



THE GENESIS OF THE IMAGE OF WOMEN IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Throughout history, relationships between men and women were particularly common in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The role of gender has been a source of research and discussion in all areas of society, including politics, socioeconomics, culture and education. There is no doubt that a person is not traditionally the one in the principal position of the landowner, but a family member, father, protector and beneficiary. For centuries, men have had the right to determine women's roles in the family and society.

In all languages, mythologies and cultures, the concepts of "male" and "female" are simultaneously as mutually exclusive opposites and as mutually penetrating principles. The biological concept of "sex" was supplemented by the concept of "gender", which also implies social, historically established relationships between men and women and the corresponding ideas and stereotypes. It is known that the gender status of a person is associated not only with the biological sex, but also with its ideas about their field. The content components of gender identity are revealed through the categories of "masculinity" and "femininity". In this article, only the image of a woman is considered.

Speaking about the image of a woman in the English literature of the 19th century, one should also clearly distinguish between "male" and "female" literature. At "male" literature, positive images of women become the subject of almost limitless idealization. So, already in the novel by W. Scott "Ivanhoe" the Anglo-Saxon beauty Rowena is an idealized incarnation female passivity, softness, inability to resist, in contrast to Jewish beauty Rebekah, who has great knowledge and vitality tenacity. W. Scott's preface to the second edition of the novel is known, in which the author has to justify Ivanhoe's marriage to Rowena with laws historical authenticity. The code of conduct for a lady is obligatory in literature for any positive heroine, even if she does not belong to the upper class. In the works of Ch. Dickens there are many



ideally virtuous, kind, passive heroines from different walks of life (Roz Maley in *The Adventures of Oliver Twist*, Florence Dombey in *Dombey and son*”, Agnes in “*David Copperfield*”, etc.) These heroines, for all their softness, however, by the will of the author, strictly adhere to the norms of morality. It is the Dickensian heroines that most fully correspond to the Victorian model of a woman's behavior, as E. Zbrozhek describes it: “The main value orientations in the everyday moral culture of middle-aged women classes are sincerity, naturalness, modesty. Without openly despising anyone, she must have felt tender pity for the unfortunate person, or the inferior, or the “ignorant.” At the same time, she carried in herself an innocence and good-heartedness, which disarmed ill-will and brought her universal respect and love. The manners of a true lady on the street are regulated by the framework of the Victorian everyday culture is quite strict: as in the house, it is modest, careful, kind and requires appropriate treatment. She always carries with her a favorable atmosphere that attracts everyone and makes communication with her effortless”. Often the desire to portray just such a nude hero leads to the creation of images that are practically devoid of individuality, which is created only by attributing small cute weaknesses to the heroine (for example, the heroines of the novels by W. Collins, Laura Fairlie and Rachel Verinder, are distinguished by some capriciousness). Only a few authors manage to go beyond stereotyping of female images at the level of the author's attitude, although at the level of the plot, situations are resolved quite stereotypically. These are Rebecca Sharpe and Emilia Sedley in W. Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, Marion Halcombe in “*Woman in White*” by W. Collins, Tess in “*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*” by T. Hardy. Here the stereotypical images of the huntress for grooms, the good hero, the companion and the fallen woman find their more complex embodiment. At the same time, the plot is each time resolved by the triumph of virtue and the punishment of vice, the reward of an idealized beauty and a modest accepting his share of an ugly poor girl.

In women's literature, the image of a woman is more believable, here the theme of family, marriage comes to the fore. It should be noted, however, that although the role of the family in Victorian culture is very significant, by no means not a family woman becomes a symbol of Britain. Indeed, Victorian England produced two major figures who, in concentrated form represent the concept of the English national character: “The cartoons of continental Europe depict the Englishman as an aristocrat with a monocle, an ominous-looking capitalist in a top hat, or an old maid from Burberry”. The image of the latter was the result of serious social problems associated with the position of women in England. As E. Zbrozhek writes: “... according to statistics in 1830-1870. about 40% of Englishwomen stayed all their lives unmarried”. The problem of marriage for an English woman was unusually sharp. The same author emphasizes that Victorian life was conditioned by the fact that there was “an unnatural system of moral conventions that created deadlocks for those who wanted to arrange personal new life”. So, women and men during this period could not openly talk about their feelings, did not have the opportunity to stay alone before the announcement of the engagement to explain themselves, could not show feelings in open courtship. The fullness of the drama of the situation with marriage is revealed in J. Austen's novel “*Pride and Prejudice*”, written before the onset Victorian era, where, on the example of a family that was not lucky enough to have five daughters, and not yet burdened with a dowry, demonstrate almost all



possible options for marriage. The most realistic is option chosen by the main character's friend Charlotte, agreeing to a marriage that would give her "a roof over her head and a respectable position." The result of this state of affairs is the often completely implausible portrayal of love relationships and women themselves in Victorian literature. Absolutely unacceptable is a marriage through an escape chosen by Lydia, who also connected her life with an unworthy person, Wickham. Desired and the version approved by tradition, though not entirely plausible in the absence of funds in the bride's family, is the marriage of the second daughter, Jane, concluded after much courtship and negotiation. The story of the main character, Elizabeth, who marries for love, and even with a man much higher than her in position, this is rather a dream of a Victorian young lady, which can only be realized in literature.

Much more socially typified are satirical female images, the hallmark of which is the lack of beauty and / or youth, which makes their commitment to virtue excessive and therefore funny. One of these images is the image of Mary in *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, whose excessive commitment to reading books is regarded in full accordance with the canon of English society as a rejection of its feminine essence and is punished by the absence of a husband: "Mary, the only one in the family an ugly girl who was intensely engaged in self-improvement and was glad to show herself".

It is significant that here the desire for self-improvement is seen as an occasion for irony. In the same novel, the main heroine, Elizabeth is forced to convince Mr. Bingley's sisters that she does not experience excessive reading cravings. In Dickens's work, the reader encounters a whole gallery of spinsters, or widows who want to marry, who are depicted with more or less sarcasm from Mrs. Bardle in *"Pickwick Club"* and Mrs. Corney in *"The Adventures of Oliver Twist"* to the tragicomic and even sinister portrayal of Miss Havisham in *"Great Expectations"*.

Subsequently, this image in its most diverse versions becomes an invariable attribute of literature about the Victorian era, primarily humorous ("*Town*" by E. Gaskell, novels by A. Christie, G. Wodehouse, etc.). It is these parodic images in English literature that look the most nationally typical, while the images of ideal heroines differ from their European counterparts only in their excessive concern for virtue. All this leads to the fact that with the existence of a national male image, a broad embodiment of the national way of life, the national female image in the Victorian

Roman English novel as such does not add up and its place may occupy only the satirical image of an old maid, which is repeatedly encountered in Victorian novel.

By the end of the 19th century, the situation in literature, in parallel with the change situation in the culture is gradually changing. The assertion of the image of a "true lady" is manifested in mass literature through an increase in the importance of women's images and, in particular, ladies who, with care, patience and manifestation other, purely feminine virtues are achieved, including socially meaningful results. One of the first ideals of such a woman, embodied in the Victorian literature, is Lady Godiva from the poem A. Tennyson. Tennyson's poem idealizes precisely the social virtues of a true lady who rode naked through the city in order to free its citizens from the exorbitant taxes imposed by her husband. The gratitude of the townspeople was expressed in the fact that they all disappeared into their houses and did



not look out into the street so as not to see Lady Godiva. The image of an English lady who cares about the public good shows kindness to weak and at the same time, firmness in relation to vice, clearly manifested itself in the colonial novel.

A new type of woman appears in literature, opposed to Victorian ideal. In the work of T. Hardy, the image of a strong and independent woman with a tragic fate appears, who resemble Dickensian heroines only situationally, but not conceptually. The level of irony in the depiction of female images is reduced, this even applies to the image of an ugly old maid. The image of Marion Holcomb in the novel by W. Collins "Moonstone" is rather the image of a smart woman, whose virtues are not able to be assessed by English men due to their limitations. Thus, in the literature of the 19th century, in the process of self-identification there is an idea of the features of the English national character.

The ideal of social behavior (lady) is gradually transformed into a model national behavior in parallel with the blurring of social boundaries evidence of which is the rupture of the obligatory connection of the noble origin and following the code of conduct "lady". In parallel, on the basis of a social stereotype, a stereotype of national behavior is formed, distinguishing an Englishwoman from representatives of other nations.

Being half of humanity, a woman occupies a significant place in the literature of any nation. The name of a woman, the heroine of the work of art, is associated with the embodiment of artistic and aesthetic ideals in the literature of a particular country. In order to put into practice beautiful ideals, aspirations to the heights of moral and physical beauty, female images in art and literature were generously endowed with the best qualities. Therefore, a woman in art and literature often acquired a symbolic meaning.

The role of women was clarified, and the protection of the family, procreation, rearing, and obedience were limited by emphasizing and attaching physical attraction over special traits and intellect. Men were seemed to be as "normal", while women were considered to be as "other." This so-called "Other" depicted the state of the women in society, their inferiority. The word "woman" had few distinctive features or distinctions necessary to recognize her as a person. The traditional and accepted belief that women are "weak, submissive, gentle, dependent, selfless, emotional, and intuitive" is part of the accepted norm.

Early feminists emphasized the need for more consciousness of women to know and understand their place in the world. Simone de Beauvoir questioned conventional notions of women as specific "vessel" and "carriers" of the male race. "Women are breasts" Like de Beauvoir, many feminists believe that a full understanding of "the role of women" requires a full understanding of patriarchy and prevailing historical, cultural, and social values. They argue that men view women from men's own paradigms, and women are often forced to view themselves through the same lens. Feminist critiques have become the main tool used in analysis. These cultural works reflect or form literary and critical texts and are observed in the fields of writing, reading and evaluation. They focus on the gender perspective (images of women) presented in literary drama and they are the texts, who created these point of view of the image (male or female), and how and by whom these texts are read and evaluated. This is the real core of feminist theory. The first two essential principles of feminist theory are how "woman" is depicted in literature by male authors, as well as the vocabulary men use to



describe her and her status in society. This is the real core of feminist theory. The first to cover the content of these two criteria "femininity".

In literature, the roles of women have changed over time, but until recently the majority of published authors were male and the portrayal of women in literature may have been misrepresented. This is largely due to the fact that in the ancient world literacy was very limited and most people who could write were men. However, the contribution of women to oral folklore in folk songs, fairy tales, poetry and literature cannot be taken for granted. Below is the image of a woman in the literature of different eras.

Feminist criticism arose as a primary instrument for evaluating women's issues. According to Al-Joulani, "those cultural practices are reflected in or shape literary and critical texts, and traces them within the domains of writing, reading and evaluation. It targets the perception of gender (images of women) that a literary text offers, whose perception (man's or woman's) constructs these images, and how these texts are read and evaluated and by whom." This appears to be the essential heart of feminist thinking. Feminist literary criticism is primarily concerned with how it reacts to women in relation to their portrayal in literature. The first of feminist theory's two essential principles is how "woman" is depicted in literature by male authors, as well as the vocabulary men use to describe her and her status in society. The second premise examines how women are depicted in female writers' writings, as well as how they utilize language to represent her and her status in society. The creation of the woman in literary texts by men is known as phallogocentrism, whereas the building of the woman in literary texts by women has evolved into Gynocriticism, a type of feminist criticism pioneered by Elaine Showalter. Modern feminism has attempted to bring to the surface the cliché pictures of ladies in writing as either passive, harmless blessed messengers or horrendous spirits of fiendish, and to display a more evenhanded picture of woman in all angles of social life. Subsequently, the authentic pictures of lady as negative and woman as a second-class citizen have been more carefully scrutinized. One does not have to see as well distant over the borders to note the nearly non-existent status of ladies in some staunch patriarchal social orders in a few third-world nations where outright isolation still exists. In such social orders lady should fight with these sexual orientation disparities and stereotypical parts.

It is believed that the representation of the character in the literature of the XIX is a type of English gentleman. The paradox of the formation of a female type lies in the fact that at first it is presented in a parodic image of an English old maid, and only towards the end of the century an attractive female character is formed, which differs from the common European one.

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