



Traduction et Langues Volume 23 Numéro 03/2024

Journal of Translation and Languages مجلة الترجمة واللغات

ISSN (Print): 1112-3974

EISSN (Online): 2600-6235

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52919/translang.v23i03.1015>



## *Gender Identity and Literary Expression: Examining the intersection of literature and sociocultural shifts*

Oleksandra Budilova 

Oles Honchar Dnipro National University-Ukraine

[o.budilova@outlook.com](mailto:o.budilova@outlook.com)

Maryna Volkova 

Oles Honchar Dnipro National University-Ukraine

[maryna\\_volkova@ukr.net](mailto:maryna_volkova@ukr.net)

Svitlana Honsalies-Munis 

Oles Honchar Dnipro National University-Ukraine

[s-honsalies-munis@hotmail.com](mailto:s-honsalies-munis@hotmail.com)

Tetiana Aksiutina 

Oles Honchar Dnipro National University-Ukraine

[tetianaaksiutina@outlook.com](mailto:tetianaaksiutina@outlook.com)

Oksana Vovkodav 

Oles Honchar Dnipro National University-Ukraine

[o\\_vovkodav@hotmail.com](mailto:o_vovkodav@hotmail.com)

### **To cite this paper:**

Budilova, O., Volkova, M., Honsalies-Munis, S., Aksiutina, T., & Vovkodav, O. (2024). Gender Identity and Literary Expression: Examining the intersection of literature and sociocultural shifts. *Traduction et Langues*, 23(3), 111-134.

**Received:** 12/03/2024; **Accepted:** 22/08/2024, **Published:** 31/012/2024

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*Corresponding author : Maryna Volkova*

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**Keywords**

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Gender identity;  
Literary  
representation;  
Cultural heritage;  
Feminist  
literature and  
gender  
stereotypes

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**Abstract**

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*This study explores how perceptions of gender identity have evolved by analyzing works from different cultural and historical contexts in English, American, and Ukrainian literature. The research seeks to connect gender roles with literature, highlighting the diversity of identity expressions and their impact on the development of gender awareness. The study employed various qualitative research methods, including content analysis, inductive reasoning, and comparative analysis. Literary works by notable authors such as Virginia Woolf, Charlotte Brontë, and Olha Kobylianska were analyzed. The findings show an evolution in the portrayal of gender roles and identity in literature, moving from rigid Victorian-era stereotypes to more complex, realistic, and diverse representations in modern works. Women authors were key in this shift, challenging gender norms and amplifying marginalized voices. The analysis of Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and Kobylianska's *He and She* reveals unique yet complementary approaches to exploring gender issues within their cultural contexts. Literature has been a strong platform for expressing and shaping views on gender identity. The study's findings suggest that the evolution of gender roles in literature mirrors broader societal changes, with modern authors often challenging traditional stereotypes and showing the complexity of gender experiences. Including Ukrainian literary heritage in the analysis offers valuable insights into the diverse cultural perspectives on gender identity. This research adds to the growing field of gender studies and the connection between literature and identity. By examining how gender is represented in works from different cultural traditions, the study provides a deeper understanding of literature's influence on the development of gender awareness. The findings can inform educational programs, literary analyses, and future research on the important role literature plays in addressing gender issues and promoting inclusivity and equality.*

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**Ключові слова**

Гендерна ідентичність; літературна репрезентація; культурна спадщина; феміністична література та гендерні стереотипи

**Анотація**

Метою цього дослідження було вивчити еволюцію сприйняття гендерної ідентичності шляхом аналізу творів різних культурних та історичних контекстів в англійській, американській та українській літературі. Дослідження спрямоване на встановлення зв'язків між гендерними ролями та літературою, розкриваючи різноманітні прояви ідентичності та їхній вплив на розвиток гендерної свідомості. Були досліджені літературні твори таких видатних авторів, як Вірджинія Вулф, Шарлотта Бронте, Ольга Кобилянська. Отримані результати демонструють еволюцію у зображенні гендерних ролей та ідентичності в літературі, перехід від суворих стереотипів вікторіанської епохи до більш складних, реалістичних і різноманітних уявлень у сучасних творах. Жінки-авторки відіграли вирішальну роль у цьому процесі, кидаючи виклик гендерним нормам і висловлюючи маргіналізований досвід. Аналіз «Власної кімнати» Вулф та «Він і вона» Кобилянської виявляє різні, але взаємодоповнюючі підходи до дослідження гендерних питань у відповідних культурних контекстах. Отже, література була потужною платформою для вираження та формування уявлень про гендерну ідентичність. Результати дослідження показують, що еволюція гендерних ролей у літературі відображає ширші суспільні зміни, причому сучасні автори часто кидають виклик традиційним стереотипам і підкреслюють складність гендерного досвіду. Включення до аналізу української літературної спадщини дає цінну інформацію про різноманітні культурні погляди на гендерну ідентичність. Вивчаючи репрезентацію статі у творах багатьох культурних традицій, дослідження пропонує комплексне розуміння літературного впливу на розвиток гендерної свідомості. Отримані результати можуть бути використані для освітніх програм, літературного аналізу та подальших досліджень ключової ролі літератури у вирішенні гендерних питань і просуванні більшої інклюзивності та рівності.

**1. Introduction**

In contemporary society, there is an increasing scholarly and public interest in gender identity and its influence on literature. Gender issues have emerged as central themes in discussions about cultural development and gender equality, highlighting the awareness of diverse and unique expressions of identity. The dynamics within society are often mirrored in literature, making the exploration of gender aspects within this context particularly important. Understanding gender identity is crucial for comprehending how gender influences personality development and the differences in perception and interaction among individuals. By examining the literary traditions of English, American, and Ukrainian cultures, we can trace the evolution of gender roles across various historical periods and socio-cultural transformations. Research in this field sheds light on how



literary works reflect gender stereotypes and inequality, as well as how they respond to shifting perceptions of gender and sexual roles.

In her study on gender stereotypes in ancient Indian literature, Rudenko (2020) highlights that the prevalent gender stereotypes found in ancient Indian commentaries on Prabhupada's "Srimad Bhagavatam" primarily revolve around women's economic dependence, the forced bride price, polygamy, isolation (which restricts freedom of action, movement, and decision-making), as well as the inability to divorce and the experience of perpetual widowhood. These issues encapsulate the various constraints faced by women, such as early marriage and limited autonomy. Demchenko and Rybalka (2014) delve into the representation of gender stereotypes in artistic discourse, specifically by defining the concepts of "man" and "woman." They examine how lexical units that embody these gender stereotypes manifest in contemporary society. When discussing the status of Ukrainian women, Litvin and Kolenko (2019) argue that comparing the status and rights of women in many other countries, Ukrainian women hold a relatively privileged position, as supported by various examples from Ukrainian literature. For instance, the term "wife" was often associated with friendship. Historical accounts suggest that girls would sometimes request Cossacks to marry them, women possessed their seals, and hetmans were allowed to participate in public and political life in the absence of men. A notable illustration of Ukrainian women's resilience in captivity is the figure of Roxolana, a legendary woman who has inspired numerous works of fiction and popular science literature, as well as a television series.

Dvorova's research (2018) examines the concepts of "stereotype," "gender," and "gender stereotype." The author explores the construction of gender within the German language, focusing on its linguistic and cognitive dimensions in the German-speaking context. Dvorova highlights issues in linguistic gender studies and uses examples from German proverbs to illustrate that the worldview expressed in German often reflects a male perspective, with women frequently portrayed as objects rather than active subjects. In their study, Koburtay et al. (2019) offer a literature review on gender and leadership, drawing on role congruence theories to explain prejudice against women in leadership positions. By analyzing the evolution of these theories, the authors encourage fresh perspectives and provide a foundation for future empirical research in this area.

The research establishes a theoretical framework for understanding the factors hindering and promoting the emergence of women leaders. Lewis and Lupyan (2020) contend that cultural stereotypes—such as the belief that men are inherently better suited for paid employment while women are more suitable for domestic and caregiving roles—contribute to gender imbalances and other forms of gender inequality in fields like science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Their study investigated whether these gender stereotypes are reflected in the large-scale distributional structures of natural language semantics. The authors analyzed the gender associations in 25 linguistic statistics and correlated them with data from the International Psychological Gender Association Dataset. They discovered that people's implicit gender associations are influenced by the



gender associations embedded in the linguistic statistics of their spoken languages. Furthermore, these associations were linked to how extensively a language labels gender in relation to occupations (e.g., "waiter/waitress"). This finding supports the idea that the connotations of language shape individuals' implicit judgments.

Despite the significant body of research, there remains a gap in comprehensive studies examining the relationship between literature and gender identity, indicating a need for further investigation. This research aims to fill this niche by exploring the interaction between literary texts and gender. The primary objective is to analyze the evolution of perceptions regarding gender identity through works from various cultural and historical contexts. One of the key tasks is to establish connections between gender roles and literature, which will aid in revealing the diversity of identity expressions and their influence on the development of gender consciousness.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Research Design

The analysis draws significantly on the work of both Ukrainian and international researchers who have previously examined the intersection of gender identity and literature. Their findings and methodologies provided valuable context for the results and allowed for comparisons with earlier studies. Additionally, the contributions of authors who addressed gender aspects—specifically the role of women in their respective societies—were utilized. These works were groundbreaking and merit further examination. Notably, Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" (1929) and Olha Kobylianska's "He and She" (1895) were analyzed and compared. The study also considered Woolf's "Mrs. Dalloway" (1925) along with the writings of other influential authors such as the Brontë sisters, Emily Dickinson, and Sylvia Plath. Furthermore, revolutionary concepts related to gender in literature were presented in tabular form, highlighting examples from "Jane Eyre" by Charlotte Brontë (1847), "Wuthering Heights" by Emily Brontë (1847), "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall" by Anne Brontë (1848), and "Little Women" by Louisa May Alcott (1868).

### 2.2 Data collection and Analysis

The research has led to the formulation of a hypothesis regarding the evolution of gender roles in literature and the similarities in gender issues present in the works of English, American, and Ukrainian women authors. To validate this hypothesis, several scientific methods were employed, including content analysis, the induction method, and the methods of analysis and synthesis. A diverse range of methodologies was utilized to fulfill the research objectives and address the key research questions. This section outlines the research process and the rationale behind the selection of the employed methods. Content analysis was particularly important in examining the textual materials. This method facilitated the identification of key themes, terminology, and expressions of gender aspects within literary works, while also enabling the tracking of their evolution



across different historical periods. Additionally, content analysis allowed for a comparative study of women authors' works, revealing both commonalities and differences in their writing. The analysis of the texts focused on their intended purpose, seeking to understand the messages the authors aimed to convey to society through their works.

Employing the method of induction, the examination of American and English literature from a gender perspective allows for the drawing of conclusions regarding the development and evolution of gender understanding within these works. The analysis method facilitated a deeper exploration of the aforementioned women authors' writings. It enabled an examination of their intentions, revealing what the authors aimed to communicate to their readers and how their works impacted society. Furthermore, the analysis method allowed for a detailed consideration of each work, highlighting their unique features, which contributed to the study of gender aspects in literature. Conversely, the synthesis method was instrumental in comparing the works of various female authors to identify commonalities and differences. This method helped determine what makes these works revolutionary and allowed for the tracking of the chronology of changes in female representations across different authors, based on the time periods in which they were written.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 *The literary evolution of gender identity: from diversity to activism*

In recent decades, significant societal changes have led to profound transformations in the perception of gender identity. From a general recognition of diverse gender identities to a rise in activism surrounding gender issues, the contemporary social landscape is grappling with the concept of gender and its implications. These changes are reflected in legislation, the socio-cultural environment, and the arts, including literature (Kowalski & Scheitle, 2020). The literary heritage of English and American cultures has responded to these shifts by amplifying voices representing various gender identities and exploring different facets of gender issues. Literature has long served as a vital medium for expressing socio-cultural standards, values, and stereotypes (Arginbekova et al., 2024). It offers authors a platform to articulate their thoughts, observations, and perspectives on the gender dynamics within society. This research aims to uncover how literature shapes the understanding of gender identity. By examining literary works from English and American authors, we can trace the evolution of gender roles and stereotypes across different contexts and time periods. Furthermore, this analysis enhances our understanding of how literature reflects socio-cultural changes and contributes to their ongoing development.

In this context, comparing the English and American literary heritage with Ukrainian literature is crucial. The diversity of cultural approaches and contexts can reveal both similarities and differences in the perception of gender issues. Incorporating Ukrainian literary heritage and research into the discussion can enrich our understanding



of gender relations in literature. Before delving into a detailed analysis of the literary dimensions of gender identity within English and American cultural heritage, it is essential to clearly define the key terms and concepts related to gender identity and its connection to literature. Establishing these definitions will provide a solid theoretical foundation for further analysis. According to the Dictionary of Gender Terms, the main term of this research—gender—is defined as a socio-cultural and symbolic construction of sex, designed to establish specific associations, facilitate communication, and maintain social order.

It is important to differentiate between the concepts of sex and gender. The term "sex" refers to the biological, anatomical, and physiological differences between female and male organisms, which manifest in the distinct roles of men and women in the reproductive process, their differing genitalia, and their sets of chromosomes (Shevchenko, 2016). While biological sex is assigned at birth, gender is a socially constructed concept influenced by the cultural context of a society during a specific historical period. Gender represents a social dimension of sex that delineates behavioral, cultural, psychological, visual, and other socially and culturally defined differences between men and women. In addition to the term "gender," it is essential to acknowledge related phrases and their meanings. For instance, gender identity refers to an individual's internal experience and perception of their gender, which may align or differ from their biological sex (Spytska, 2023a). Gender identity encompasses how a person views themselves within the spectrum of male, female, or other gender variants. Furthermore, gender roles are defined as socially constructed stereotypes and expectations regarding the behaviors, roles, and functions of men and women within society (Nusubalieva et al., 2023). These roles develop based on cultural, historical, and social factors and may vary across different contexts.

Gender stereotypes are biased and oversimplified notions regarding the roles, characteristics, and abilities of individuals based on their gender (Vyhovska et al., 2024). These stereotypes can shape perceptions and behaviors, imposing limits and expectations on individuals according to their gender. Gendered literature refers to works where gender, identity, and roles are central themes. This includes literature that is written from a gender perspective as well as works that examine gender in various contexts. Women's literature encompasses writings by women that express their thoughts, experiences, and emotions related to female gender identity and roles. By defining these fundamental concepts and terms, a theoretical framework can be established for analyzing gender identity within the English and American literary heritage. These definitions will aid in uncovering significant aspects of gender issues in literary works and elucidate their interaction with the socio-cultural environment.

### 3.2 *The gender revolution in American and British literature*

Throughout history, numerous authors have perpetuated gender stereotypes and inequalities in their writings. Many classical works contain stereotypes portraying women



as having inferior intelligence, being dependent on men, and facing limitations in their social roles. These authors frequently depicted women as primarily housewives and mothers, overlooking the multifaceted aspects of their lives and identities (Troy, 2022). Moreover, literature has emerged as a platform for highlighting diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. Such works enhance the understanding of gender diversity and offer support to individuals who feel marginalized by traditional roles (Grove, 2021). The rise of gender studies and feminist criticism has further facilitated the analysis of literary works. Scholars have begun examining how authors utilize language, symbolism, and plot to represent gender structures and dynamics within their narratives. This approach has allowed for more profound analyses and the revelation of subtextual messages regarding gender and society (Kumlu & Çomoğlu, 2021).

In classic English and American literature, one often encounters reflections of the gender norms and roles prevalent during those times. Women were frequently depicted as the weaker sex, confined to the roles of housewife and mother, while men were portrayed as leading characters with active careers and life opportunities. This portrayal of gender roles may be linked to the stereotypes and socio-cultural expectations of the era (Saeed et al., 2013). Table 1 presents key revolutionary works and their groundbreaking theses regarding gender.

**Table 1.**

*Characterising revolutionary works from the perspective of gender identity*

Author	Work	Revolutionary theses about gender
<b>Charlotte Brontë</b>	“Jane Eyre”	The work addresses several critical issues, including the personal and social freedom of women, class inequality, and questions of faith.
<b>Emily Brontë</b>	“Wuthering heights”	The work describes a female protagonist who feels compelled to suppress her own emotions due to societal expectations, resulting in a profound division within her personality. As a consequence, the protagonist experiences self-negation, trapped in a marriage that confines her to a social system that undermines her autonomy.
<b>Anne Brontë</b>	“The tenant of Wildfell Hall”	This work was quite revolutionary for its time, as it depicted the protagonist leaving her husband to relocate to another city, marking a significant departure from traditional norms. It can be considered a sensation of its era.
<b>Louisa May Alcott</b>	“Little women”	The statement, “It’s better to be old maids than unhappy wives or immodest girls running around looking for





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husbands,” encapsulates the work's bold commentary on women's choices and societal pressures.

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*Source: developed by the authors based on C. Brontë(1847), E. Brontë(1847), A. Brontë(1848), Alcott (1868).*

Charlotte Brontë was among the first English literary figures to focus on gender characteristics in her writing. Research into the evolution of female characters in Brontë's novels reveals that her early works feature two distinct types of female characters typical of the Romantic era. Initially, she largely imitated the Romantic canon, which is evident in the presence of contrasting pairs of female characters within her narratives. The use of contrast is applied both in the characterization of individual heroines and throughout the overall figurative framework of her works. The uniqueness of her portrayals of women is expressed through a blend of original, conventional, and typical traits commonly found in female characters of that period.

In the early works of Charlotte Brontë, two types of female characters emerge that are characteristic of Romanticism, distinguished by contrasts significant to Romantic ideals and reflected in both the external and internal traits of the heroines: the "European type" and the "non-European type." Brontë's early heroines can be conventionally categorized as "European" and "Oriental," aligning with the principles of this Romantic typology. The roots of this conventionality lie in the Romantic worldview, which emphasizes the symbolism of reality and humanity, particularly the contrasting meanings of "Oriental" versus "European." In her later works, Brontë further develops these character types, maintaining the distinctions she established in her youth. The restrained "European" heroines are set against the emotional "Oriental" women, creating a sort of "love triangle" among the characters. In Brontë's early writings, women are often portrayed as isolated, with their interactions and surroundings confined to a closed circle. However, there are already signs of transformation among these heroines influenced by their micro-society (their immediate environment and close relationships) and macro-society (the broader society). Most of the author's female characters exhibit these evolving dynamics.

In many of her works, the ideal Charlotte Brontë presents is that of a free personality with a rich inner life, whose beauty remains untainted by an ordinary appearance or an unfavorable social position. She transitions from depicting a romantic beauty—characterized by multifaceted talents, fragility, and cheerfulness, who waits for her beloved—to creating the image of a woman of her class: a strong-willed individual who, through her own efforts, carves out a place “in the sun” and takes responsibility for her own life. In portraying her early heroines, Brontë emphasizes the sensual aspects of their lives, capturing their vivid emotions and intense passions. These characters symbolize a free spirit as well as emotional and intellectual liberty. Their representations lack the social specificity that characterizes Brontë's mature heroines, which may explain why the female



figures in her early works diverge from conventional perceptions of her writing and therefore present intriguing subjects for analysis.

In the literary analysis of gender aspects, significant emphasis is placed on the works of women authors who have asserted their views and challenged stereotypes. Women's literature captures the diversity of gender experiences and highlights the critical contributions of women to societal development. Notable writers such as Virginia Woolf, Emily Dickinson, and Sylvia Plath play a pivotal role in examining various facets of gender identity (Lootens, 2013). Virginia Woolf, a prominent British author, made substantial contributions to the evolution of modernist prose. In her works, particularly in the novel "A Room of One's Own," she delves into the inner lives of her characters, exploring their thoughts, desires, and struggles against gender role stereotypes. Woolf reveals the complexities of gender relations and underscores the importance of women's self-expression (1929). Emily Dickinson, a 19th-century American poet, is known for her deeply emotional and original lyrics. While she often focused on her personal inner experiences, her poetry also reflects on women's roles in society and the stereotypes they face. Sylvia Plath, an American poet active in the mid-20th century, is recognized for her candidness and profound exploration of personal experience. Plath's poems address gender roles and identities, providing a poetic response to the challenges of her time. Together, these writers, along with many others, have established a vital foundation for discussions surrounding gender, identity, and the role of women in literature and society. Their works illuminate the internal conflicts women have faced throughout history and amplify the voices of those whose stories have often been marginalized (Pavlova, 2021).

Virginia Woolf is recognized as one of the leading figures in English modernism and feminism. Feminist ideas permeate her entire body of work, including her novels, essays, journalism, and letters. In addition to being a prolific writer, she was an experienced publisher and literary critic, addressing critical issues such as personal freedom, equality, and the role of women in society. These significant social themes are reflected throughout her novels and scholarly research. Her most notable work in the feminist context is "Mrs. Dalloway" (1925), which intricately explores the concepts of freedom and independence. The subject of marriage frequently arises in her literature as a touchstone for evaluating the state and consciousness of society.

In "Mrs. Dalloway," the protagonist, Clarissa Dalloway, influenced by various philosophical currents, believes that marriage should embody freedom and independence for both partners. She contrasts her husband with her former lover, noting that with her husband, she does not feel obligated to inform him of her whereabouts, and similarly, he does not have to report to her. In contrast, with her former lover, she would expect constant updates, which would restrict his freedom of movement (Zykhowicz, 2019).

Throughout the novel, readers are prompted to contemplate whether true love is characterized by freedom or indifference. One relationship embodies a practical arrangement typical of the time, while the other is driven by genuine emotional connection. This theme resonates in the works of three Ukrainian writers from the late



19th and early 20th centuries: Olha Pchilka, Olha Kobylanska, and Lesya Ukrainka. Among them, Lesya Ukrainka stands out as a prominent figure in Ukrainian modernism. While it is possible to analyze her work independently of her biography, such an approach is limited. To fully understand the essence and depth of her philosophical world, one must consider her upbringing, living conditions, social circles, and influences.

Virginia Woolf is a pivotal figure in feminist thought. Her influence reached the Ukrainian context through the Polish literary scene, with her novel "Mrs. Dalloway" being translated into Polish in the 1960s. At that time, critics hailed "Mrs. Dalloway" as a political statement, considering the historical and cultural context of its publication (Rezai et al., 2021). In the 1990s, Woolf's works reemerged in the literary landscape amid significant social changes, alongside feminist writers like Olha Zabrzyko, who candidly articulated her own experiences in a post-socialist society. In 1997, Graf's Polish translation of Woolf's renowned novel "A Room of One's Own" ignited a national debate.

The respectable image of Virginia Woolf from the 1960s has faded, giving way to a more pronounced feminist presence. This shift indicates that Eastern European and Ukrainian audiences are evolving and embracing a more explicit feminist stance. These changes are also linked to global political transformations that legitimized and formalized transnational women's activism during the interwar and postwar periods (Bidzilya, 2015). Woolf's work "A Room of One's Own" examines the historical position of women in Ukrainian society, echoing her original ideas. The text serves as a reminder that certain phenomena become central to people's lives once they are made visible. Uncovering women's stories is a vital mission for all writers and artists who dare to express themselves through their words or art (Balalaieva, 2022). What if the space where you could truly understand yourself was transparent? What if your room were a glass house? Creativity involves recontextualizing the boundaries between the private and public spheres, integrating everyday materials, structures, and perspectives, while establishing new vocabularies, narratives, and mechanisms for constructing one's identity and perceiving others and the surrounding world in innovative ways.

An increasing number of individuals are recognizing the significance of free choice and the expression of gender identity (Ryskaliyev et al., 2019). Analyzing literary heritage through a gender perspective plays a crucial role in enhancing awareness of diversity and fostering acceptance of gender identity as an essential component of cultural richness. Consequently, literature has emerged as a platform for showcasing a variety of gender identities and sexual orientations.

The introduction of gender-neutral characters and narratives addressing transgender issues has enriched the literary landscape (Izydorczyk et al., 2023). This development has broadened the understanding of gender diversity and amplified the voices of those whose stories were previously marginalized. Emily Dickinson, the American poet, lived a reclusive life dedicated to her craft, producing over 1,800 poems, yet only seven were published during her lifetime. Gender studies and feminist criticism have significantly advanced the analysis of literary works. Scholars are now examining how authors utilize



language, symbolism, and narrative structures to represent gender dynamics. This approach has facilitated the uncovering of subtextual messages about gender and society, as well as the identification of potential avenues for positive change (Abar et al., 2019; Charlesworth et al., 2021). By analyzing the works of prominent women authors, we can gain insights into how they have shaped perceptions of gender identity and roles, revealing the detrimental effects of stereotypes and inequality while also reflecting the profound emotions and experiences of women across various social contexts.

### *3.3 Evolution of gender roles and gender identity in Ukrainian literature*

Analyzing literary works from various periods reveals the evolution of gender roles and their representation in literature, shedding light on how perceptions of sex and gender have shifted throughout history. Victorian literature, for instance, often reflects entrenched gender stereotypes and constraints (Kejriwal & Nagaraj, 2023). During the Victorian era, which spanned the mid-19th century, gender roles were rigidly defined and adhered to traditional socio-cultural standards. Men were depicted as British gentlemen possessing power and authority, while women were portrayed as vulnerable and dependent, constrained by familial obligations. These notions of gender roles are frequently echoed in the novels of that period. However, as times changed and the women's movement gained momentum, alongside a growing awareness of gender issues, literature began to evolve. Contemporary works now feature deeper, more complex, and realistic characters that represent various aspects of gender identity. Modern authors often critique the limitations of gender stereotypes, as well as the violence, discrimination, and inequality associated with them (Spytska, 2023b). Today's literary landscape introduces readers to a diverse spectrum of gender identities, including transgender, non-binary, and other variations. These works illuminate the complexities of gender relations and highlight the distinction between biological sex and gender identity. They serve as reminders of the importance of recognizing and respecting the diversity of gender experiences (Chen & Song, 2023).

Thus, the evolution of gender roles in literature mirrors the broader shifts in societal perceptions of gender. From the stereotypes of the Victorian era to the modern portrayal of complex and realistic characters, literary works illustrate the journey of gender identity within public consciousness. The relationship between English and American literary heritage and Ukrainian literature in the study of gender aspects presents an intriguing and fruitful area of inquiry. By comparing these three literary traditions, we can identify shared trends as well as distinct features unique to each. Ukrainian literature, emerging from a different cultural and historical backdrop, makes a significant contribution to gender studies. The works of notable Ukrainian writers such as Lesya Ukrainka and Olha Kobylianska delve into various facets of gender identity within Ukrainian society. Furthermore, contemporary Ukrainian authors provide in-depth analyses of gender issues, taking into account the current social and cultural context. They explore themes of gender equality, stereotypes, and the roles and identities of Ukrainians.



### 3.4 Analysis of gender evolution on the examples of works of literature from different countries

Virginia Woolf's book "A Room of One's Own" (1929) addresses the challenges faced by women writers and intellectuals throughout history, who have had to navigate asymmetrical systems of economic and legal power. At the time Woolf was writing, women in the industrialized Western world lacked legal protections in areas such as employment, the right to vote, and access to contraception. Her famous assertion that "if a woman wants to write well, she must have money and a room of her own" has been endorsed by feminist literary and cultural critics such as Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous (Djalilova, 2021). "A Room of One's Own" is an essay derived from two lectures delivered by Woolf in October 1928. In contrast, Olha Kobylanska's work "He and She" is labeled a humoresque; however, the narrative does not present a comic plot, and the reader does not encounter a humorous tone aside from some superficial comments made by the doctor regarding the culture and customs of certain Slavic peoples. Therefore, from a literary criticism perspective, "He and She" can be viewed as an essay crafted in the form of a diary or confession, designed as an interstitial dialogue between the two genders, represented by the generalized figures of Her and Him. Like Woolf's essay, the defining characteristics of "He and She" include subjectivism, a philosophical interpretation of the subject, and a non-linear composition, despite the fact that the essay genre was not yet familiar to Ukrainian literature in the late 19th century.

In terms of genre correlation, Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" and Olha Kobylanska's "He and She" are nearly identical. The feminist idea in Woolf's work is expressed through various thematic elements, including the stages of development of the women's literary tradition, the material conditions influencing women's writing, and the characteristics of women's consciousness and life experiences, which shape their literary output. In Kobylanska's writing, the feminist concept is conveyed through the balance between the physical and the spiritual. On one hand, the narrative advocates for a woman's right to education; on the other hand, it suggests that He and She—implied by the final phrase, "And thus, she is already my destined one: her relatives already know about this, and I am now going to her for tea"—will cultivate a harmonious marriage founded on mutual understanding and gender equality.

In the works being compared, the central figure is a generalized representation of a woman; however, each writer weaves this image into the semantic and poetic fabric of their texts in distinct ways. In Woolf's work (1929), the woman writer is perpetually positioned on the periphery of literature due to the prevailing patriarchal tradition. Woolf examines the status of women in both literature and the arts more broadly, concluding that "any gifted woman in the 16th century would have gone mad or committed suicide or spent her days alone on a farm somewhere as a frightened half-witch" because "her instinct for disobedience would have inevitably led her to lose both her physical and mental health."



This societal rejection of women artists resulted in the anonymity of many works and, at times, the use of male pseudonyms. This phenomenon can be viewed as both a capitulation to established norms and a form of playful imitation, reflecting an acceptance of male-dominated rules. Writers such as Bell, George Eliot, and George Sand exemplified this internal struggle, as their works reveal. They sought to conceal their identities under male names, thereby paying homage to a tradition set by men that deemed women's popularity as undesirable. "Anonymity is in their blood," highlighting the pervasive nature of this issue. Beyond anonymity, women's writing was also impeded by a continual internal struggle, marked by various forms of despair and confusion.

Approaching the topic of women's creativity with the meticulousness of a scientist—characteristic of the essay genre, which blends scientific and artistic styles—Virginia Woolf employs a diachronic method in her exploration, examining the phenomenon of women's creativity from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Her aim is to observe the development and positive dynamics of this creativity over time. Unfortunately, she concludes that little has changed by the 19th century. The ironically dismissive aphorisms of earlier centuries, such as "a woman who plays on stage is like a dog that dances" and "a woman who writes music is like a dog that walks on its hind legs," remain relevant. Woolf attributes the persistence of these stereotypes regarding gifted women to "the dark male complex," which has significantly influenced the women's movement. This complex embodies a profound, passionate desire not merely to humiliate women but to obliterate them, creating obstacles that impede their progress in both art and politics—even when the risks to men are minimal and the challengers are modest and dedicated.

In her detailed analysis of the thematic and genre dominance in women's writing, Virginia Woolf concludes that a woman's literary endeavors in the early 19th century primarily revolved around character observation and emotional analysis. Over the centuries, her sensibilities were shaped by the communal experiences of the domestic sphere, deeply imprinting the feelings of others upon her. Personal relationships were always present in her life, which is why the novel emerged as a favored genre for women. There are several reasons for this preference: first, the collective female experience fostered a method of analyzing characters and emotions; second, poetry and drama demand concentration, tranquility, and space—qualities that women have historically lacked; and third, the novel, being a relatively new literary genre, was adaptable and manageable in their hands.

Despite the genre's monotony in women's writing, it is marked by ideological and thematic constraints stemming from a lack of experience, which is closely tied to their freedom—or rather, the absence of it. Woolf observes, "A woman could not travel alone. She never traveled; she never rode an omnibus through London; she never had breakfast alone in a café." In this way, Woolf illustrates how both the woman in literature and literature itself are dependent on the material world, particularly on her own space—her room. The English writer articulates this thesis at the beginning of her essay: "A woman



must have money and a room of her own if she wants to write anything.” Throughout the essay, she searches for and provides arguments to support this assertion. Ultimately, she reiterates this idea as a definitive conclusion: “Intellectual freedom depends on material conditions. Poetry depends on intellectual freedom. And women have been poor for two hundred years, not just for two hundred years, but since the beginning of time. Women had less intellectual freedom than the sons of Athenian slaves. Thus, women had even fewer opportunities to engage in poetry than a street dog. Therefore, I emphasize the importance of money and my room.”

In her analysis, Virginia Woolf acknowledges the inevitable divergence between the sexes and interprets their perpetual conflict as a struggle of opposites that necessitates considerable strength, courage, and self-confidence. Utilizing one of the principles of dialectics regarding the struggle and unity of opposites, she arrives at a rather surprising conclusion about the nature of human consciousness, even for herself: “There are two forces within each of us—masculine and feminine. In the male brain, the male predominates, while in the female brain, the female takes precedence. A normal and comfortable state of being is achieved when these forces coexist harmoniously in spiritual collaboration... it is through this merging that consciousness is enriched and fully utilizes its potential. Perhaps a solely male consciousness cannot establish itself, nor can an entirely female consciousness.” Translating this concept into the context of literary creativity, Woolf observes that men’s writing often lacks the energy of suggestion that characterizes women’s writing. For a work of art to reach its full potential, she argues, a specific “cooperation between a man and a woman” must take place in the artist’s mind, resulting in “a specific marriage of opposites.”

While Virginia Woolf interprets the image of a woman in literature through a diachronic lens—spanning four centuries—Olha Kobylianska’s generalized female image, represented by the pronoun “She,” is static and confined to the synchronous context of the late 19th century. In her work “He and She,” there is a dynamic progression: it begins with the solitary reflections of two strangers of opposite sexes and evolves into an accidental meeting and subsequent engagement. The portrayal of the male character is also dynamic. The narrative opens with the man’s almost hostile thoughts about women: “I want nothing to do with women, absolutely nothing! They are capricious, fastidious beings, full of self-love. They hold restrictive opinions and are childish—what can I do with them, with this mosaic of emotions? However, one is like the other.” As the story unfolds, his aggressive tone shifts to a more lyrical and confessional one: “Now I know that I have no life without her, that my strength is meaningless without her, that I cannot live without her!” Thus, while Woolf’s central image in “A Room of One’s Own” is a generalized representation of women, with the male image serving merely as a backdrop to the dynamics of the female character, Kobylianska presents a more egalitarian portrayal. In “He and She,” both images of men and women are equal, as the work consists of monologue reflections from both sexes.



A key ideological and thematic aspect of Olha Kobylianska's (1895) work is her attempt to view women through the perspective of a man, reflecting on male opinions regarding the role and position of women in the family and society. Furthermore, she specifically chose to explore male consciousness with a national dimension, as her male character is of German nationality. The author suggests that this choice was intentional, as the text is replete with quotations from Nietzsche, Kobylianska's favored German philosopher and voluntarist. Additionally, the epigraph for the work is drawn from Nietzsche's "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," stating, "Man is something that must be overcome."

Most literary critics discuss the interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy within the context of Ukrainian literature through the lens of Olha Kobylianska, who openly acknowledged this influence in her letters and autobiography. In her analyzed work, she embodies Nietzschean ideas. However, the understanding of the phrase that serves as the epigraph at the beginning of the work evolves with her changing life experiences. For a woman who is frequently preoccupied with thoughts of her illness, this phrase is perceived as a reflection of the inevitability of death: "A man is something that has to be overcome," "I will be overcome by death," "Man is indeed something to be overcome," and "We will overcome this disease for sure." She remarks, "He said it so kindly and so sincerely that I believe him. I must reflect on his words once more. Then I can still live! Live! Live!"

Thus, the writer articulates her conclusions through the voice of her heroine, emphasizing that it is essential to overcome stereotypical thinking in order to gain a new perspective on the world around them. However, some of Nietzsche's statements, particularly those expressed by Zarathustra, evoke controversy within the text, especially those that are discriminatory towards women. For instance, Nietzsche's remark, "If you go to a woman, do not forget the whip," is not voiced by She but by He: "Should I, for instance, approach her with a whip, standing before her, this gentle, quiet creature, like a conqueror of beasts before gnashing teeth?" He further reflects, "Women are such a gentle race, and when they are lacking and immature in various ways, we have only ourselves to blame—those who are their masters and defenders." It appears that the masculine views held by much of society at that time diverged from those of the German doctor, aligning instead with Kobylianska's vision. Both Kobylianska and Woolf express similar sentiments regarding the limitations placed on women's freedom: "How difficult it is for a woman to be a complete and free person today, to be solely for herself, like a flower, like a star." Initially, Kobylianska's character rejects any notion of marriage, perceiving it as a form of unfreedom. However, as the story progresses, her mutual love for her partner transforms her perspective on marriage.

Literary critic Dragan notes that in Kobylianska's works, societal constraints hinder her characters from realizing their ambitions or securing a place in society independently, leading them ultimately to marriage. Thus, Kobylianska did not depict any woman who finds happiness without the roles of spouse and mother. In contrast, Woolf observed a





trend among women writers: most remained unmarried or did not have children, channeling their maternal energies into creative pursuits.

A comparative analysis of O. Kobylanska's humorous piece "He and She" and V. Woolf's essay "A Room of One's Own" reveals several conclusions: both works are ideologically and thematically aligned, as both British and Ukrainian writers center their reflections on feminist themes, which remain underexplored in the literary traditions of both cultures. However, each writer approaches feminism differently. The central figure in V. Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" is a generalized portrayal of a woman writer striving for creative expression, challenging the deep-seated patriarchal norms. In contrast, Kobylanska's heroine contemplates women's potential in society, drawing on Nietzsche's philosophical concepts. For the Ukrainian writer, the first step toward this realization is self-awareness and education, with the second step being a harmonious and equal marriage. While Woolf examines the image of women in literature diachronically across four centuries, Kobylanska's representation, symbolized by the pronoun "She," remains static, focusing solely on the late 19th-century context.

#### 4. Discussion

This research broadly explored the influence of English and American literary heritage on the understanding of gender identity. It analyzed several aspects of this impact, including the contributions of women authors, the evolution of gender roles in literature, and the portrayal of gender identity in Ukrainian literature. The findings of this study offer valuable insights into the connection between literature and gender identity in today's world.

Several studies are especially relevant to this topic. For instance, Charlesworth et al. (2021) systematically analyzed gender stereotypes by embedding words within a language corpus of exceptional size and scope. They found that gender stereotypes appear consistently and strongly across all corpora, both in commonly examined stereotypes (such as work and family) and in an extensive list of over 600 personality traits and 300 occupations. Despite differences between the corpora, such as age, formality, and target age groups, the results underscore the widespread presence of gender stereotypes within each corpus.

Focusing on gender stereotypes, the authors merged 19th-century theories on collective representations with contemporary insights from implicit social cognition to examine the subtle yet enduring presence of collective representations in language. Their research highlights the significance of gender stereotypes within language corpora and their influence on societal perceptions of social roles. This approach enables quantification of gender stereotypes in texts, a crucial step in understanding their prevalence and societal impact.

A notable distinction exists, however, in methodologies for studying gender stereotypes: while the authors' research utilizes language corpus analysis and word embeddings to produce objective data on stereotype prevalence, the study referenced



above leans toward textual analysis and reader interpretation, focusing on gender identity within literature. Both studies underscore the persistence and societal importance of gender stereotypes, emphasizing the necessity for further exploration to understand and mitigate gender biases. This research contributes meaningfully to the ongoing discourse on stereotypes and gender equality, promoting further expansion in this field.

Ongoing research continues to reveal the scope and importance of gender inequality across social, cultural, and economic domains. Recently, computational tools from natural language processing have been introduced to measure these inequalities, leveraging large datasets and rigorous empirical methods (Abdrakhmanov et al., 2024). Kejriwal and Nagaraj (2023) contribute to this field by analyzing legacy literary texts from the pre-modern period (specifically, the mid-18th to mid-19th centuries). They highlight that a key challenge in applying these tools lies in maintaining quality control to ensure reliable statistical outcomes.

While the authors recognize challenges in using widely accessible and time-tested materials and methods—both to ensure future applicability and to build trust in the methodology—they address these issues by implementing a set of measures to examine pre-modern literature. This approach aims to uncover notable disparities in the representation of female versus male characters.

Researchers suggest that evidence indicates this disparity decreases when the author is female, with the discrepancy remaining relatively stable over time when plotted by decade across the 100-year span. They thoroughly address the limitations and ethical considerations inherent to this and similar studies. This research, alongside the previously mentioned study, tackles gender inequality in literary texts while sharing both similarities and differences. Both works highlight the importance of gender issues in literature and society, analyzing the roles and stereotypes associated with different genders in literary works. Each study also employs computational methods for text analysis. While this research adopts an empirical approach with theoretical data, the authors of the other study rely on natural language processing to quantify gender disparity. Key differences exist, such as the focus here on gender identity in literature, while the other study centers on gender disparity in literary representation. The two studies also differ in their primary analysis objects and data collection and processing methods. Additionally, the research discussed includes English, American, and Ukrainian literary heritage.

The research is confined to the pre-modern period and examines texts with expired copyrights, highlighting differences in the temporal and spatial contexts of the studies. Additionally, the findings vary: studies on literature examine perceptions of gender in literary works, including shifts in role stereotypes and detailed role analyses. The author's research, however, focuses on gender disparity within literary texts and suggests that this disparity lessens with female authors. These contrasting conclusions reflect distinct facets of gender inequality explored by each study.



In their research, Chen and Song (2023) examine how gender representation is translated into the English version of the Chinese children's novel *Bronze and Sunflower*. They focus on the translator's decisions regarding omissions and rewrites, exploring how these choices alter the portrayal of the protagonist, Sunflower. Their analysis reveals that the translator reduces Sunflower's fragility and submissiveness, emphasizes her strengths, and softens the original metaphor, where the girl is depicted as part of the landscape. The authors suggest that this approach aims to challenge and dismantle traditional gender stereotypes and patriarchal narratives. Their study underscores the importance of thoughtfully addressing gender content in translating children's literature, as it shapes young readers' perceptions of gender roles. This research makes a valuable contribution to the fields of gender studies, children's literature, and translation studies.

Djalilova's (2021) research focuses on gender linguistics, particularly its development and establishment in English-language literature, as examined through a review of scientific literature. Based on her analysis, she chose to explore the characteristics of gendered speech within Uzbek contexts. Her study examines various forms of communication, including the language used between spouses, parents and children, and in military fiction, often represented through brief dialogues. Djalilova suggests that women's language is often marked by shyness, trust in men, reverent love, respect, and awe, whereas men's language is characterized by affirmative structures, conciseness linked to respect and attentiveness, and an adaptive style for interacting with others. While both her study and the previous research share a focus on gender linguistics, they differ in approach and cultural context. Both analyze gendered speech and behavior within a cultural framework, examining how cultural factors shape communication. However, the earlier research investigates gender identity within literature and its impact on public consciousness across English, American, and Ukrainian contexts, while Djalilova's study explores specific patterns in Uzbek men's and women's speech.

In her study, Gu (2020) examines the translation of "Unforgettable Love" by British translator Gladys Young through the lens of New Historicism, with a particular emphasis on gender issues in translation. The research begins by introducing New Historicism and exploring its integration with translation studies, followed by case studies. The translation analysis, along with a review of various literary and non-literary texts, such as newspapers and magazines, is conducted from three perspectives: the translator's manipulation of texts, the translator's underlying beliefs, and the positive portrayal of 1980s China concerning gender issues. By applying Foucault's approach, the study establishes an interdisciplinary framework that combines translation, gender, and New Historicism. Overall, this research provides a valuable example of integrating New Historicism with translation studies.

In recent years, numerous studies on gender have emerged, primarily examining the influence of gender representations in texts on society. Many of these studies are aimed at analyzing how gender identity is portrayed in literature and how readers perceive these portrayals.



## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The research yielded findings that support several key conclusions, particularly highlighting shifts in gender representation and roles in American and English literature. From the Victorian era—when literature often depicted men and women through stereotypical gender roles—to modern works that portray more nuanced and realistic characters, there is a clear progression toward a deeper exploration of gender identity. Women authors have been instrumental in this transformation; the contributions of writers like Woolf, Brontë, Dickinson, and others have challenged stereotypes and amplified women's voices in literature. These changes reveal an evolution in gender roles and identities across different historical periods, tracing the development of gender roles in literature. The research confirms that literary heritage both reflects and shapes societal views on gender, suggesting that shifts in literary portrayals of gender can correspond with broader changes in social norms and perceptions.

The research on Woolf and Kobylanska's literature underscores the importance of feminist writing as a means of articulating women's experiences and challenging power imbalances in economic and legal spheres. Each author offers a distinct approach to feminism in her work: Woolf emphasizes the material constraints faced by women writers, advocating for financial independence and personal space to foster creativity. In contrast, Kobylanska expresses feminist ideas through the theme of body-spirit harmony and equal partnership between genders. These works capture the evolving role of women in society. Woolf wrote during an era when women were beginning to demand rights such as suffrage and professional opportunities, while Kobylanska's work emerged in the late 19th century, a time when limitations on women's freedom remained deeply entrenched.

The examination of gender aspects in the literature of Woolf and Kobylanska highlights literature's vital role as a medium for advocating gender equality and supporting the struggle for women's rights. Both authors' works reflect shifts in women's societal roles and continue to resonate today, fueling further progress in the feminist movement. These findings underscore the importance of further investigating gender identity in literature as a means of reflection, critique, and gender advancement ideas in contemporary society. The research outcomes hold valuable potential for educational programs, literature courses, and studies focused on gender identity and literature's influence on gender perspectives.



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### Acknowledgments

We are deeply grateful for ASJP for the opportunity to share our reflection by publishing this important topic and we hope that our findings will inspire further dialogue and scholarship in the field.

### Authors' Biodata

**Oleksandra Budilova** is a Full Doctor, and an Associate Professor at the Oles Honchar Dnipro National University. Her research interests cover the English language and education.

**Maryna Volkova** is a Full Doctor, and an Associate Professor at the Department of English Philology, Oles Honchar Dnipro National University. Her research interests include linguistics, philology, and education.

**Svitlana Honsalies-Munis** is a Full Doctor, Associate Professor at the Department of English Philology, Oles Honchar Dnipro National University. Her research interests cover philology, language and culture studies.

**Tetiana Aksiutina** is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of English Philology, Oles Honchar Dnipro National University. Her research interests include education, linguistics, and foreign languages.

**Oksana Vovkodav** is a Lecturer at the Department of English Philology, Oles Honchar Dnipro National University. Her research interests are philology and linguistics.

### Authors' Contribution

*Oleksandra Budilova* and *Maryna Volkova* guided the conceptualization, methodology, data curation, and manuscript draft preparation. *Svitlana Honsalies-Munis* managed the investigation and supervision. *Tetiana Aksiutina* and *Oksana Vovkodav* collaborated to use the software and participated in the validation of this research as well as the reviewing task. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

### Declaration of conflicting interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of the article.

