

The Integration of Ecological Prose and Female Writing: A Multi-dimensional Interpretation of Ecological Narratives in Ai Ping's Works

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Abstract. Ai Ping is a representative writer of contemporary ecological prose in China. Her ecological prose embodies both ecological and feminist consciousness. By employing a distinctive female perspective as the starting point, it successfully achieves a profound integration of ecological prose and female writing. Based on the current status of domestic ecological prose research, Ai Ping's prose *Green Elegy*, and the collection of essays, *Hidden in the Vast Time*, this study focuses on the ecological narrative approach in her works for analysis. The research further reveals the unique value and significance of integrating ecological writing and female writing in her creation. Not only does it offer new insight for expanding the gender dimension of ecological prose research, but it also provides a narrative experience for the creation and research of contemporary ecological literature.

Keywords: Ecological literature, *Hidden in the Vast Time*, Ai Ping, Female perspective, *Green Elegy*

1. Introduction

In recent years, Ecological literature, as an emerging field of literary and cultural studies, has garnered increasing attention from the academic community. Ecological literature refers to works grounded in ecological holism that examine the relationship between nature and human beings and explore the social roots of ecological crises [1]. At the same time, this field breaks through the limitations of anthropocentrism in traditional literature. Significantly, it emphasizes the importance of the overall interests of the ecosystem and has outstanding features such as ecological responsibility, critical civilization, ecological ideals, and ecological early warning [2]. As an important branch of ecological literature, ecological prose not only focuses on the expression of ecological consciousness within the text but also deeply explores the complex relationships between ecological prose, nature, society, and culture. As a representative writer of contemporary Chinese border ecological prose, Ai Ping's writing is rooted in the local experience of the Hulunbuir Grassland. Her works are based on nomadic civilization, integrating Mongolian traditional ecological wisdom and a criticism of modernity into the texts. Her collection of essays, *Green Elegy* and *Hidden in the Vast Time*, are typical representative works of this style.

Therefore, this study examines Ai Ping's ecological prose from the integrated fusion perspective of female writing and ecological narrative. It aims to explore the dual textual characteristics of constructing ecological narrative and fusion writing. This article aims to fill the gap in the existing focus on Ai Ping's female perspective. By focusing on Ai Ping's works, this research seeks to fill a gap in the gender dimension of ecological prose research. It provides a new analytical framework for ecological literature research and serves as a narrative reference for contemporary ecological prose.

2. Literature review

Existing research analyzes Ai Ping's works and ecological literature from multiple perspectives. For example, Wang noted in her works that ecological essayists convey the unique charm and vitality of objects through extensive, systematic, and genealogical descriptions of physical properties. According to Wang, this approach provides readers with a broader worldview by exploring the ways of heaven and earth, as well as the ways of counterattacking people [3]. Scholar Liu pointed out that Ai Ping's prose works not only describe the philanthropic spirit of grassland mothers, the folk customs and beliefs of grassland herdsman, and the natural scenery of the grassland from a female perspective, but also showcases its profound cultural heritage and unique artistic charm [4]. Furthermore, Tang extended the historical dimension and argued that Ai Ping's prose embodies a distinct spirit of historical rationality, a profound sense of the connection between heaven and earth, and a strong sense of national identity. Tang emphasizes its significant role in deepening nature writing and promoting the construction of ecological civilization.

3. The natural gaze and life narrative from the female perspective

3.1. The formation of maternal perspective

Ai Ping was born in Hulunbuir, Inner Mongolia. The grassland landscape, yurts, animals, and multi-ethnic culture in her childhood environment influenced her cognition and emotions. These factors shaped her maternal perspective of love and compassion in her creations, making her works often focus on themes such as grassland, family love, and vitality [5]. Therefore, Ai Ping's ecological prose pays more attention to the female perspective and the narrative of nature and life.

3.2. Embodied expression of ecological trauma

In *Green Elegy (Snowy Night as Scheduled)*, Ai Ping uses the disappearance of poplar trees to metaphorically express her sorrow for the destruction of the natural environment. This highlights the importance of nature to human survival and spirituality, and calls for establishing a civilized society where human and nature coexist harmoniously. First, the author personifies ecological trauma as "maternal trauma". "My cradle, my mother, my city, like the ark of life, has been drained of blood and spirituality..." In this sentence, the author cries from the perspective of a "daughter" about the violence suffered by the "mother" body [6]. By linking Ai Ping the city to "mother" and the "ark of life", Ai Ping gives the ecosystem a concrete, perceptible, and emotional female body. Changing the act of cutting down trees from environmental destruction to blood and spiritual withdrawal from the mother body. The words "ageing", "withering", and "losing form" are used to describe the embodied pain that originates from women's most direct understanding of pregnancy, nourishment, and life maintenance [6]. At the same time, the collapse of the ecosystem is linked to the critical illness of the mother's body. This perspective shifts criticism from external data-driven arguments to an internalized physical and emotional crisis.

3.3. Mother-daughter bond and intergenerational protection

In *Green Elegy*, Ai Ping constructs an ecological ethics passed down from generation to generation, placing nature protection within the bond between mother and daughter. Discussions such as "The method she relies on is not genetic, nor should it be based on moral significance or textbooks, but the communication between leaf veins and blood vessels in the bright sunshine, the connection between life and life" [6]. And "She ran, jumped, hid in the green shade, and then flashed out like a deer and looked back with a smile..." and other descriptions of her daughter [6]. Ai Ping uses her relationship with her daughter as the core framework for thinking about the ecological future. She emphasized that ecological awareness cannot be imposed on the next generation through "textbook" preaching, but through personal experience in nature, thereby achieving a "connection between life and life". This maternal ecological wisdom holds that true protection originates from heartfelt love and recognition, and requires nurturing in childhood through close contact with nature. The author uses the description of her daughter's "deer-like" figure in the green shade to metaphorically depict the new life integrating with nature. Protecting poplar trees translates to protecting the childhood experiences and futures of the next generation. Ecological responsibility has evolved from a significant social issue into a concrete, compassionate act of maternal guardianship, an ethical commitment that must be fulfilled for the sake of future generations.

4. Integration of natural scene writing and female perception

4.1. Natural dialogue in perceptual language

Ai Ping employs the delicate language and perceptual narration of the female narrator to draw readers closer to nature through empathy, thereby infusing ecological writing with a delicate emotional texture and a unique aesthetic dimension. In Ai Ping's ecological prose, writing about natural scenes and female perception is not isolated from each other but forms a dual relationship of mutual achievement and deep integration. On the one hand, natural scenes such as grasslands and forests provide a concrete expression field for women's perception, offering a narrative carrier for their unique understanding of life, emotions, and relationships. On the other hand, female perception lends natural scenes a deeper meaning, transcending mere "scenery description" and transforming the originally static ecological picture into a dynamic narrative that carries thoughts about life.

In *The Look of Time Walking on the Grassland*, Ai Ping wrote: "This is a living grassland, an organism inseparable from man and nature. Man is in the embrace of nature, and nature is in man's life... Nature has long nurtured all things into flesh-and-blood fruits. It turns out that humans and every grass, tree, horse, and deer carry her will and temperature to thrive" [7]. This metaphor of an "organism" establishes a foundational disconnectedness. This connection is experienced directly by the narrator, who also describes: "I walked and stopped, almost with tears in my eyes, talking to the picture scroll-like grassland, and kissing the clear air." She further deepens this intimate dialogue through acute sensory awareness: "...I can even hear the sound of butterflies flapping their wings on the petals, and the sound of bats calling for their mates" [7]. The author regards herself as a node in the ecological network, listening to the fluttering wings of butterflies and the calls of bats, and feeling the pulse of other lives. The author employs visual, auditory, and emotional perception to convey a more authentic language for communicating with nature, relying on direct bodily and emotional reactions.

On a perceptual level, her works embody a feminine mode of perception. With "nurturing" as the core concept, "empathy" as the method, and "tactile temperature" as the medium, nature is re-

envisioned as a maternal existence, full of active care and inner spirituality. Ai Ping's focus on this perceptual dialogue is driven by a specific cultural context. Due to the influx of large numbers of nomadic people into cities, traditional nomadic societies are gradually disintegrating and transforming. Through the text, Ai Ping attempts to convey the authentic image of the grassland and the lifestyle of the herdsmen [8].

4.2. Construction of natural subjectivity under feminine metaphor

In the descriptions, "The wilderness is as quiet as a mother's body, and the clear water is like a married woman who doesn't want to leave", the author repeatedly uses "mother" and "married girl" as metaphors for the wilderness and clear water, thereby articulating a profound ecofeminist worldview [7]. The author also defines nature as "matrix" to emphasize its nurturing, sheltering and nourishing qualities, transforming it from an inanimate resource bank into a living, warm subject. By comparing the river to a "married girl who doesn't want to leave", she endows natural objects with human emotions and will, embodying the concept of "animism" and emphasizing the intrinsic value and subjectivity of nature. Furthermore, the author mentioned that it was inconvenient for her to drive and take photos, believing that photography could not capture the charm of the scene, but flattened its beauty [7]. Faced with the beautiful scenery, she undergoes a transformative experience of "blending", penetrated and altered by the beauty itself. She chooses to commit it to memory through her senses rather than intercept it through technology thus maintaining the intrinsic value of nature and his inviolable subjectivity.

4.3. Gaze and criticism of instrumental rationality

Ai Ping views tools like cameras, lenses, and other tools as instruments that "flatten" the three-dimensional, multidimensional, and spiritual nature. She characterizes the photographic gaze as a form of instrumental rationality that aims to capture, possess, and display nature.

The author describes that "when one sees incredible beauty, they will feel an inexplicable sense of depression, and a huge sense of loneliness because of the fragility of life. Language inevitably enters a desperate situation, and tears flow involuntarily." She does not shy away from showing those feelings of "vulnerability" [7]. Within a patriarchal culture, the emotional expression of "vulnerability" is often regarded as irrational and weak. However, from a feminist perspective, the feeling is a more real and authentic state of existence. This perspective acknowledges the paleness of rational language and the insignificance of individual life in the face of majestic nature. This opens the way to a more primitive, empathetic connection based on the body and emotions.

5. Literary significance from the perspective of ecofeminism

Zhu Xinfu, in *Research on American Ecological Literature*, noted that ecological narratives from a female perspective can provide people with a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between women and nature, as well as the artistic expression of this relationship in literary works [9]. Ecofeminism is a school of thought that combines feminism and ecology. It emphasizes the care of women's lives and opposes all forms of oppression, including gender oppression and oppression of nature.

Ai Ping's works deeply engage with ecofeminist thought and bring multi-dimensional enlightenment to contemporary ecological literature. Based on a female perspective, she moves traditional ecological prose and critical framework of ecological prose to incorporate a dual

reflections on both gender oppression and environmental oppression. She not only enriches ecological literature with narratives imbued with emotional warmth and a sense of life connection, but also advanced the field in terms of in depth of thought and humanistic care. This contributes to a more inclusive and sustainable discourse framework for ecological literature.

In terms of artistic techniques, Ai Ping employs delicate descriptions and innovative narrative strategies. Through metaphorical language, she shapes the subjecthood of nature, striking a balance between sensibility and rationality in ecological care, thereby enhancing the appeal and readability of the work.

Green Elegy, The Look of Time Walking on the Grassland, and other works are vivid artistic presentations that show the ecological beauty of the grassland. They confirm the effectiveness of her creative in conveying ecological care and broadening the scope of literary expression, thereby providing new ideas and examples for the creation and research of ecological prose.

Furthermore, her works also profoundly reveal the cultural roots of the ecological crisis, calling on people to pay attention to nature and protect the ecosystem. The intergenerational ecological ethics and maternal ecological philosophy constructed by Ai Ping provide ecological literature with narrative examples rich in emotional warmth and life connection, and expand the gender dimension of ecological prose research.

6. Conclusion

This study explores the ecological prose style and female perspective in Ai Ping's typical works, Green Elegy and The Look of Time Walking on the Grassland. Research suggests that Ai Ping seeks to expose the intricate connection between nature and humans through the traumatic portrayal of the ecosystem, the subjectivity of the natural system, and the metaphor of intergenerational relationships. The study also finds that, through personification and metaphor and other metaphors, Ai Ping attempted to use intergenerational relationships to symbolize the destruction of the ecological environment, thereby urging people to protect the ecological environment. Ai Ping's works provide innovative artistic writing techniques and ecological ethical perspectives for the development of ecological literature.

However, this paper focuses on Ai Ping's typical works and lacks a comparative analysis with other works of ecological prose. It also does not delve deeply into the historical background. Future research will further explore its deeper background and conduct a comparative analysis with other works on ecological prose.

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