

# The Construction of Female Discourse Authority: An Analysis of *To the Lighthouse* from the Perspective of Feminist Narratology

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**Abstract:** *To the Lighthouse*, one of Virginia Woolf's masterpieces, has caught the attention of literary critics at home and abroad since its publication in 1927. Intensive studies have been made on its advanced feminist implication and unique narrative skills, yet few pay attention to the interaction of these two factors in the novel. Based on the theory of feminist narratology, the paper, through the analysis of narrative voice, narrative focalization and narrative speech in the novel, attempts to explore the effects of its feminist narration, namely how it uses narrative strategies to construct female discourse and establish female authority. The main argument of the paper is that *To the Lighthouse* is Woolf's intentionally planned narrative subversion of traditional male narrative and exhibition of her unique feminist consciousness. Woolf chooses to use the authorial voice to create a heterodiegetic narrator, laying the foundation for achieving a strong narrative authority. However, the modernist idea requires that the narrator cannot overtly present his or her voice to gain mighty authority. Thus, Woolf effaces the narrator's voice on the surface but retains it with the help of another two narrative techniques. Through the use of variable internal focalization, the authorial voice is kept indirectly by giving more chances to female characters to observe and speak. Through the use of free indirect speech, the authorial voice is preserved directly through being scattered in different characters' speeches. In this way, Woolf finally successfully maintains the feminist authorial voice and wins feminist discourse authority in the novel.

**Keywords:** Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, Feminist Narratology, Discourse Authority, Authorial Voice, Internal Focalization, Free Indirect Discourse

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## 1. Introduction

Virginia Woolf is considered to be one of the most important modernist novelists and female writers in the history of British literature. *To the Lighthouse*, published in 1927, is deemed one of Woolf's most profound and meaningful works. In the novel, Woolf draws on her family experiences to look into serious issues such as personal identity, interpersonal relationships, the meaning of war, etc.

Since its publication, it has tightly caught the attention of literary critics at home and abroad. Feminist study of the novel is the hottest field of research. A significant number of scholars have been attracted by this research topic. Derbyshire suggests that, as shown in the novel, it is possible that men and women achieve gender harmony as in the case of Mr Ramsay and Mrs Ramsay, who harbour different

opinions towards life but understand each other and live in harmony nonetheless [1]. Heilbrun appreciates the androgynous concepts conveyed in the novel [2]. Rutledge believes that through comparison, Woolf encourages her female readers to break traditional rules and become a modern woman like Lily Briscoe [3]. Jenkins remarks that Briscoe has been a paragon of defiant female creativity, revealing female relationship with the arts [4].

There are also a great number of scholars studying the narrative skills of the novel. Corner emphasizes the mysticism and atheism of Mrs Ramsay and Lily Briscoe throughout the narrative [5]. Minogue indicates that Woolf embeds the ideology of "nihility" in the novel through the characters' consciousness of death and abstraction, which is an issue that modernist writers usually pay attention to [6]. Sardin suggests that in this novel, Woolf makes use of the

stream of consciousness technique to depict the flow of the characters' thoughts, and reveals the trauma that the First World War has brought to people [7]. Similarly, Koppen proposes that Woolf utilizes comparison and stream of consciousness skills to present the true feelings of people [8]. Lovelock regards Woolf as the high priestess of modernism in the English novel and *To the Lighthouse* as her most successful novel [9].

However, they make their studies separately and few pay attention to the relationship between these two research topics. As the novel itself is unusually both a modernist and feminist work, it is meaningful to consider these two topics altogether. Thus, it is substantial to interpret the novel from the perspective of feminist narratology, which originates from the combination of narratological criticism and feminist criticism. In the 1980s, Susan Lanser is acutely aware of the possibility of combining these two theories and puts forward the idea of exploring feminist ideology by using the critical tool of narratology [10]. Later, she gives the name Feminist Narratology to the theory in one of her articles and expounds her views in another book [11-12]. In recent years, the theory has now become a popular sub-strand of post-classical narratology [13]. There is not only Lanser keeping developing the theory and providing new enlightenments, but also a group of young scholars working to apply the theory in a broader and larger corpus of material [14-16]. Inspired by previous researches at home and abroad, the paper seeks to provide a new way to interpret the novel by analyzing important narrative strategies in the novel, including narrative voice, narrative perspective and narrative speech, and arguing that Woolf uses modernist narrative strategies to express feminine consciousness with typical examples from the novel.

## 2. Narrative Voice in *To the Lighthouse*

Clarifying the narrative voice is the entry point of research based on feminist narratology. To make clear what type of narrative voice is used in *To the Lighthouse*, the first several paragraphs from different sections of the novel will be extracted and analyzed here respectively.

'Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow,' said Mrs Ramsay.

'But you'll have to be up with the lark,' she added.

To her son these words conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled the expedition were bound to take place, and the wonder to which he had looked forward, for years and years it seemed, was, after a night's darkness and a day's sail, within touch.... [17]

These two paragraphs are the opening paragraphs of section one. It is not difficult to observe that the narrator tells the story of "other people", namely Mrs Ramsay and James about what Mrs Ramsay says in the first paragraph, and what Mrs Ramsay thinks in the second paragraph. Thus, it can be concluded that the narrator is not a participant in the fictional world of Mrs Ramsay and James but exists in a separate ontological world. Hence, the narrator is heterodiegetic, and the narrative voice is an authorial voice.

'Well, we must wait for the future to show,' said Mr Banks, coming in from the terrace.

'It's almost too dark to see,' said Andrew, coming up from the beach.

'One can hardly tell which is the sea and which is the land,' said Prue.

'Do we leave that light burning?' said Lily as they took their coats off indoors.

'No,' said Prue, 'not if every one's in.'

'Andrew,' she called back, 'just put out the light in the hall.'

One by one the lamps were all extinguished, except that Mr Carmichael, who liked to lie awake a little reading Virgil, kept his candle burning rather longer than the rest. [17]

These paragraphs come from section two. The narrative voice used here is not personal since it is not the "I" who tells the story. However, it is quite confusing to tell whether the authorial voice or the communal voice is adopted here. It has the appearance of the authorial voice. The narrator here is heterodiegetic, telling readers what different characters in the story say and do. However, it also has some characteristics of the sequential speech in the communal voice because individual characters come to the foreground to narrate in turn. In fact, the voice here cannot be a communal voice. Lanser has given a further explanation to communal voice in her book: unlike authorial and personal voice, the communal mode seems to be primarily a phenomenon of marginal or suppressed communities [12]. Taking a closer look at the characters above, it can be found that they do not belong to a marginal or suppressed community, which usually refers to a group of children, women, the aged, or the disabled living in a particular area. The characters involved here include the male and the female, the old and the young, the strong and the weak. It is more appropriate to say they represent different communities in Britain.

What does it mean then, what can it all mean? Lily Briscoe asked herself, wondering whether, since she had been left alone, it behoved her to go to the kitchen to fetch another cup of coffee or wait here. What does it mean?—a catchword that was, caught up from some book, fitting her thought loosely, for she could not, this first morning with the Ramsays, contract her feelings, could only make a phrase resound to cover the blankness of her mind until these vapours had shrunk. For really, what did she feel, come back after all these years and Mrs Ramsay dead? Nothing, nothing—nothing that she could express at all. [17]

This paragraph comes from the last section. The voice adopted here is also an authorial voice. The heterodiegetic narrator tells readers what Lily thinks when she comes back to the vacation house of the Ramsay family. She went there ten years ago as a friend of the Ramsay family, but much has changed in the past ten years and elicits her meditation.

From the analysis above, it is confirmed that the authorial voice is applied in the novel. The reason is that the authorial voice has its natural advantages. Such a voice produces the structural and functional situation of authorship [12]. As long as the distinction between the implied author and a public,

heterodiegetic narrator is not textually marked, readers will have a disposition to equate them. Therefore, the authorial narrator possesses superior discourse authority in comparison with those in the other two modes. Not being a character in the world of the story, the narrator can gain authority by freely making comments on whatever happens in the fictional world. In the era of realist literature, many writers employed the authorial voice to gain discourse authority, among them George Eliot, one of the greatest realist writers.

However, in the era of modernist literature, Woolf cannot acquire discourse authority as conveniently as George Eliot. The use of authorial voice was not as free as before. The new “indirect and oblique” method proposed by modernist master Gustave Flaubert swept through the modernist literary world. This idea requires the narrator to hide himself or herself to the greatest extent and give readers the illusion that it is the character who tells the story. Extrarepresentational acts were denied, which is once a shortcut to gaining authority in realist literature. Just like Joyce wrote, the artist, like the God of the creation, remains with or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails [18].

Hence, Woolf faces a dilemma in her writing. She needs to make a choice between strong authority and wide acceptance of the novel. If she attempts to express her feminine consciousness and achieve a strong female discourse authority, it can be best conveyed in the authorial narrators’ reflections, judgments and generalizations which are directly addressed to the narratee. But if she undertakes those authorial acts overtly, the novel will not conform to the aesthetic value of modern literature and thus deny itself as a classic work. In the beginning paragraphs of each session discussed above, no extrarepresentation can be detected. The narrator, like a faithful reporter, gives readers a true account of what has happened. As for the narrator’s gender, age, occupation and opinions towards the characters, they are totally unknown to us. Thus, the answer to the riddle is that Woolf conforms to the modernist rule and erases the overt authorial voice. However, it does not suggest that Woolf gives up the experiment of constructing a female discourse authority through the novel. Further understanding about her approach to winning female discourse authority entails exploration of other narrative strategies employed in the novel.

### 3. Narrative Point of View in *To the Lighthouse*

(a) ‘It is a triumph,’ said Mr Banks, laying his knife down for a moment. He had eaten attentively. (b) It was rich; it was tender. It was perfectly cooked. (c) How did she manage these things in the depths of the country? he asked her. (d) She was a wonderful woman. (e) All his love, all his reverence had returned; (f) and she knew it. [17].

The paragraph above is extracted from section one of the novel. It is about Mr Banks’ response to the dinner prepared by Mrs Ramsay. In the previous paragraph, Mr Banks felt the

dinner was so boring that he preferred to stay in his apartment alone. His disappointment has been noticed by Mrs Ramsay, who tried to remedy the situation by choosing a piece of beef for him. Then come Mr Banks’ comments and actions in (a). (b) reveals the inner thoughts of Mr Banks. After that, Mr Banks asks a question in (c). (d) and (e) are again about his psychological activities. But finally, (f) is about Mrs Ramsay’s thoughts.

When it comes to the perspective applied in this paragraph, (a) is narrated from the narrator’s perspective. Mrs Ramsay has chosen a piece of beef for Mr Banks and is waiting for his response at this moment. (b) and (c) are narrated from Mr Banks’ view. Then, (d) is narrated both from the perspective of the narrator and Mr Banks. For the next two parts (e) and (f), the narrator draws a conclusion from his or her own perspective. Overall, the narrator seldom uses his or her own perspective in the novel. Instead, the narrator observes the world in the novel through different characters’ eyes in most cases. Thus, it is the variable internal focalization that is applied in the novel.

Desiring a female discourse authority, Woolf could have applied the omniscient authorial voice and zero focalization to deconstruct the male discourse authority in the literary world, but under the prevalence of the “indirect and oblique” method, she has to make a compromise. Woolf is well aware of the psychological effect of focalization and of the power of the controlling narrator who manipulates focalization [19]. She knows that the characters focalized can “know” and “judge” from their own perspectives. They can make reflections and comments. Although the narrator cannot speak for them, the characters can defend themselves. Thus, if the focalization is shifted to female characters in the novel, the private and the domestic space occupied by women, as well their innermost feelings and secret thoughts, would be open to readers. This can help construct female authority and retain the authorial voice.

However, if the story is told from the perspective of one or more female characters from the beginning to the end, the novel risks being resisted for its obvious intention to speak for women or being misunderstood as an autobiography which is a record of the writer’s personal experience. Adding some content in which male characters are focused can make the novel more easily accepted by readers who are tired of didactic feminist narrators. Thus, instead of the fixed internal focalization, variable internal focalization can satisfy Woolf’s need most.

Thus, in the novel, Woolf gives every character chances to be the focus, yet in total, female characters get more. Male characters are decentered, though not completely ignored, so the monologic patriarchal voice is diffused. The novel tells the story of the Ramsay family’s trip to the lighthouse. In the first part, *The Window*, Mrs Ramsay is the main focus character, though both Mrs Ramsay and Mr Ramsay are core members of the family and are equally important for the development of the plots. The second part is very short and is told from the perspective of the vacation house, so it will not be discussed in this paper. In the third part, *Lighthouse*, Mrs Ramsay has

passed away. Mr Ramsay becomes the most important member of the big family. He is also the leader in the trip to the lighthouse. Telling the story from his perspective is highly convenient. However, most of the time, the focus character is Lily Briscoe, a friend of the Ramsay family. Analyzing two paragraphs focalized through Mrs Ramsay and Lily Briscoe respectively can demonstrate the narrative effects.

But what have I done with my life?... They all sat separate. And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her. Again she felt, as a fact without hostility, the sterility of men, for if she did not do it nobody would do it, and so, giving herself the little shake that one gives a watch that has stopped, the old familiar pulse began beating, as the watch begins ticking—one, two, three, one, two, three.... [17]

This paragraph is extracted from the first part of the novel. What has been revealed here is Mrs Ramsay's attitude towards her role in the whole family. In a society dominated by men, women cannot speak out their voice by themselves in public space, including in literary works. Their voices are created by male writers. Even in the modernist era that is supposed to be open to the "feminine", the representation of the "feminine" has been most valued when a man created them, instead of a woman [12]. In men's writings, the Victorian women are "the angel in the house", a moral, yielding, domestic paragon. It is presumed that they are inferior to men intellectually and physically, so they should be satisfied with being confined to the home to exert a good influence on their husbands and children. However, Woolf insists that it is not true. She portrays a real image of women. On the one hand, women are not inferior to men. Mrs Ramsay has great interpersonal skills, which the men in the Ramsay family lack. Without the help of Mrs Ramsay, they cannot even sit together and have dinner harmoniously. On the other hand, women are not always satisfied with family life. In the novel, Mrs Ramsay is in any way a good wife and mother, but she will also get tired of the family life and desires to have her personal time.

Of course, Mrs Ramsay is still a traditional woman. Although she is aware of "the sterility of men", she regards getting involved in marriage and family as the duty of a woman. Thus, at the end of the paragraph, she gives in to the "old family pulse" and is ready to remedy the terrible situation. Despite all this, providing more chances for her to be the focus character can make the readers feel closer to her and understand the greatness and bitterness of a family woman. In this way, Woolf has already gained female discourse authority by deconstructing "the angel in the house", the isolated, static and one-sided image of women shaped by male writers.

Different from Mrs Ramsay, Lily Briscoe is a rare example of single female protagonist with more advanced female consciousness in canonized literature [20]. Through her perspective, Mrs Ramsay's domineering over others, Mr Ramsay's greediness for reverence, Tansley's prejudice for women and her own pursuit of art are presented. She hates both the dominating role of men and the traditional role of women. As a woman herself, she devotes her whole life to the artist career.

Quickly, as if she were recalled by something over there, she turned to her canvas. There it was—her picture. Yes, with all its green and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something. It would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed. But what did that matter? she asked herself, taking up her brush again. She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision. [17]

This is the ending paragraph of the novel. In this paragraph, Lily finishes her painting of Mrs Ramsay, while the Ramsay family finishes their trip to the lighthouse. Lily's painting is symbolic of her restoration of courage and pursuit of a new way of life for women, structurally and thematically corresponding to the family journey which can be interpreted as a spiritual, artistic and psychoanalytic reconstruction [21]. She is single. She does not have a child. She spends all her time on painting. Tansley once derided her aspiration. He told her that women cannot draw, but now her picture was done and finished. Mrs Ramsay once suggested that Lily must get married, but now Lily has found the meaning of her life in art, which is a representation of life with all its manifestations, an approach to the perception of beauty and satisfaction in life, no matter whether her painting "would be hung in the attics" or "be destroyed" [22]. By exposing Lily's self-conscious feminist voice to readers, Woolf gains female discourse authority successfully.

#### 4. Narrative Speech in *To the Lighthouse*

(a) With stars in her eyes and veils in her hair, with cyclamen and wild violets—what nonsense was he thinking? She was fifty at least; she had eight children. (b) Stepping through fields of flowers and taking to her breast buds that had broken and lambs that had fallen; with the stars in her eyes and the wind in her hair— He took her bag. [17].

In the paragraph above, Tansley is enchanted by Mrs Ramsay and helps her to take her bag voluntarily. (a) is about the flow of thoughts of Tansley. With a closer look at its form, it can be found that the inner thoughts are not quoted in the way the character formulated them, because the tense of predicate verbs is not present tense. In addition, there is no narratorial mediation in these two sentences. Therefore, the narrative speech applied in (a) can be defined as free indirect speech. (b) is about the actions of Mrs Ramsay and Tansley, rather than thoughts and utterances, thus it cannot be categorized as narrative speech.

Although this is just one paragraph extracted from the novel, it is truly representative. In fact, free indirect speech is frequently used in the novel. Espinola estimated that 44% of discourses in the book belong to indirect speech, and most of them are free indirect speech [23]. Grisot et al. remark that the skills of free indirect style are significant in the book, which are applied almost entirely to represent the character's voices and consciousness [24]. Moreover, Woolf does not use this

technique by coincidence. She writes in her diary: "I think I can spin out all their entrails this way; but it is hopelessly undramatic. It is all in oratio obliqua. Not quite all; for I have a few direct sentences [25]." The "oratio obliqua" here is the translation of free indirect discourse in Latin.

The reason why Woolf uses free indirect speech in the novel is also related to the preference of modernist literature as well as the writing purpose of Woolf. The modernist pursuit requires covering the narrator's overt authority, which is usually acquired by demonstrating authorial voice overtly. In this situation, free indirect speech is a clever technique. Since it does not possess a reported verb like "he said that" or "she thought that", nor does it retain the tense and pronoun in the original speech, it has the same outward appearance as the narrator's speech. It is hard to distinguish whether a free indirect speech is delivered by the character or the narrator, or both. Hence, it is a zone where dialogue is played out between the narrator and the character. It can set up two quite contrary positions: narratorial irony towards and distance from the focus character (if what said by the character is ridiculous to the narrator), or narratorial empathy towards the characters, which results in a more engaged reader response (if what said by the character is also believed by the narrator) [26]. With this narrative strategy, the narrator retains his or her voice whereby the novel gains narrative authority.

Thus, by using this narrative strategy, Woolf conserves the authorial voice. The narrator buries his or her voice in speeches delivered by different characters. For some characters, the narrator elicits antipathy from the readers. For others, the narrator draws sympathy from them.

(a) The extraordinary irrationality of her remark, the folly of women's minds enraged him. He had ridden through the valley of death, been shattered and shivered; and now she flew in the face of facts, made his children hope what was utterly out of the question, in effect, told lies. (b) He stamped his foot on the stone step. (c) 'Damn you,' he said. (d) But what had she said? Simply that it might be fine to-morrow. So it might. [17]

In this paragraph, Mr Ramsay thinks that his wife is too irrational. At first, he complains in his heart. Then, he even couldn't bear to scold her. But very soon, he realizes that he is too mean to his wife. In terms of the type of speech in this paragraph, (a), (c) and (d) are narrative speeches describing the thoughts and utterances of Mr Ramsay. Firstly, Mr Ramsay's thoughts in (a) are narrated in the form of free indirect speech. For one thing, it is an indirect speech. Judging from the past tense applied in it, the speech is not quoted in the way Mr Ramsay formulates it. For another, it is a free speech because no narratorial mediation such as "he thought that" can be detected. Secondly, (c) is narrated in the form of direct speech. The words "damn you" are exactly what Mr Ramsay said. And there is also the reported verb "said", one type of narratorial mediation, to remind readers of the speaker. Finally, (d) is again narrated in the form of free indirect speech.

To sum up, (a) and (d) in this paragraph are narrated in the form of free indirect speech. Technically, the voice can belong

to Mr Ramsay and the narrator simultaneously. As for (a), although Mr Ramsay has lost his temper and regards his dear wife as "extraordinary irrational" and "foolish", the writer owning a feminist consciousness would not agree. Through the eyes of her narrator, Woolf looks coldly from the sidelines at Mr Ramsay's breaking out. In this situation, the dual voice causes irony towards and distance from Mr Ramsay, reminding readers how ridiculous and inconsiderate Mr Ramsay is to get angry at just a few words from his wife. In addition, (ed) is the second thought of Mr Ramsay, and it is also the narrator's justification for her. Thus, influenced by the narrator's alienation from Mr Ramsay, readers will naturally be repulsed by his behavior and feel a stab of pity for his wife. And as the Ramsay family epitomizes numerous male-dominated families in the patriarchal society, if the novel cannot go that further to stimulate readers' resistance to the patriarchal system, it can at least stir up their reflection of the rationality of that system and awareness of the unfair situation women are in. In this way, Woolf has won female discourse authority through the novel.

(a) And so she went down and said to her husband, Why must they grow up and lose it all? Never will they be so happy again. And he was angry. Why take such a gloomy view of life? he said. It is not sensible. (b) For it was odd; and she believed it to be true; that with all his gloom and desperation he was happier, more hopeful on the whole, than she was. Less exposed to human worries—perhaps that was it. He had always his work to fall back on. Not that she herself was 'pessimistic,' as he accused her of being. Only she thought life—and a little strip of time presented itself to her eyes, her fifty years. There it was before her—life.... There were the eternal problems: suffering; death; the poor. There was always a woman dying of cancer even here. And yet she had said to all these children: You shall go through with it. To eight people she had said relentlessly that (and the bill for the greenhouse would be fifty pounds). [17].

In this paragraph, Mr Ramsay and his wife present different opinions towards the nature of life. Both (a) and (b) are narrative speeches. To be specific, the utterances of the couple are presented in (a) in the form of free direct speech. What they have talked to each other has been faithfully recorded. Then, the inward thoughts of Mrs Ramsay are disclosed in (b) in the form of free indirect speech, considering that the speech is given with the past tense and without narratorial mediation. Thus, double voices are contained in (b). On the one side, Mrs Ramsay's voice is clear. She explains the reasons for being "pessimistic" towards life. As a woman who has devoted her fifty years to saving money for the huge family, taking care of eight children, comforting her sensitive and suspicious husband, and even worrying about the poor and the weak in their community, she believes that the eternal problems of life are "suffering", "death" and "poor". Hence she is not willing to let her kids grow up and go through the bitterness of life. As for her husband, Mrs Ramsay suggests that he is "less exposed to human worries". The reason behind it is not given explicitly, but readers can well understand that his wife has taken good

care of all the family and given him no room to worry. On the other side, the narrator's voice is also embedded here. Depicting the image of an old, tired and helpless woman, the narrator shows sympathy for Mrs Ramsay. At last, the combined voice augments readers' empathy towards Mrs Ramsay and antipathy towards her husband, and ultimately contributes to the construction of female discourse authority.

(a) He was really, Lily Briscoe thought, in spite of his eyes, but then look at his nose, look at his hands, the most uncharming human being she had ever met. (b) Then why did she mind what he said? Women can't write, women can't paint—what did that matter coming from him, since clearly it was not true to him but for some reason helpful to him, and that was why he said it? Why did her whole being bow, like corn under a wind, and erect itself again from this abasement only with a great and rather painful effort?... [17]

In this paragraph, Lily is thinking about the words that Tansley has said to her. (a) is narrated in the form of indirect speech taking into account that the past tense and the tag clause "Lily Briscoe thought" are applied. Conversely, (b) is narrated in the form of free indirect speech because there is no narratorial meditation at all. Thus, (b) can be the thoughts of Lily and the narrator simultaneously. For one thing, considering that (a) is Lily's inner thoughts, it is highly possible that (b) is the same. In her inner thoughts, Lily persuades herself to disregard Tansley's insult—"women can't write, women can't paint." For another, the possibility of the reader's involvement cannot be excluded. In fact, Woolf has publicly advocated women to pick up their pens and write in her speech at the University of Cambridge [27]. While her lecture attracts a great number of audiences, addressing directly to the readers in the novel is impractical. But with the technique of free indirect speech, that will be acceptable. Through the narrator's voice, she can freely criticize the stereotypes about women and encourage Lily to "erect herself again". Therefore, the dual voice arouses readers' sympathy and calls for resonance and support. When reading this paragraph, readers would firstly feel sorry for Lily's difficult situation, then get attracted to Lily's new ideas towards women's careers. Finally, they will ask Lily's questions "why did women mind what others said" by themselves in the real world.

## 5. Conclusion

Written by Virginia Woolf, "synonym of both modernist literary innovation, gender politics and feminist aesthetics", *To the Lighthouse* is both "an example of a quintessential modernist text" and "a sobering picture of gender relations" [28, 4, 29]. With an aim to clarify the interactive relationship between the modernist and feminist nature of the novel, the paper applies the theory of feminist narratology to make textual analysis. It is discovered that Woolf adopts an authorial voice in the novel, through which the narrator could have achieved the most forceful discourse authority by making his or her voice explicit, namely making

extrarepresentational acts. However, this kind of domineering authorial voice has been discarded by modern critics and readers. Thus, to obey this rule, Woolf effaces the explicit voice of the narrator in the novel. On the one hand, she uses variable internal focalization, revealing Mrs Ramsay and Lily's perspectives, which are very close to that of the narrator, to retain the authorial voice. On the other hand, she uses free indirect speech frequently, which is a method to retain the authorial voice in a more direct way. Apparently, all the speeches are made by the characters. In fact, some speeches made by the characters are also comments from the narrator. Hence, Woolf finally successfully maintains the feminist authorial voice and wins feminist discourse authority in the novel. Hopefully, this paper will make a contribution to the understanding of the greatness of the novel.

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