply. At the same time, the destruction of land and the pollution of air by the smoke and fire of war is also incalculable and cannot be restored in the short term. Therefore, the death of men in war can be interpreted as a terrible price to pay for their indifference, alienation and destruction of nature. Faulkner calls on men to cut off their ties with nature, which will inevitably backfire on them, and that only by giving up their superior desire for conquest and discrimination, and by establishing a harmonious and intimate relationship with nature, can they secure a stable and long-lasting future.

Comparing to women's intimate relationship with nature, men always holds up the banner of rationality and enjoys a dominant position in patriarchal societies. Whether it is Hemingway or Faulkner's male character, they always maintain an attitude of indifference and alienation towards nature, and even put nature at risk of depletion in order to satisfy their own interests. In the materialistic 1920s in the United States, the society advocates rationalism to the maximum in the industrialized development, but neglects the moral ethics of caring for each other and nature. Men are unable to seek comfort from nature as women do to save their empty and helpless spiritual world, and their detached attitudes also prevents them from living in harmony with nature, which inevitably leads to a lose-lose situation. On the one hand, nature is gradually marginalized and othered in a patriarchal society, while at the same time, men struggle to endure a protracted crisis of uncertainty and confusion, becoming enmeshed in a deadly cycle of materialism and environmental degradation, and maintaining their dominant but incredibly hollow status as conquerors.

4. Imparity between men and women

Much of men's own strong sense of superiority stems from an inherent dualism that regards concepts such as masculinity and rationality as far superior to their complementary concepts such as femininity and emotion. One of the action goals of ecofeminists is to put an end to this long-standing male dominance tradition. This unequalized relationship is evident in the narratives of the two works examined here, and both authors deftly convey women's othered status from the oppressor's viewpoint by utilizing techniques like dialogue and body language.

The conflict between men and women presented in *Hills Like White Elephants* centers on whether or not to abort a foetus. Abortion is virtually a reflection of the biological differences between men and women. For Jig, abortion means that they need to abdicate her responsibility to reproduce life, then takes the risk of life and moral condemnation that this entails. But for the husband, abortion is merely a minor procedure. Jig holds the fetus in her womb as a treasure, as a continuation of her life while the husband regards the child as a burden, a hindrance to his future freedom and indulgence. When she is pregnant and eagers for her husband's love and care, she receives his indifference, deception and temptation. This apparent misalignment forces her to be progressively othered and marginalized.

In addition, patriarchal societies are sometimes characterized by the displacement of males by females^[7], which is vividly illustrated in Faulkner's works. All the males of the Sartoris family are invisible, except for the only little boy. But the deep-rooted patriarchal system and consciousness does not go up in smoke. The family desperately needs a symbolic father to sustain them in the future. Aunt Jenny is called upon to act as the father of the family. On the explicit level, Aunt Jenny, as the administrator and maintainer of order in the Sartoris family, will severely control the manners of the other women. She regards the development of the family as her unshirkable mission. When it comes to issues that are degrading to the family's reputation and honor, she utilizes all coercive means to solve the problem. On the implicit level, it is apparent that Aunt Jenny has imprinted herself as a patriarchal administrator. Her logic of thinking is typically patriarchal, and she does not even realize that her control and oppression of the young women in her family is the downside of the prevailing concepts of the time, but rather takes for granted the morality that she upholds as appropriate. This dual transformation, both explicit and implicit, makes Aunt Jenny compliment with the dominant patriarchal concepts of society, both physically and mentally, and establishes a long-lasting imparity between her and the other women.

The two works portray in great detail what eco-feminists regard as the usual tactics of male dominance, including seduction, deception and oppression. Within the specific realm of male existence, women are equated with tools to fulfill their desires, and free will is an illusion for women. More ironically, even in the absence of men in certain areas, the patriarchal system of domination, as set up in the story of *There*

Was a Queen, remains in place. The older, more powerful women may step up to the plate and assume the responsibility of maintaining the whole family, and in the process, the symbolic father continues to subjugate the younger generation of women with her existing thoughts and actions. As a result, women will never be able to escape from the unfair ideology of patriarchal society.

5. Conclusion

As a whole, the two novels can be regarded as masterpieces exploring the wisdom of Hemingway and Faulkner's ecofeminism writing. First, the most evident feature is the intimate and frequent connection that women have with nature. In constructing the specific plot of each novel, the two masters perform a fantastic job of presenting to the readers the scenario of women, who are marginalized under the patriarchal system, huddling together for warmth with nature. Diverse representations of nature frequently accompany the appearance of female characters, and these depictions of nature frequently offer women emotional solace and discursive value. In contrast, men's relationship with nature is one of alienation and oppression, which manifests itself in the form of male indifference to and rejection of nature and the unlimited exploitation of nature, such as the dedication to war, for the sake of the perpetuation of the general benefits of mankind. Furthermore, women in a patriarchal society are in a similar situation with nature. In conclusion, the analysis of specific works in this paper can categorize the ecofeminism writing wisdom of the two creators to a certain extent, so as to serve as a reference for the study of the commonalities between these two wildly disparate yet equally accomplished writers.

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