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摘要

约翰·斯坦贝克 (John Steinbeck) 是美国 20 世纪最著名的小说家之一。他的代表作《愤怒的葡萄》可以说是美国 19 世纪 20 年代到 30 年代的一部历史史诗。小说真实再现了美国 20 世纪 30 年代的沙尘暴，警戒人们保持生态平衡的重要性。小说以乔德一家为例，叙述了被剥夺了土地的农民在前往加利福尼亚的过程中如何受农场主的压迫，又如何团结在一起。小说也描述了乔德一家由各个成员之间的相互独立到最后相互依赖的过程。笔者认为，作者在这部小说中建构了一个理想的世界秩序：人与人之间相互平等，在这个共同的生物圈内，要相互依赖才能达到平衡状态。

本文将从生态女性主义的角度解读此小说。在以往的文学研究中，“妈”一直以来被认为是被塑造的最成功的女性，有的批评者甚至认为斯坦贝克重现了母系氏族社会，然而，笔者认为妈仍是受男性压迫的对象。在“妈”细心照料一家人的背后，她接受男权主义对男女的社会分工，认为女性就是要做饭，看孩子，照顾老人，尽管妈是一家的主心骨，她甚至没有一个名字，她的发言权也在男性的发言权之后；此外，罗莎夏的被弃和奥尔对女性的玩弄说明女性在这部小说中仍处于受压迫和弱势的地位。

生态女性主义认为，男性对女性的压迫和对自然的压迫之间有一定的联系。生态女性主义号召结束一切形式的压迫，包括性别、阶级、种族之间的压迫，倡导建立一种人与人、人与自然之间和谐相处的新型关系。笔者认为，该论文的创造新价值在于用女性生态主义的角度去解释小说中男对女、农场主对佃户、资产阶级对农民以及人类对非人类（大自然和动物）的压迫，并彻底地找寻这些压迫之间的联系——男性中心主义，对这种压迫逻辑的根源进行分析探讨。该论文旨在为斯坦贝克《愤怒的葡萄》的研究提供一个新的视角并能对增强人们的环保意识有所贡献。

关键词： 生态女性主义，《愤怒的葡萄》，和谐共处，相互依赖

ABSTRACT

John Steinbeck is one of the most famous novelists in the 20th century America. His masterpiece The Grapes of Wrath is a vivid representation of a great historical epic of America from 1920s to 1930s. The book truly reproduces the sand storm in America in 1930s, and warns people of the importance of keeping ecological balance. The novel takes the Joad's family as an example and relates the land deprived farmers' westward journey to California. It depicts how the landowners oppress them and how the farmers hold together in the course of their procession. The novel describes the transformation of the relation among the members of the Joad's from independence to interdependence. I hold that John Steinbeck is trying to establish a new ideal world order in the novel, namely, the equality among human beings. And in the common biosphere, only through interdependence could all the livings achieve the state of balance.

This thesis will analyze this novel from the perspective of eco-feminism. In the previous literary studies, Ma is considered to be the most successful female image that had ever been made. Some critics even think Steinbeck has recurred the maternal society, however, as far as I am concerned, Ma is oppressed by the men and is the victim of a

patriarchal society in the novel. She accepts the social distribution to men and women, and believes that women are born to attending the family, and doing all the housework. Though she is the mainstay of the family, Ma does not have a name of her own, and her voice is behind that of men. What's more, Connie's desertion of Rose of Sharon and Al's philandering to women all indicate that women are in a disadvantaged position and they are under oppression.

Eco-feminism believes there is a connection between all forms of oppression and calls on to end the oppressions, which includes the oppression among gender, class and racial, and proposes to build up a new mode of relation advocating a harmonious relationship between men and women, human beings and nature. This thesis will adopt the perspective of eco-feminism to interpret the oppression between men and women, land owners and farmers, human beings and other non-human beings, and seek the connection among these oppressions---androcentrism, and make an analysis of the source of the oppression logic. The study aims at enhancing people's consciousness of the significance of preserving the environment, enabling a new perspective in Steinbeck study and making some contribution to the Chinese eco-feminism study.

KEYWORDS Eco-feminism, The Grapes of Wrath, Coexist in harmony, Interconnectiveness

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Introduction

John Steinbeck (1902-1968), a great novelist in the 20th century America, is a milestone in American literature. Throughout his life, he published over 30 books all together, including novels, short stories, journals, essays, film script and articles in newspaper and magazines. Steinbeck is widely read both at home and abroad. While his works have achieved great success, they also receive heavy criticism. Steinbeck used to unite his works with people, and believed that “literature could unit people and help them overcome their most enduring fears and troubles” (Schultz vii). The Grapes of Wrath is the masterpiece of John Steinbeck, which won him the Nobel Prize and established his reputation as a proletarian writer.

0.1 An Introduction to Steinbeck’s life and the background of The Grapes of Wrath

Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California in 1902. His father was a miller and his mother a teacher. Under the influence of her mother, he was fond of reading when he was young. He paid special interests in The Bible, Paradise Lost, and the works of Flaubert, Gorge Elite and Thomas Hardy. His favorite book was Morte

d'Arthur, which exerted a life-long influence on him. In his middle school years, he contributed to the school newspapers, and this action lasted to his university years. In 1919, he got into Stanford University as an English major, but left in 1925 without a degree. After that, he did certain laboring works to maintain his life while at the same time he continued to practice writing.

In 1929, Steinbeck published his first works---- Cup of Gold. However, this novel did not win him success or money. But early in Cup of Gold, we can see “the early use by Steinbeck of the personification of landscape” (Simmonds 7), the technique which Steinbeck employed a great deal in The Grapes of Wrath. Simmonds believes, this novel is a “short step to Steinbeck’s most profound philosophical preoccupations with man’s intrinsic relationship with the land on which he lives” (Simmonds 7). The formation of Steinbeck’s ecological ideas, which run through nearly all of his works, will be introduced in the following part.

Subsequently, Steinbeck published----The Pastures of Heaven and To a God Unknown. But his fame as a writer was established after the publication of Tortilla Flat: he became the idol of millions of people. The Dubious Battle followed the next year. In 1937, Of Mice and Men received the best evaluation that Steinbeck had ever got and he himself was selected as one of the “Ten Outstanding Figures” in America. In the same year, the fiction was adapted and put its first performance in Broadway, which received high praises among the critic circle. The Grapes of Wrath was published in 1939, and later it won the Pulitzer Prize in America in 1940 and the Nobel Prize in 1962. In the later period of Steinbeck’s writing, he produced The Red Pony, The Pearl, The Winter of Our Discontent, America and the Americans, etc. Some of his works were adapted into films and plays, all of which received great success.

The Grapes of Wrath relates a story about the land-deprived tenant's westward journey to California. The fiction takes the Joad's family as an example, depicting the oppressions they suffer from the moment they are driven out of the land where they have been living for generations till they get to California, and how the farmers hold together in the process of being exploited. The novel describes how the relation among the member of the Joad's family changes from independence to interdependence as well. As far as I am concerned, the author is trying to establish a new ideal world order in the novel, namely, the equality among human beings, and in the common biosphere, only through interdependence could all the livings achieve the state of balance.

The novel is a realistic piece of work. In preparing The Grapes of Wrath, Steinbeck planed a three-week travel to the FSA camp in Gridley with Tom Collins—one of the people the novel is partially dedicated to, who was currently in charge of the camp. During the trip, they went all the way to Oklahoma, he “interviewed as many migrant workers as he could and he even picked Collins's brain for stories.” (Parini 239) Beyond these, the two friends even worked at the Weedpatch camp. As they could not make the truck through the road, they set out there on foot. Once there, Steinbeck worked to “help the sick and dying for two days without rest” (Parini 245). Steinbeck also kept a journal to record his own experiences. The very experience provided Steinbeck a keen insight into the real life of the migrant farmers. The very depiction of the poor conditions of the migrant workers caused a big dispute.

In addition, the Dust Bowl in The Grapes of Wrath was a real one as well. Steinbeck based the depictions of the Dust Bowl on the sand-storms happened many times in the southern plain of America. According to the archives in the plain area,

take those sand storms whose visibility is less than a mile as an example, they happened 40 times in 1935, 68 times in 1936, 72 times in 1937 and 61 times in 1938. The condition was quite severe. The formation of the sand storm takes 50 years. Stock raising was the first development the Whites took after their arriving at the plain. When the stock raising was at its best time, the amount of the stocks was 4 times surpassing the supportability of the land. The land reclamation in the 1980's contributed to the breaking down of the ecological system as well. Both of the behaviors led to the final Dust Bowl in the 1930s. In the novel, we could also see that the farmers know it is themselves that cause these disasters; they know it's the cotton that "sucked the blood of the land", and they know the ecological disaster is due to their own behaviors.

0.2 The Formation of Steinbeck's Ecological Views

Since eco-feminism is the combination of feminism and ecology, it is therefore necessary to introduce Steinbeck's ecological ideas. To trace the formation of Steinbeck's ecological ideas, we cannot avoid mentioning Steinbeck's friendship with Edward Ricketts. In 1930, Steinbeck met Edward Ricketts in the waiting room of a dentist according to his own words. The two men immediately became close friends. Edward Ricketts was a marine biologist, and he played the role as Steinbeck's philosophical and literary mentor (Wang 17) for over 18 years until his accidental death. As Richard Astro remarked in his study of the friendship between Steinbeck and Edward Ricketts, he wrote "no analysis of Steinbeck's world view, his philosophy of life, can proceed without a careful study of the life, work, and ideas of this remarkable human being who was Steinbeck's closest personal and intellectual companion for nearly two decades" (Parini 130). Edward recommended

books about biography and ecology to Steinbeck, and he crystallized the relationship between human beings and the natural world which embodies a lot in the works of Steinbeck. Under the influence of Edward Ricketts, Steinbeck “believed passionately that human kind had to fit within the large communities of living things, being conscious of its ‘organismal’ place in the scheme of creation”. (Parini 5) And Parini deems that in some way, Steinbeck is “a founding father in ecological thinking, viewing all parts of nature as a united whole and recognizing that the existence of any single part is intricately dependent upon all other parts” (Parini 5). And this characteristic was especially obvious in The Grapes of Wrath.

0.3 Criticism on Steinbeck and The Grapes of Wrath

The recognition of The Grapes of Wrath was a long and brambly one. It was not until 10 years later after Steinbeck entered the literary circle were his works treated seriously. The Grapes of Wrath was either praised as the best novel of the time or criticized for its language and organization. Yet, the circulation of the book surpassed the bestseller —Gone with the Wind at that time. Peter Lisca describes it as “a phenomenon on the scale of a national event. It was publicly criticized and burned by citizens; it was debated on national radio hook-ups; but above all it was read.” (Lisca 77). The novel won Steinbeck the Pulitzer Prize and opened him the chance to be elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

Some considered it as a communist propaganda and even regarded it as a “proletarian novel” (Tedlock xxxiv), “that aroused people to fight against the unbearable mortification” (McElrath 167). As for this, it was banned for a while. Edmund Wilson deemed that Steinbeck “compared human beings to animals... the inclination of Steinbeck’s animalization are a flaw in the writing of his descriptions

of human beings” (Wilson 42). Edmond Magni thought, “Because of the broken up of the syntax and the inexactation of the vocabulary,” Steinbeck’s “diction was strangely limited” (Tedlock 225).

In 1958, The Wide World of John Steinbeck got published. This is the first time researchers use Steinbeck’s letters to corroborate his writings. Peter Lisca made an intensive reading of Steinbeck’s works from the approach of New Criticism. He deems that “the main achievement of Steinbeck lies in the new dimension he endured with naturalism” (Lisca 152). The 1950s and 1960s was the high time of archetype criticism which also exerted an influence on the study of Steinbeck. According to its view, the mythology and symbolism used in Steinbeck’s works expressed Steinbeck’s viewpoints that all the lives were holy; the entire creature was worth being valued.

The scale of the study of Steinbeck in 1980s was not as large as before, though, it developed in a wider range. Criticism noticed that the intense relation between the East and West was deep in Steinbeck’s ideology.

As a winner of the Nobel Prize, for decades The Grapes of Wrath has been interpreted by plenty of scholars from different perspectives, namely, the theme of the novel, the biblical allusions and symbols, the style of the novel, the transcendental ideal overflowed in the novel, feminism, the narrative structure and inter-chapters in the novel, last but not the least, the ecological aspect.

Steinbeck and the Environment: Interdisciplinary Approaches published in 1997 opened the ecological study of John Steinbeck. In this book two theses studied The Grapes of Wrath. One is Natural Wisdom: Steinbeck’s Men of Nature as Prophets and Peacemakers, the other is Steinbeck’s Ecological Polemic: Human Sympathy and Visual Documentary in the Intercalary Chapters of The Grapes of

Wrath). The former analyses how Casy draws wisdom from the nature, like Jesus in the wild, and apprehends “may be all I love is all the men and women...” (Steinbeck 47). The latter used many photos to prove the misery of the migrant farmers, and deems that the social needs of human beings interdependent with the needs of a healthy earth.

At home, a great number of the ecological reading of The Grapes of Wrath appeared. They mainly criticized “anthropocentrism”, industrialization, and the social, economic and political resources of ecology crisis. Some theses analyze the ecological views of Steinbeck’s and the embodiment in the novel, the importance of interdependence among nature, men, and women; some interpret the novel from various branches of ecology, namely, natural ecology, social ecology and spiritual ecology.

There are two theses which illustrate from the eco-feminism angle. One is Rapes of Earth and Grapes of Wrath: Steinbeck, Ecofeminism and the Metaphor of Rape by Gudmarsdottir, and the other is All That Life is Holy by Dong Lina from Hebei University. Gudmarsdottir deems that eco-feminism should stay away from the illusion which compare women to nature, the personification only intensify the patriarchy dualism which deems that women are inferior to men. Gudmarsdottir explains from three aspects about what “rape” means in The Grapes of Wrath: the green apocalypse, the ecological rape and earth mother. He believes in the western literature, under the influence of The Bible there is a tradition of revelation (or apocalypse). Ecological rape refers to the social, economical and ecological disasters which have been brought by sand storms, as a case in point, plough with a tractor is a kind of ecological rape. Earth mother mainly analyses the ending—Rose of Sharon’s nurse to a strange man.

All That Life is Holy focuses on the connection between women and nature, discusses how in a patriarchy society, men supplant both nature and women as “other”. Then through the analysis of Casy’s transcendence and Ma’s and Rose of Sharon’s care to nature and men respectively, the novel depicts them as Goddess. Lastly, the author analyses the cooperation and interdependence between men and women, and between men and the environment, expresses her idea that partnership and harmony are important to human survival.

Chapter 1 Eco-feminism: Formation, Definition and Main Idea

The word “eco-feminism” was first coined by French feminist Françoise d’Eaubonne in her book Le Feminism ou la Mort in 1974. Eco-feminism was first appeared as a movement allying with the environmental protection movement. It proposes that nature and feminism should be integrated into one, as eco-feminism “is not only feminism, but also ecologist theory, as well as a multi-culture perspective”. On one hand, it succeeded the tradition of feministic theory, which proposes diversity and respect of the difference, deconstructs dualism men/women, culture/nature, reason/emotion; on the other hand, it absorbs the essence of eco-criticism, whose main idea is the liberation of life, opposition of oppression, the pursuit to the harmony between human beings and the nature. Eco-feminists deem that among the bio-circle, human beings and nature are interdependent to each other, and so does the relationship among human beings. Eco-feminists take the construction and promotion of the female culture as the basic solution to solve ecological crisis. Meanwhile, it raises its criticisms from the gender oppression to any kind of oppression. Furthermore, it digs deeper in “anthropocentrism”. Eco-feminists deem that the essence of anthropocentrism is androcentrism.

Eco-feminism provides a new perspective in rereading the classics. For instance, Gone With the Wind, Sister Carrie, The Rainbow, the poems of Wordsworth. Beyond this, a number of the non mainstream works find a new way to express them as well.

The representatives of eco-feminists include Rosemary Ruether, Susan Griffin, Vandana Shive, Carolyn Merchant, Dorothy Dinnerstein, Karen Warren, Gaard, Val

Plumwood, Judith Plant, Ynestra King, etc. With the development of eco-feminism, several branches came into being, which include culture eco-feminism, social eco-feminism, free eco-feminism, radical eco-feminism, socialism eco-feminism, third world eco-feminism and so on.

It was not until 1990s that eco-feminism finally earned its reputation in the field of literary research. The literary researchers employed eco-feminism theory into literary critics.

1.1 The Formation of Eco-feminism

In the 17th century, Bacon proposed that “Knowledge is power”, and deemed that human beings could rein everything: human bodies, medicine, machine, etc. Descartes proposed “I think, therefore I am”, establishing human beings as the self-conscious rational objects, thus human beings became the central existence that represents God. They thought optimistically that there was no limit to the development of science. Human beings, who process reason and knowledge, could find out ways to know and rein nature. All these ideology built up a firm frame which holding that human beings were the dominant of the world.

As a result, when human beings stepped into the era of industrialization, the development mode upholding develop at the price of sacrificing nature and environment started. Taken themselves as the dominant, human beings did everything at their own will. Therefore, the shortage of resources, environment pollution and ecological crisis came one after another, threatening the life quality of human beings. A number of intellectuals, thus, called on people to preserve the environment. Women actively participated in environment protection. Patrick

Murphy wrote that in its early stage,

Ecofeminism is a practical movement for social change arising out of the struggles of women to sustain themselves, their families, and their communities. These struggles are waged against the 'maldevelopment' and environment degradation caused by patriarchy society, multinational cooperation, and global capitalism (Murphy 2)".

In 1980, "Women and Lives in Earth: A Congress of Ecofeminism in 1980s" was held in Amoster, America. A wide range of women participated in the meeting, and had a heated discussion on feminism and ecology, and clearly connected them together. The organizer Ynestra King pointed out that "ecofeminism is the integration and unification of the theory and practice, it insists that all the species that with life force possess a unique strength and complete meaning" (Ynestra 5).

In terms of academic discourse, and attention within the university, at least in the United States, ecofeminism was initially discussed almost exclusively in departments of philosophy and women's studies and on the fringes on the environmental studies, where any inroads made by ecofeminism were almost allied with ecology...in more recent years, ecofeminism has begun to turn up in other departments, such as criminology, in conjunction with environmental justice in terms of both racial and gender oppression...cultural studies...and English departments, in terms of women's and environmental literatures."(Gaard 5)

In 1990s, ecofiminism finally made itself known as a component of literary criticism. Young academics who graduated from the above-mentioned department started to practice analyzing the existing literary works from this perspective, thus opened a new way in the interpretation of literary critics, making ecofeminism one of the most popular perspective of nowadays literary study—finally comes the spring of ecofeminism.

1.2 The Content of Eco-feminism

In literature circle, women are “naturalized” and nature is “womanized”. Men compare women either to a kind nature or a cruel one. It’s all in men’s hands and according to their will. Both of the two inclinations reflect men’s aesthetics and needs.

Ecofeminism holds that there is a connection between the oppression of nature and women. It is considered as a further development of deep ecology. What is different from deep ecology is that ecofeminism criticizes androcentrism instead of anthropocentrism. Ecofeminism deem that in human beings’ reigning over nature, it is actually men, rather than women, who hold the rein. Women, as well as nature, are both the victims of men’s domination. In the course of the development of western civilization, nature was considered as “other”, without right to speak for itself and to be conquered and dominated. Natural resources were explored to serve for the needs and purpose of human beings. While the needs of the nature, were ignored by the profit-oriented human. Human, or more accurately, men, took themselves as the mater of nature, and everything. The same thing can be said of women. In the course of the development of human civilization, women were pushed aside as “the second sex” (Beauvoir 12), as “other”, and as the secondary citizen. Women’s task is limited into a house, doing tasks about raising children, cooking, washing, cleaning ect. Ecofeominism deems that both of these were rooted from androcentrism, which consideres both nature and women as objects to be reined. They find the connection between men’s rein over nature and women.

Ecofeminism involves a critique of the white Western patriarchy culture, dualism such as self/other, man/woman, culture/nature, human/animal etc. Another important point of ecofeminism is the criticisms on modern science. From 16th to

18th century, the central status of nature was shaken. Science mode and free ideology were established on the basis of the submission to men's will, surpassing the dependence to nature and extricating human beings from natural energy, we can say that the mode of European science is patriarchy, anti-nature and colonial.

Ecofeminism criticizes the results of modern industry and market-oriented economy. It criticizes the terrible sequence from uncontrolled development related to capitalism, technology and process of the society. In one word, it criticizes the unlimitedness to development, which was upheld high in the past 200 years. Ecofeminists call to get back to the ecological balance before industrialization and overpopulation.

The most significant contribution of ecofeminism is as Starhawk claims that "ecofeminism challenges all relations of domination. Its goal is not just to change who wields power, but to transform the structure of power itself" (77). Ecofeminism considers that there is a close relationship between the domination of women and the domination of the natural environment (Cudworth 6). If women want to change their status, the harmonious development among the bio-circle is needed to oppress against all kinds of domination and oppression. Women should take the liberation of nature, women and ecological crisis together as one goal. Without the liberation of each one of them, there is no absolute liberation of all.

As Ynestra King put it, ecofeminism bases itself on the following principles: As women are believed to be closer to nature, the Western industrial civilization's hatred to nature interacted with the hatred to women; Life on earth is rather an interconnected web than hierarchy, human beings created the hierarchy and used it in the relation between human and nature, so ecofeminists aim to show the connection between all forms of domination; a balanced ecosystem must maintain

diversity and oppose all forms of domination and violence (Ynestra 225).

To ecofeminism, interdependence is an important concept. It stresses the idea that human beings can not live without nature and other livings. Therefore human being should abandon the anthropocentrism ideology, adopt the new ideology that human beings are independent to nature and other livings.

In a healthy and balanced ecosystem, all the livings are interconnected to each other instead of dividing the nature into dominating grade and to be dominated grade. Ecofeminism claims that the interdependence between human beings and other livings, men and women should replace the precious dominating mode.

One significant characteristic of ecofeminism is the principle of seeking connection. It emphasis not only the connection between the exploration of nature and oppression of women, but also its close relation with race oppression, racism and colonialism.

In conclusion, ecofeminism criticizes modern science, development, and the western patriarchy culture. Ecofeminists believe there is a close connection between the exploration of nature and the oppression of women. The source of the oppressions comes from the western patriarchy ideology. Ecofeminism calls on to unchain all forms of domination and establish an interdependent society.

The eco-feminism literary texts refer to those “texts exhibit nature’s and women’s activities, place and fate.” (Xie 279) The Grapes of Wrath related the situation on a true basis when the Dust Bowl came. A great deal of the description of the Dust Bowl and the earth after the Dust Bowl are abundant in the text. So were the women’s fate and place in the westward journey to California. Therefore we can say, this novel includes both the nature and women’s place and fate. Therefore it is a proper text to be interpreted.

Chapter 2 A Critique to the Unlimited Development and Capitalism

The key idea of ecofeminism is to call an end to all forms of domination. In The Grapes of Wrath, Steinbeck shows various forms of domination, which include the domination of men to women, nature and animals and the oppression among human beings. All of the dominations come from one and the same source: patriarchy ideology. Karen Warren pointed out there is a kind of conceptual structure which sources from the patriarchy ideology. The conceptual structure divides the individual from up to down in moral, and presumes the “up” type should dominate the “down” type and thus proves the rationality of human beings’ dominance to nature, men’s dominance to women (Warren 97).

As one component of ecofeminism, the critique to the development is shown in the first few chapters in The Grapes of Wrath. The industrialization brings to the women dual oppressions, women suffers more than men. As they leave the place their ancestors have been living for generations, women meet more difficulties than men, for instance, in looking after the family. Take the two women in Joads as an example. Firstly, Rose of Sharon, as they leave their hometown, her husband leaves at the time when she mostly needed to be taken care of and loved. Bearing a child is the hardest thing for a woman, and Connie just walks away from his wife. Lack of husband and enough nutrition, Rose of Sharon born a dead baby---nearly the most pathetic thing for a woman! Were Connie had not left her and she had been at home and been taken good care of, such things would not have happened. The second one is Ma. We can see from the fiction that the most unbearable thing for Ma is seeing

the family falling apart. It would be simple and easy to keep the integrity of the family if they had not been exiled. However, during their westward journey, Noah chooses to leave the family, and goes away along a river. Tom finally leaves the family as he kills the man who has beaten Casy to death. Winfield eats too many peaches as they do not have enough food to eat and effuses seriously. And Ma has to take care of Rose and Sharon as well. Leaving one's home brings more difficulty for women in taking care of the family. Washing cloth and vegetables is the basic thing for living, yet, on the journey, Ma has to pray for the opportunity to wash, "I pray God we gonna be let to wash some clothes. We ain't never been so dirty like this. Don't even wash potatoes 'fore we boil them" (Steinbeck 255).

2.1 Various Kinds of Oppression in The Grapes of Wrath

The main content of ecofeminism is to seek for the connection among various kinds of domination. In the novel, Steinbeck showed the readers a number of domination, the broken balance, etc. The various oppressions include men's domination over women, nature, animals, and the oppression among people.

2.1.1 Men's domination over women

In the novel, Ma is considered by much criticism as the most successful women that were ever figured, as far as I am concerned, in the novel, women are the oppressed objects by men. Ma is of no exception. As Chodorow said, the role that women take as mothers in social distribution is universal and permanent (Chodorow 3). And Huffer's expression is sharper, she said, "under the patriarchy system, being

a woman means to be a mother” (Huffer 48). It seems that women possess little status in the novel. In the beginning chapter, sand storms destroy the corn, instead of pay attention to their own feeling; the women “studied the men’s faces secretly, for the corn could go, as long as something else remained (Steinbeck 6)”. After the faces of the men become “hard and angry and resistant”, the women know “it was all right...and knew deep in themselves that no misfortune was too great to bear if their men were whole” (Steinbeck 6). In the very beginning, the author shows a kind of patriarchy ideology roots deep in the minds of women. Women need to depend on men to keep things going on. They accept the division which puts men in the central status and women to be the subordinate role. Men are the mental support, as long as men are good and resistant, in their opinions; they could bear and conquer anything.

In Chapter 5, the owners come and try to drive the tenants out of the land. Cloudy are the faces of men. So “the women walked cautiously out of the doorways toward their men” (Steinbeck 40). And then the women tell their children “Go out and play. But don’t go near your father. He might whale you if you go near him” (Steinbeck 40). Men are the backbones of the family; their emotion determined the whole atmosphere of the family. Were they good, all the family is good; were they in bad mood, children might get whaled.

Examples of men’s dominance over women are scattered everywhere in the novel. When the priest, Casy makes a request to go west with the Joads in front of Tom Joad and Ma, “Ma looked to Tom to speech, because he was a man, but he did not speech,” she “let him have the chance that was his right,” (Steinbeck 108) It is not until Ma finds that Tom is not going to speech that she begins to say something. Here in the novel, the author writes that having the chance to speak first is men’s

right. Women are made to follow men. Only when men give up their opportunities, can women have the chance to express their ideas. Priority is always in the hands of men. Although Ma expresses her idea that she will be proud to have the priest, she says "I guess we better not say till all the men come...they'er gonna figger soon's they get back" (Steinbeck 108). It is men who make the final decision.

Women are distributed to cooking, looking after the family's livings. Ma's first appearance in the novel is in the kitchen, cooking. And Ma believes it is her job to cook for to whole family, all the cooking stuff is "women's work" (Steinbeck 125). Before setting out to California, all the family is preparing for the exhilarating journey. Accepted by the Joads, Casy wants to offer his help to the family. The priest steps to Ma and offer his help to salt down the pigs. Ma "stopped her work and then inspected him oddly, as though he suggested a curious thing" (Steinbeck 125). After that, she said "It's women's work" (Steinbeck 125). Another case in point is that after grandpa's death, Pa asked Ma, "You'll lay 'im out?" (Steinbeck 164) Ma agreed, and then asked "Who's to get the dinner?" (Steinbeck 164) In Ma's common sense, it is her job to do all the cooking.

Moreover, Casy, Tom, and Al's dallying with women shows that in men's subconsciousness, women are inferior to men and born to serve for men's need. Just as Liu Yan said "in marriage, women are depressed into the conventional role of wife and mother; while beyond marriage, they become the sexual objects of men" (Liu Yan 6).

And Ma, the metal support of the entire family, has not got a name. Throughout the novel, Ma is addressed as "Ma". She has not a single name. In the patriarchy society, no one cares what Ma cares about; their address exposes the inward expectations of Ma: her role of just being a mother to cook, taking care of the entire

family, and being the mental support. Ma “does not possess a name, her function seems limited in the reproduction and care” (Kristeva 26). The entire family lean on Ma to seek the courage, “she seems to know that if she swayed the family shook, and if she ever really deeply wavered or despaired the family would fall” (Steinbeck 86), and she “seemed to know, to accept, to welcome her position, the citadel of the family, the strong place that could not be taken” (Steinbeck 85). One scene worth our attention is that before leaving for California, everyone is packing, while Ma is in her room to deal with her old stuff. “She touches the letters with her fingers, touched them lightly...And then she made up her mind...She lifted the stove lid and laid the box gently among the coals” (Steinbeck 126). With women’s sense, Ma knows that a battle with life will be soon on. Ma was young ever; she has had the fantasy of a romantic life, all beautiful and good things, yet, with the responsibility and love to the family, Ma’s fantasy was dead. She knows the old steady life has gone forever. What is waiting for them ahead is hardness and uncertainty to California. She bravely accepts the truth and resolvedly makes an end to the past. No one cares about Ma’s inward feelings.

All the examples above exhibit that women are unconsciously subordinate to men. Women take men’s rein to them for grant. Men are the dominator of women. It seems that this ideology is rooted deep in both men’s and women’s minds.

2.1.2 Men’s domination over nature

John Steinbeck is believed to be an “ecological writer” (Benson 18), certainly, a great deal of ecological description can be found in The Grapes of Wrath. In the first chapter, Steinbeck specifically depicted the Dust Bowl and the following chapters its damage to the tenants. For centuries, the ideology “anthropocentrism” dominated human beings, they believe they are the dominator of the universe, and

they can do everything according to their own will.

In the novel, tenant's unlimited exploration contributes to the coming of the Dust Bowl. They "know what cotton does to the land; robs it, sucks all the blood out of it". (Steinbeck 37) They know the consequence of planting the same crop year after year, which robs the fertility of the earth. In order to get more money, they ignore the natural laws. The author explains clearly in the novel that because of the war, the price of the cotton "hit the ceiling" (Steinbeck 37). Greed seizes the hearts of the tenants. Overdrafting the fertility of the land to trade for more profits, men are destined to undertake the consequence of the leanness of the land and nature's punishment to them.

Beyond that, the intimate relationship between human beings and earth is broken up. The offspring of the technology, the tractors does serious things to the earth. Speaking of technology, King pointed out technology "signifies the tools that human beings use to interact with nature, including everything from the digging stick to nuclear bombs" (King 24). As the owner sends a tractor to drive the tenants out of their hometown, men are no longer close to the earth. While before this, the tenants "measure the land and broke it up", they "born on it, got killed on it, and died on it" (Steinbeck 39). Since they are driven out of it, and a tractor comes, machines, replace people to interact with the land. Steinbeck wrote that "The man sitting in the iron seat did not look like a man; gloved, goggled, rubber dust mask over nose and mouth, he was a part of the monster, a robot in the seat" (Steinbeck 41). This shows the author's hatred to the mechanization. Steinbeck continually wrote, "he (the driver) could not see the land as it was, he could not smell the land as it smelled; his feet did not stamp the clods or feel the warmth and power of the earth" (Steinbeck 41). The attachment between people and earth, or, nature is

broken. Even worse, “the tractor rolled the shinning disks, cutting the earth with blades---not plowing but surgery” (Steinbeck 41). In the latter part of the chapter, Steinbeck gave further analysis,

and when that crop grew, and was harvest, no man had crumbled a hot clod in his fingers and let the earth sift past his fingers. No man has touched the seed, or lasted for the growth. Men ate what they had not raised, had no connection with the bread. The land born under iron, and under iron gradually died; for it was not love or hated, it had no prayers or curses” (Steinbeck 42).

Men are no longer close to the earth (nature) any more. They explore nature, ignore the natural laws, and use machines to replace the communication with the land. Nature is no longer the place where it supplies them with daily bread, the relationship between human beings and nature is against each other.

2.1.3 The oppression among people

A variety of oppression among people is shown in the novel. Men with money are always thinking about getting more money. They play all the tricks they can to the ones who seem “less smart” than they are. Isolated with nature, the richer people become the less honest. All that they can see is profits. They believe money entitles them the right to be the “up” side of the society, while those poor people are the “down” side, thus they could do everything they can to the poor people.

2.1.3.1 The landowner’s oppression over tenants

The peasants have been living in the land for generations. They were born there, died there, dropped their blood there. The land relates to the peasants’ memories. Muley’s father was killed by a bull. His blood dropped in the earth, mixed with earth, for Muley, this land had a special meaning and a special connection to his dead father and ancestors. Then the owner comes and drives the tenants out of the land. They know themselves what they are doing is not right, they

“hated what they had to do...they hated to be cruel” (Steinbeck 36), yet they know one cannot become an owner unless they are cold. Therefore they come, leaving the tenants to undertake the misery. Once the owners arrive at the land, the tenants become homeless. Muley is a typical example, he insists in staying in the land where his ancestors have buried, and does not leave to California with his family, however, he “creepin’ aroun’ like a coyote”, “he’s getting’ screwy as a gopher, livin’ as he does” (Steinbeck 78). Even Muley himself said, “I never thought I’d be hidin’ out on my old man’s place” (Steinbeck 69). How bitter is that!

2.1.3.2 Oppressions among cars sellers, the farmers and the buyers

When going west seems to be the destiny, the peasants decide to sell all the belongings to trade for a car which can take them to the west. All the tools and horses, which seemed so dear to them, are depressed extremely low by the buyer. Knowing nothing about the trick of the business, the unsophisticated tenants sell the plow, harrow, carts, and seeders at a much lower price than they are actually worthy. Actually, what the peasants sell is not just what they are, but their former lives, “years of work, toil in the sun” and “sorrows” (Steinbeck 101). Steinbeck wrote out the bitter inward thinking of the tenants. The buyers know the farmers are anxious to get the farming stuff out of hand, they offer to pay however little they want. In their deep mind, they looked down upon these clodhoppers, and treat the peasants roughly without any scruple.

With the little money they get from selling tools, the tenants plan to buy cars. However, buying cars, for the tenants who have been working in the fields for generation is no easy thing. It is not what they are good at. Covered the impatience in the patient and kind face, the ill intentioned car sellers do everything they can to

sell the cars at a price which they have multiplied two or three times higher than the original price to the tenant. Honesty and kindness are no long in the hearts of the sellers and bosses. All they want is profit, huge profits. Nowhere could the farmers find justice and fairness, as a result, they become the sacrificial lamb of the people who want high profits. Tenants are oppressed by all of these people with little force to strike back.

2.1.4 Men's domination over animals

In The Grapes of Wrath, Steinbeck spared some ink to relate a certain animals. The most well-known one is the turtle Tom Joad tried to catch for his younger brothers. Criticism came to consensus that the turtle was a symbol of the proletariat under the oppression of the capitalism. Ecofeminism claims the interdependence among all organism. Zimmerman calls on us to "change our anthropocentric ethnical attitudes and granted "moral consideration" to nonhuman beings" (Zimmerman 3). Undoubtedly, animals are one part of that. Thus, we may have a fresh explanation of the turtle's symbolic meaning.

We might as well take the turtle as a symbol of the nature, and Tom's action of catching the turtle home is the encroaching of the nature. The turtle tries to escape a few times, the result is just got caught again. Facing the "almighty" men, the poor turtle could just be manipulated. So is nature---waiting to be explored and destroyed by human beings. Human beings can determine where the animals are going to live, what kind of life they'd go to live, no matter they like it or not, as long as human races are satisfied. The same thing can be said of the dog that bumped to death by the car in their way to California. The dog, "a blot of blood and tangled, burst intensities" (Steinbeck 151), indicates men's cruel action to animals. The life of

animals is as cheap as nothing. After the death of the dog, instead of saying sorry to the owner of the dog, the causer of the trouble just “slowed for a moment and faces looked back, and then it gathered greater speed and disappeared” (Steinbeck 151). Rose of Sharon showed not a little pity or sympathy to the poor dog, all she cared was the little baby inside her. Pa just “looked down at the dog for a moment” (Steinbeck 152) and then said “I don’t know how we was gonna feed ‘im anyway. Just as well, may be.” (Steinbeck 153). The dog’s death seems a kind of release to Pa and saves him from the trouble. Ruthie and Winfield talk about the dog, too. Winfield even “gloried”. However, a dog is different from a pig any way. The bloody scene makes Winfield vomit, and here, Steinbeck borrowed Winfield’s mouth to express his idea, and “It ain’t like killin’ pigs.” (Steinbeck 151) The only person shows sympathy and regret is Uncle John, he looks as if the death of the dog is his fault, “I ought ta tied him up” (Steinbeck 152). Everybody is just worrying about his own business; the death of the dog is of no importance to them. The last example is the death of the snake. On one of Al’s driving, “a snake wriggled across the warm highway. Al zipped over and ran it down” (Steinbeck 431). Al does this on purpose. Just for the reason that he hates snakes, he thinks he possesses the right to kill them. The life of animals seems worthless in human beings hands. Just as the peasants, or the poor people’s lives in the eyes of the rich people. The superior can do whatever they want to the inferior ones, as they believe, the superb ones are entitled the rights to control the inferior ones.

2.2 The connection of all kinds of domination

Warren holds that there are important interconnections among the domination

of women, the human Others and nonhuman nature (Warren 18). Different from deep ecology, ecofeminism claims it is androcentrism rather than anthropocentrism that causes the crisis and all forms of injustice. For centuries, men have employed a kind of “conceptual framework” to justify the dominations of women, other subordinated humans, and nonhuman nature. All of the inferior sides, the women, nature, animals, and poor farmers were oppressed by the “upper” ones who believe they are superior to them. It is such a belief that entitled them the right to do whatever they want to the inferior group, and thus justifies the governing of them. In the next section, the logic behind such ideology will be discussed.

As women’s role is limited in the house, while men’s are outside, it is believed that men’s work are important than that of the women’s. Therefore women need to study men’s face, were men in good mood, the entire family is good, were they bad, the entire family are bad. It seems that men’s high contribution to the family entitles him the right to decide for the family.

Compared with human beings, neither nature nor animals can think. Human being possesses the right to change the environment around, thus, human beings believe he is the centre of the world and can do whatever he wants to nature and animals. They deem that they are in a higher position than nature and animals; therefore it is justifiable for human beings to rein over them.

The car sellers and the land owners, they are richer than the poor tenants, and living in the cities, both the money and experiences are the capital for them to be proud over the poor tenants. Thus they employed various methods to cheat or flatter

the farmers to get what they want. They believe they are the better and more important than the tenants.

All of the above mentioned people, the men, the car sellers and the land owners, believe they have got something the women and the poor farmer do not possess, and these make them the more important people, and entitles them the right to be the oppressor side and can do things at their will.

2.3 The source of the patriarchy ideology

According to Warren, a conceptual framework is “a set of basic beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions which shape and reflect how one views oneself and one’s world” (Warren 46). The conceptual framework is oppressive and justifies the relationships of unjustified domination and subordination. It is the logic behind the patriarchy ideology which controlled the oppressor and the oppressed. The conceptual framework involves five parts.

Firstly, an oppressive conceptual framework consists of value-hierarchical thinking, which means, the “Up-Down” thinking. This thinking entitles the Up with greater rights, and little to the Down. It puts men Up and women Down, puts Human beings Up and other nature Down, minds Up and body Down. All of the meaning of this thinking is to make the Up’s oppression to the Down reasonable and justifiable. In the novel, men are the Up side and women the Down side; human being the Up side, other non-human beings the down side; the land owners the Up side, the tenants the Down side; the rich people the Up side and the poor people Down side.

The second characteristic of the conceptual framework is the oppositional

value dualism, which divides the values into two oppositional disjunctives, and attributes greater values to the higher group. For example, based on the conceptual framework, human beings are separated into male/female, white/colored, rational/emotional, etc.

Thirdly, the power exercised in the conceptual framework is the “power-over” power. In the oppressive system, what Warren means by “power-over” power refers to the power peasants over their young children, judges over defendants, and so on. This kind of power reinforces the advantages of the Up and keeps Downs subordinated. In the novel, when men are angry, women warn the children not to get close to their fathers, for they might get whaled.

What is more, the conceptual framework maintains that the privilege of the Up’s dominance over the Downs permanently belongs to the Ups. And lastly, the conceptual framework sanctions logic of domination. The logic of domination assumes that the Ups possess certain characteristic that the Downs lack, and thus the Down’s subordination to the Up is justifiable. Lori Gruen claims that the logic of domination “constructs inferior others and uses this inferiority to justify their oppression” (Gruen 442).

The logic of domination makes a distinction between the Up and Down. It is believed that Up is better, smarter, wiser, more powerful and rational than the Down. It advocates the value “superiority justifies subordination” (Warren 48). Without the logic, the difference between the Up and Down will not make a difference, it is the logic of domination justifies the domination.

What separates human beings from others is the capability to alter the environment around us and the abilities to think. In these two aspects, human beings are better than rocks and plants. Thus, human beings is deemed as Up and rocks and

plants as Down. As Warren Karen put it:

(1) Human do, and plants and rocks do not, have the capacity to consciously and radically change the communities in which they live in self-determined ways.

(2) Whatever has the capacity to consciously and radically change the communities in which they live in self-determined ways is morally superior to whatever lacks this capacity.

Thus, (3) Humans are morally superior to plants and rocks.

(4) For any X and Y, if X is morally superior to Y, then X is morally justified in subordinating (dominating) Y.

(5) Humans are morally justified in subordinating (dominating) plants and rocks.”(Warren 49)

With the above explanation of the logic of domination, we may see the deep reason behind all of these oppressions. Nature is deemed as without feelings and rationality; though animals possess feeling, they possess no moral and rationality, thus it is justifiable for human to dominate over them. As of women, historically, women have been considered inferior to men. Merchant argues that at least in western society, women have been identifies in literature, art and philosophy with nature, body and the realm of physical, while men have been identifies with culture, reason and the realm of mental (Merchant 115). Men authorized themselves the right to control and oppress women.

Thus women need to study men’s faces; men can do everything they want to the nature, like planting the same crop year after year, driving a tractor on the earth, which was considered as “ecological rape” by Gudmarsdottir (215), and so on. Men kill animals randomly, the life of animals seem worthless in the eyes of men. The above mentioned people believe either money or the ability to alter the environment entitles the right to them, which is in accordance with the conceptual framework.

Yet, it is not all men in the novel enjoy the right to oppress others. Certain

poor men, without money and land, or the protagonists of the novel, the Joads, are the objectives being oppressed. So the hierarchy is not invariable. The rich people in the novel, the owner, the bank, the farm owner, the man and woman in the car, they believe money entitles them the privilege to prejudice and oppress others.

In the beginning of the novel, all kinds of relation are imbalanced. Al is a typical example of the imbalanced relationship between man and woman. In the first three quarters of the novel, Al's favorite is going out to look for girls. Even Tom and Casy do such things. They play with women, get what they want, and then walk away. Let's take Al specifically as an example. Al looks for countless girls, in the novel, he even cheated a girl that he would marry her, he begs her to wait for him back. And the girl believes. Clearly Al knew he would not be back, he was going to leave with his family, and he himself does not even know where they are going to go. Then the poor girl never occurs again, maybe she has waited for a long time and in the waiting she loses her youth and beauty. We do not know. Next time, Al declares he would marry Aggie to his family. He is serious this time. He tried to leave his family a few times and follow Aggie. In the flood, Al refuses to go with the family to a higher place. We can conclude from the transformation of Al that from the philandering with girls to the determination to marry and follow Aggie, the status of women changes. Women are not the ones to be led in the family and the ones to be philandered by men any longer. Women earn their status and respect from men. The duality of men and women is broken down. And the family, although at last it seems like it does fall apart, while inwardly, the spirit of the Joads become one part of the "big soul". Tom goes for the benefits of the masses; Al ends up with a girl, and Rose of Sharon relays Ma to be the next caring role. Even Pa, when in front of the flood, he called on other guys to build up a bank.

Chapter 3: The Transcendence from Independence to Interdependence

3.1 The Independence Part

As we can see in the first half of the novel, every one is independent and only thinks of his own business. Let's take Tom as an instance, on his way from the jail home, he meets a truck driver, and "Steinbeck includes nineteen direct interrogative sentences. Most of these occur in Tom's dialogue with the truck driver, to whom Tom responds defensively and sarcastically" (Meyor 152). At this time, he is only concerned with his own welfare and all that he wants is to make up for the things he missed in prison (Gao 25). On the western journey to California, Rose of Sharon and her husband only think to leave the family, dreaming their own good life, which later proves to be just a fantasy. The reality crushes their dreams and makes Connie leave Rose of Sharon, leaving her alone to undertake the sealed future and herself to bear the child. Al is another case in point. Steinbeck describes Al as "a dung-hill rooster" (Steinbeck 498), he likes going out to look for girls. He used to flirt with girls and then leave them. Yet, at the end of the novel, he ends up with a determination of marrying Aggie.

On the other hand, farmers just care about their own benefits. Joe Davis's son becomes a tractor driver helping to drive his town fellow out of the land they all had

been living for generations. In order to earn food, the grocery man sells things for the company to the poor people at higher prices. Both of them are forced to do so. In the beginning of the novel, the people do not know how to make a change of their situations, but in the end, by the preaching of Casy, they unite together to take a strike.

3.2 The Interdependence Part

In the eco-feminism organism, interdependence is a significant conception. Interdependence stresses the relationship between human beings and other livings, men and women, and among people should replace the previous domination mode.

Casy, the previous priest is the string to unite the interdependent idea and he plays the role as the enlightener of the people and later in the novel becomes the leader of the strike. Beyond that, on their way to California, the Joads unite together, and so do all the farmers. All the previous relationships that are imbalanced gradually becomes balanced. The interdependence takes the place of the intense relationship. In the end of the novel, the poor people unite to gain the common interests; they no longer fight on their own or try to gain one's own interest on the basis of hurting others. What's more, men are no longer the only ones who decide for the family. Men's dominating role is replaced by the mutual dependence between men and women.

3.2.1 Farmers unite together on their way to California

In the opening of the novel, we see the farmers spiritually are individuals. On Tom's way home, what he is thinking about is how to make up his lost times in prison. Willy, the tractor driver, in order to earn 3 dollars a day, drives his town fellows out of the earth they have been living for generations. Lack of food and basic substance to sustain life, despise from citizens of other states, and hardship on the westward journey enable the migrant farmers to know the value of mutual help, and thus breaking the consciousness of "self" and build up the conception of "we".

3.2.1.1 The mutual help among farmers

The starting point of the farmer's uniting is after Grandpa's death. Grandpa died in Wilson's tent. Ma apologizes to Sairy for having spoiled her quilt and promises to make it up to her. Sairy's answer is quite warm, since the Joads' driven out of their home, it might be the first time they have heard such warm words, Sairy relieves Ma, and herself as well, "You shouldn't talk like that. We're proud to help. I ain't felt so---safe in a long time. People needs---to help" (Steinbeck 165). The rich, who are available enough to help, oppress the ones they should help; while the poor that lack basic substance to life, extend their warm hands to the ones that are in need. After burying Grandpa, the Joads invites the Wilsons to go along with them, but are refused. Because all they have is only 30 dollars and Sairy is sick. They do not want to become the burden. Ma believes that the mutual help will help both of the families to the destination. Then it is decided that Al will drive Wilson's car. A kind

of relationship is established between the two families. Later on their way, Wilson's car is broken, the Joads do not give them up, but tries all they can to help the Wilsons.

Hearing the news that there are jobs of picking peaches, the Joads go right away merrily. After a day's hard work, the entire family earns one dollar. Several days' starving makes Tom want to eat meat and drink coffee with sugar very much. He says this for a few times and Ma promises him. Only arriving at the grocery does Ma know the prices of the food, which are very different from that in town. The hamburger, potatoes, coffee and sugar are all more expensive here! With one dollar, Ma can only buy food enough for a supper. After telling the man to wrap them up, Ma remembers Tom want some sugar in coffee. Then she consults with the grocery man that they have not got any coffee yet, would the man please give them some coffee and she could bring the slip later? After certain hesitation, the man, taking out one dime from his own pocket and pre-paid the money for Ma. From this, Ma learns one thing that "If you are in trouble or hurt or need---go to the poor people. They're the only ones that'll help---the only ones" (Steinbeck 444), which is the central theme Steinbeck wants to express in the novel. Another similar example is Mae, the woman seller; in the beginning she gets certain emotion which makes she despise the poor people, or the "shitheels" (Steinbeck 188), whatever the emotion is, she helps in the end. She sells the fifteen cent loafs to the man at a dime, and the five cents stripy candy at one cent.

3.2.1.2 From “I” to “we”

As it is mentioned above, Casy plays the role as an enlightener. He used to be a priest but he begins to realize what the society is like and shifts his attention from the next world to this world. In the opening of the novel, he begins his wondering of the “big soul”. He shared his still immature ideology with Tom,

I figgered about the Holy Spirit and the Jesus road. I figgered, ‘Why do we got to hang it on God or Jesus? Maybe,’ I figgered, ‘maybe it’s all men an’ all women we love; maybe that’s the Holy Spirit---the human spirit---the whole shebang. Maybe all men got one big soul ever’body’s a part of.’ Now I sat there thinkin’ it, an’ all of a sudden---I knew it. I knew it so deep down that it was true, and I still know it” (Steinbeck 28).

In his going to the wildness, he also comes to an epiphany, “There were the hill, an’ there was me, an’ we wasn’t separate no more. We was one thing. An’ that one thing was holy” (Steinbeck 98).

Casy plays an important role in the movement from “I” of each man for himself to the “We” which the desperate people are driven to a unit. He knows that “we got a job to do” and applies what he has epiphanied to help the folk that don’t know which way to turn to.

The second time Tom sees Casy, when he is the leader of a certain strike, he has found out what he has been looking for, and he explains it to Tom. He tells the fellows he met in prison, at this time he knows it is the need of basic substances that makes them bad. Then he tells the story “yelling for sour beans”, if the entire fellow

begins to yell, they will get what they want. And this is the truth. What Casy is doing is to call on people to unite together to ask for higher payment. However, “we tried to camp together, and they druv us like pigs. Scattered us” (Steinbeck 452). It is these words that makes Tom begin to think, and then comes to his own epiphany when he is hiding in a hole.

Casy first realizes only through the uniting of the people can they win the battle and get what they want. And he is right. The rich people take it for granted that they can do whatever they want to the poor people. Money entitles them the power wantonly do everything. What is behind the ideology is the oppression framework.

Now let's come back to Tom. He realizes “maybe like Casy says, a fella ain't got a soul of his own, but on'y a piece of a big one” (Steinbeck 495). His following words embodies what Casy meant by “a big soul”,

Then I'll be all aroun' in the dark. I'll be ever'where---wherever you look. Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever they's a cop beatin' a guy, I'll be there. If Casy knowed, why, I'll be in the way guys yell when they're mad an' ---I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry an' they know supper's ready. An' when our folks eat the stuff they raise an' live in the houses they build---why, I'll be there.” (Steinbeck 495)

In these words, we see that the poor people are no longer individuals; Tom's epiphany represents that of the masses'. A huge strike is in gestation, though the writer does not writer this out. On the way to California, the farmers on exile

silently unite into one. They become a whole family.

Chapter 17 is a transitional chapter. In the day, the migrant farmers go westward non-stop; and as the dark comes, they huddle and camp together. They share their lives, food, and the things they hope for in the new country. All the exile families become one family; the children become children of all. The migrant people establish a world of their own. This world has its own laws and codes, obeyed by the people consciously.

When grandma is sick and about to die, Ma tries to explain something to Rosasharn. Connie leaves her, and everyone else seems to be busy with things, and except Ma, no one cares about the poor girl who is going to have a baby. Provide it were before, Rosasharn might have been hurt by the loneliness, and the hurt would be lonely as well, but now things has changed, “They’s a time of change, an’ when that comes, dyin’ is a piece of all dyin’, and bearin’ is a piece of all bearin’, an’ bearin’ and dyin’ is two pieces of the same thing. An’ then things ain’t lonely any more. An’ then a hurt don’t hurt so bad, ’cause it ain’t a lonely hurt no more.” (Steinbeck 246).

Spiritually, the migrant workers unite into one. The land owners have cut down their attachment with the earth, or the nature, all they want is profit and development. To achieve this, they sacrifice the welfare of the masses to fulfill the benefits of their own.

Why does this happen? Casy gives out the answer, “But they’s somepin worse’n the devil got hold a the country, an’ it’s ain’t gonna let go till it’s chopped

loose.” (Steinbeck 150) Here what Casy means by something worse than a devil refers to the value system rooted in the patriarchy culture (Zhang Lisheng 107).

Such is the hierarchy society under the capital economic system. The migrant farmers are seen as “others” by the land owners, in whose eyes the world exists for their own sake. Money and profits are all that they can see. Both of the classes belong to the world and they can not live without each other. The land owners presume they belong to the upper class and the farmers the lower. As they are poor, they are stupid.

The patriarchy ideology is the way of thinking that directs the rich people’s doings. To realize the equal and justifiable social order, people need to break down the patriarchy, and establish a new ethical value.

3.2.2 The interdependence between the Joads

In Chapter 13, after the death of Grandpa, Steinbeck comments “The family became a unit” (Steinbeck 162). That is the turning point where the entire family and the poor people become united.

3.2.2.1 From “men decides” to “women decides”

In the very beginning of the novel, Steinbeck describes the “Dust Bowl’s” raid to the plain. Particularly in the first chapter, we can see it quite clear that men’s mood decide the atmosphere of the entire family. In the second chapter of this thesis several cases of such kind are presented. The women study the men’s faces secretly, and the women and children know deep in themselves that no misfortune is too

great to bear if their men are whole. In deciding whether Casy could go to California with them, Ma is the last one to express her idea. She gives the priority to men. She does not express herself until Tom chooses to be silent. This phenomenon does not change until the exile of the Joads. Ma's first firm decision is made in mending Wilson's car. Tom comes up with the idea that Casy and him stay to mend the car, and the rest of the family go to California to find jobs first, since they have not got much money, it sounds like a great idea. While the gathered family considers the suggestion and shows agreement, Ma strongly protests. She even brings out a jack handle and balance it in her hand, after that, what she says (to Pa) stunned the whole family, "An' if ya do get me, I swear to God I'll wait till you got your back turned, or you're settin' down, and I'll knock you belly-up with a bucket. I swear to Holy Jesus' sake I will." (Steinbeck 197)

Ma's firm resolution makes the men concede. By her all-conquering will, she wins her battle. For the first time, she decides for the family.

The second time that Ma makes the decision is when the Joads almost spend all of the money. Pa is escaping from the reality that there is no money left. All the men in the family can not find a solution to the hot potato. Seeing there is only food for a few days, different from men, Ma resolves to put the card on the table. She put the difficult reality which the men try to escape from, "The money gone....You got to talk it out. Now don't none of you get up till we figger somepin out...You set here and got busy." (Steinbeck 413) Tom complains a little, and then Ma replies fiercely, "You ain't got the right to get discouraged. This here family's goin' under.

You jus' ain't got the right." (Steinbeck 413)

From this case we can see that at the important moment, women are more firm than men. Thereafter the Joads decide to go to a place in the north, where the cotton is going to reap. It is from reaping the cotton and then picking peaches, the Joads earns some money, and in supper they even have meat to eat. Once in a while, Ma even agrees to buy Ruthie and Winfield each a tin of popcorn. On the next morning, when they are about to leave, Pa says sarcastically, "Seems like times is changing, Time was when a man said what we'd do. Seems like women is tellin' now." (Steinbeck 415)

From this time on, the same saying appears in the novel frequently. And Ma takes over the responsibility to make decisions for the family. Seeing Casy's death, and the oppression to the poor people, Tom again kills a person. In order not to become a burden of the family, he proposes to leave. Ma disagrees. She says to Tom, "You ain't goin'... I got it figgered out." (Steinbeck 413) The previous householder of the family comments that "seems like the man ain't got no say no more" (Steinbeck 413).

In the fighting with several big girls, Ruthie lets out her big brother has once killed two person. It is until this time, when it seems hiding is no longer a good idea for Tom; Ma decides it is time for Tom to go. She does this without the discussion with other men in the family. Only after she makes Tom go does she tell this to Pa and Uncle John. In the previous circumstances, Ma ever talks and threatens men to obey her will. From this instance we can see that Ma decides without the permission

of men. The authority of men is challenged. So Ma soothingly says to Pa that “woman can change better’n a man” (Steinbeck 499). Ma then further explains,

Man, he lives in jerks---baby born an’ a man dies, an’ that’s a jerk---gets a farm an’ loses his farm, an’ that’s a jerk. Woman, it’s all one flow, like a stream, little eddies, little waterfalls, but the river, it goes right on. Woman looks at it like that. We ain’t gonna die out. People is goin’ on---chargin’ a little, maybe, but goin’ right on.”
(Steinbeck 500)

Man’s mode of ideology is different from that of the woman’s. Man’s mode of ideology is abstract, linearly, and rational, while that of the woman is caring about the particular ones, narrative and instinct, suppressed by man for a long period. In Griffin’s Nature and Woman, she compares these two kinds of modes. The patriarchy way of thinking deems that the existence as a clear and ordered field, going in the perpetual discipline; on the contrary, the existence in woman’s views is composed of moving, changing, difference and chaos. The Females, call the resources in the web of life, which threatens the man’s self, as “the roaring inside her” (Zhu Xinfu 202). This technically explains Ma comparison of woman’s life as a river.

The last example is after Rose of Sharon gave birth to a dead baby and she is very weak. It is raining heavily and the water is overflowed. Ma knows it is time to go to a higher place. Pa does not agree. Again, Ma threatens were he would not go she would take Rose of Sharon and the two little ones leaving. Like many times before, Pa surrenders again this time.

Every time Ma makes decisions for the family, Pa would complain that women are making decisions now. Why must men make decisions? Conventionally, men are supposed to be the ones that lead the family, nod and give opinions to the crucial events. Steinbeck wrote this novel to show the readers the opposite: men are not born to be the head of the family; and women are not born to serve the family. Ecofeminist deems that in patriarchy culture, women are considered as equal to nature and body, men are to reason and knowledge, according to the conceptual framework, those who are equated to nature and body are inferior to reason and knowledge. Therefore, women are inferior to men, or men are superior to women, men's control to women thus seems justifiable in this way. This way of thinking, or duality, embodies the patriarchy culture, and the prejudice in androcentrism. In the rational framework governed by men, women are just decorations and subordinations. Such framework implies an inequality, and presumes the mode of men's control on the basis of gender (Peterson 25).

With all the above instances we could see the conversion from "men decide" to "women decide", thus arriving at the conclusion that this is a deconstruction to duality. Men are no longer the dominant gender, while men are weak, women can make good decisions as well. In facing difficult situations, men hold back while women head on. Firstly women force men to find a solution, and then women to decide. And the result is not bad. It helps the family out. The traditional ideology that women are inferior to men is breaking down. Steinbeck showed his eco-feminism ideology that women and men should unite together to make a better

world.

3.2.2.2 Ma's dependence on Tom

Although the structure of the family transforms from “men decide” to “women decide”, it is not that women decide all the things by themselves. Ma makes significant decisions, but she depends on her beloved son—Tom. Ma likes to discuss things with him. It is a mutual dependence between men and women.

On crossing the desert, Ma is once called “Okies” by a cop. She is fighting with her face. And she chooses to talk about this with Tom, whom she believes can soothe her. While she sees him she looks relieved. She shares her doubts with Tom, called by the cop as “Okies”, she can not help asking whether they are bad people, and Tom comforts her. They two discuss the plight they are in.

When the Joads do not have much money and food to sustain the life in Weedpatch camp, Ma forces the men in the family to sit down and figure a way out. She purposefully irritates Pa to make him mad instead of being worried all day long. Tom kiddingly asks her to irritate him too, but Ma replies, “You got more sense, Tom. I don't need to make you mad. I got to Lean on you. Them others---They're knida strangers, all but you. You won't give up.” (Steinbeck 416) Tom is the only person Ma trusts and relies upon. It is not man, or woman that individually undertakes the burdens of the family, but both of them.

The death of Casy fills Tom with anger, in extreme rage he kills a person. He has broken the law once and now he breaks it again. He tries to escape, in that way, he has to leave the family. Hearing this, Ma is very angry. She declares that the family has already fallen apart; she does not want to lose Tom any more. The current situation of the Joads family is heart-breaking. Pa has lost his status. Rose of

Sharon is going to bear a baby, but she does not have a home. Noah left, and all that fills in Al's mind is to go out and build his own family (He is right, as one grows old, he shall leave his parents and build his own family, and this is one of the natural laws. But on the other hand, we can see that Al is not the right person that Ma could depend on), Winfield and Ruthie are wild like animals; and Uncle John, was just dragging along. Ma finally sighs, and begs Tom, "Don't go, Tom. Stay an' help" (Steinbeck 464). Ma shares her feelings, worries and thoughts with Tom. Seeing the falling down of the family, Ma wishes the only one that she can rely on can stay and do not make any contribution to the falling any more. She tries to support the family, too. We can see that neither man nor woman alone can be the dominating role in the family, the harmonious way lies in the mutual dependence. Even Ma gradually replaces Pa's leading role, she still needs to depend on man. In this way, Steinbeck shows us a harmonious and balanced picture of the interdependence between man and woman.

Chapter 4 Embodiment of the Ecofeminism Ethical Values in the Novel

Warren proposed that only through establishing an eco-feminism ethical value system, could we get rid of androcentrism, and thus finally overcome the prejudice of nature and find a solution to the environmental crisis (Warren 56). In ecofeminist culture and ethic, “mutual interdependence replaces the hierarchy of dominations as the model of relationship as the model of relationship between men and women, between human groups, and between humans and other beings” (Ruether 330). In the novel, Steinbeck builds up a utopia society---Weedpatch camp and the images of Ma and Rose of Sharon to demonstrate a new ethical value.

4.1 The content of ecofeminism ethical value

Many ecological theorists deems that the resources of the modern environmental issues lie in the current culture, which means, there is something wrong with human beings' world values and ethic value. Eco-feminism expresses its dual attention to human beings' liberation and the natural world, which provides a possibility of building up a new world. It appeals to establish an ethical value system based on mutual benefits and mutual responsibility rather than on the principle of domination.

Warren brought forward several core points of the eco-feminism ethical value system, which includes: firstly, pro to the prejudice against nature, the way of

thinking that justify human beings domination over nature in logic, attitudes, and values; secondly, it emphasizes the connection between human beings and the nature rather than human beings responsibilities to nature; thirdly, pluralistic in structures, have a cognition of the difference among human beings and the difference between human and non-human beings; fourthly, agreeing with the following point of view: the patriarchy conception framework, opposing the relationship between man and women, nature and culture, is the basic reason to the prejudice against woman and nature, and both of the two prejudices are wrong (Tong 59).

Eco-feminism proposed an ideology respecting the wholeness, namely, the connection, transformation, caring and love to replace the western patriarchy duality value system that approves of the dissimulation and opposition (Fang Gang 173). Different from the patriarchy value, eco-feminism ethical value proposed a kind of “caring ethic”.

4.2 Ma and Rose of Sharon’s demonstration of love and caring

In the novel, Ma and Rose of Sharon perform the caring ethic. In the later part of the novel, Rosasharn changes her name to Rose of Sharon. A biblical meaning is contained in it. Rose of Sharon appears in Song of Solomon, paying a tribute to the pure love between man and woman. Rose of Sharon symbolizes the pure love. And Steinbeck showed us the transformation from a self-attention girl to a caring woman.

Rose of Sharon used to be worrying and full of self-pity, thinking things all around her and not caring for others. Seeing the death of a dog, her “eyes were

wide", and kept asking Connie "Do you think it'll hurt?" (Steinbeck 151) She has been cared too much for herself and her unborn baby. During the journey to California, Rosasharn has a value that "The world had drawn close around them, and they were the center of it, or rather Rose of Sharon was in the center of it with Connie making small orbit around her" (Steinbeck 134). After Connie left her, she complains and pities her tragedy fate. Ma instructs her about the responsibility in the circle of life. She explains the terror, the loneliness, and the joy of women's lot (Zhao Hui 27). On the way, we can see the changes undertakes in Rose of Sharon. Ma encourages her to look after Grandma and assist in cooking. As Al declares he is going to marry Aggie, she looks at him for a while and persists to pick cotton to earn money. And she tries to help with doing chores and cookies. As Ditsky says, "She senses some truth beyond herself early, but she must transcend her childishness, her impetuosity, and her lack of patience to undergo her apotheosis. Oklahoma is not enough; she must undergo the fire and flood of California" (Ditsky 290). In the end of the novel, Rose of Sharon willingly brews her milk to an unknown man. "She looked up and across the barn, and her lips came together and smiled mysteriously" (Steinbeck 536). The ending shows Rose of Sharon has grown to be a mature woman. To some extent, "Rose of Sharon is not only breeding lives of human beings, but also preserving the whole ecological circle" (Zhao Hui 28). Before the publication of the novel, the editor once advised Steinbeck to revise the ending. Yet, he refused to make any change. In a letter to the editor, Steinbeck wrote, "If there is a symbol here, it symbolized subsistence...That man has to be a stranger...the key is the Joads must not know the man, and do not care who he is. Feeding milk does not convey more message than feeding a piece of bread. The image of a breeding mother is more ancient than literature itself" (Steinbeck Robert

178) French also argues “By giving her breast to the old man, Rose of Sharon takes her place with Ma as carers of the family” (French 84).

Ma is the one to demonstrate the love and caring ethical value as well. She is always generous to people in need. Tom comes back from the prison and meets Casy on the way, as he arrives home, he sees Pa first. They plan to kidnap Ma. Pa asks whether they can spare food with fellows who are hungry. Ma agrees pleasantly, “We’ve got a plenty... Jus’ lucky I made plenty bread this morning” (Steinbeck 85). Actually, the bread is just enough for the family, but Ma generously shares them.

Another typical instance is on the way to California where the migrant people set up tents as the dawn comes, women begin cooking. Some of the families are starving. The situation of the Joads is not that bad. So as Ma is cooking, she is surrounded with hungry children. Uncle John put a piece of potato into his mouth, the hungry children’s eyes follow the potatoes, even after Tom says “there ain’t enough for you”, they are still reluctant to go. As a woman and a mother, Ma finds it difficult to ignore these starving children. She inwardly struggles for a while, and then decides to put less food in the plates for her family, leaving the rest to the children. Ma not only cares about the family member, but also about people beyond the family circle.

In deciding whether or not to take Casy with the family to California, when asked of her opinion, Ma says firmly that she agrees. Pa still has doubts whether there is enough room for one more man; Ma insists a strong and healthy man is no burden to them. Even Pa is ashamed when he heard this.

Ma’s caring is not limited in attending the daily lives of the family, but also the inward growth. The transformation of Rose of Sharon from a self-centered girl to a caring woman is another case in point. The typical one is after Grandma’s death;

Ma is teaching Rose of Sharon a significant lesson. Ma presents her a pair of golden ear-rings and pierces ears for her. We can understand the piercing as a special ceremony. Rose of Sharon must learn to bear pains in order to inherit Ma's role (Zhang Jinqiu 53). Rose of Sharon presumes it will be painful, as Ma is piercing; she finds it is less painful than she thought. Before the ceremony, Ma says to Rose of Sharon that she is "very near let you have a baby without your ears pierced" (Steinbeck 375). This statement indicates that having ears pierced is an initiation rite, showing the readiness to assume the womanly role (Zhang Jinqiu 53). Rose of Sharon asks Ma, "does it mean sompin'?" and Ma responds, "Why, 'course it does, 'Course it does." (Steinbeck 375) It means Ma passes the role of loving and caring on to Rose of Sharon.

4.3 Weedpatch camp---a Utopia created by Steinbeck

In the novel, Steinbeck presents an ideal place for the migrant people---the Weedpatch camp, which embodies the caring and loving ethical value system. The camp is a shelter for the migrant people. The people in the camp are nice, polite and caring to each other. The moment the Joads move to the camp, Ma signs with emotion, "Why, I feel like people again" (Steinbeck 362). No cop is in the camp, people constitute laws by themselves, and the committee members are voted out by people in the camp. Women have their own committee---the ladies' committee to participate in supervising of the camp. The managers of the committee are voted by people and made by turns. The common facilities like hot water, toilet room are shared, cleaned and maintained by everyone. A special account is opened for the families who are in need. When mothers go out working, members from the ladies committee will take care of the children. A child gets sick and will be cared by all

the families. From the ecofeminism perspective, the camp is a bold conception created by Steinbeck to illustrate his eco-feminism ideology (Zhang Jinqu 44). The ultimate goal of ecofeminism is to transform the power itself. Here in the camp, for the first time, the poor migrants are respected as a person. They have got the rights to manage their own business. Even women, who are in a subordinate position in the traditional society regain status, and become one of the dominating forces in the management and decision-making in the public matter. Caring and mutual help tie people closely. Equality, respect and love replaces oppression, protest and coldness. The cozy camp makes a sharp contrast with the misery migrant farmers outside.

Weedpatch camp is created by Steinbeck to illustrate a Utopia deemed as perfect. We can see the camp meets all the standards that needed by an ecological society, which includes: mutual help, caring, non-violent, diversity, participation of all, and non-hierarchy. The camp is democratic and justifiable. In constructing the eco-feminism camp, Steinbeck also shows the reader that only through the change of the social system could the establishment of a democratic society comes true.

However, a Utopia is just a Utopia. The camp is hated by the rich. They try to destroy the camp. As Warren said, without the change of the ideology and the structure of power, we could not achieve a true ecologically balanced society (Warren 161).

Conclusion

John Steinbeck, one of the Americans most prolific and most accomplished writers, established his fame as a great writer and a Nobel Prize winner by the novel The Grapes of Wrath. Though poorly accepted at the beginning of the publication, time eventually made justice to him. Steinbeck expressed his ecological views through this novel.

In the opening of the novel, Steinbeck presents the readers a world that all kinds of relationship are imbalanced. Farmers destroy the land for gaining more profits; the land owner try to drive the poor farmers out of the land they have been living for generations; human beings kill animals at their will; men take the dominating role and women the subordinate one; the farmers, all thinking about their own benefits. All of the oppression roots in the same logic---the conceptual framework.

The hardships on the way and the same misery fate makes the migrant farmers unite both physically and spiritually. A committee seems to be established. Here, one man's sadness is not his own, but the whole group's; a child is not a child of one family, but all families'; the migrant farmer selfishlessly help others in need. In the end, by the calling of Casy, they decides to make a strike to earn back the right to get higher paying.

On the way to California, the dominating role transforms as well. By her strongness in mind and caring and the courage to face challenges in life, Ma gradually replaces Pa to be the leading person in the family. However, this does not mean women replaces men, in the novel Ma depends on Tom on certain issues.

Steinbeck advocates the loving and caring ethical values, and figures two women characters to present the ideology, beyond that, a Utopia---Weedpatch camp is established in the novel, a society built up and managed by the poor people. In Weedpatch camp, the flotsam regained dignity. They have hot water, flushing toilets, and caring from the neighbors.

The author is trying to establish a new ideal world order in the novel, namely, the equality among human beings, and in the common biosphere, only through interdependence could all the livings achieve the state of balance. The result of going one's own way is dangerous, from the ecological perspective; The Gapes of Wrath is a warning to human beings today. A lesson that could be drawn from the novel is that we need to see the connection among all living, breaking of one part of the chain will eventually do harm to oneself. We need to change the ideology first to achieve a truly harmonious society.

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