

DOI: 10.24234/wisdom.v20i4.602

Olga STADNICHENKO,
Valentyna KRAVCHENKO,
Yuliia LASKAVA,
Volodymyr BONDARENKO,
Mariia LENOK

PHILOSOPHY OF THE FEMALE IMAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES IN FICTION

Abstract

The philosophy of the image of a woman, her behaviour and functions in society have changed over time. The processes of transformation of the philosophy of the female image can be observed in fiction, which is a means of comprehending the life of previous generations. Therefore, female images help to know better the national character, national spirit, even the national idea of the philosophy of each nation. The study's main goal is to reveal the philosophy of the female image in the context of the social circumstances of fiction. For a better understanding of the evolution and development of the philosophy of the female image in world literature, we have formed a morphological analysis of the image of a woman in fiction and a matrix of structural elements of the image of a woman in fiction in the context of different timeframes.

Keywords: philosophy, philosophy of image, female image, events, literature.

Introduction

The tendencies to distinguish between philosophy of feminine and masculine factors as inferior and dominant were recorded in humankind's spiritual and cultural heritage and led to the formation of certain cultural archetypes in the sociocultural space of a person. That is why the creation of stereotyped images or expected behaviour from a particular gender began to be interpreted as an element of the cultural experience acquired by the individual in the process of socialization. European culture and philosophy perfectly absorbed and reproduced the repressive experience of the feminine principle in its works, which made it possible to analyze the deep processes of retransmission of information hidden "encoded" in works to the next generations as a spiritual heritage of ancestors.

However, only in the 40s-60s of the twentieth

century, thanks to the involvement of various scientific schools and philosophy approaches, a systematic analysis of works of spiritual heritage was formed within the framework of its feminine interpretation, that is, through the disclosure of the symbols of the feminine as hidden in the text. Such an analysis made it possible to revise the works of lot sciences and separate from the author's depiction of the position of women in society and the family by the author's subconscious transfer of the then public sentiments (Agarwal, 2009).

In world literature, there are two interconnected systems of images. At the same time, the system of male images is at the centre of close attention of literary scholars, while researchers occasionally turn to females, considering only individual images, not linking them into a system and not revealing their typology.

Revealing the standard and distinctive fea-

tures of female images in the world literature of the XXI century makes it possible to determine the general laws of the literary process and contributes to the comparative typological study of national pieces of literature. The problem of confrontation with the content of paternal culture of the course of gender-oriented literary criticism, depending on their philosophical and theoretical orientation, was carried out in different ways, but in fact always going on the path of reflection on the special intuitive-unconscious nature of the female way of understanding the world and her specific way of being, activities in it. Thus, literature is declared a feminine phenomenon (Simon-ton, 1987).

As for literature created by women, it is assigned a special role in establishing this specific relationship with the “other”, since it has a more direct connection with literature and the ability to avoid masculine desires for domination and power (Eckert & MacConnell-Ginet, 2003).

The question of female emancipation takes various forms, and for some French theorists, the very concept of a woman acts as a radical force that undermines all the concepts, premises and structures of traditional male discourse. The specificity of the female perception of literature, the practical problems of the emancipation of literature from the dominant male psychology and the struggle against the male values in life, which are completely saturated with the world around them, are the essence of the feminist tendency to study a literary text. The main goal of the study is to reveal the philosophy of the female image in the context of social circumstances in fiction.

Methodology

The research methodology includes general scientific methods such as analysis and synthesis. The method of synthesis acts as a combination of abstract sides of an object and its reflection as a concrete whole. While the method of analysis studies the subject, mentally or actually dismem-

bering it into its constituent elements, for example, parts of the object, its signs, properties, relations, therefore, it considers each of the selected elements separately within the framework of a single whole. It also used methods of induction and deduction, analogy and modelling, abstraction and concretization, and specific graphical methods of modelling and matrix formation.

Historical and literary analysis methods were also used to study the role of women in the context of social circumstances in the fiction of different periods.

During the research, a morphological analysis was used, during which the concept and main features of the female image in fiction were investigated in detail.

Research Results and Discussions

The first attempt at representing the philosophical aspect of female images in classical literature is presented in the works of the legendary ancient Greek poet-storyteller Homer in his epic poems *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* (Caims, 2001). In these poems, Homer presented the primary type of female image characteristic of the ancient Greek literary tradition - the type of a faithful, loving wife. To this type belonged the heroine of the poem “*Iliad*” *Andromache* (Gaca, 2011). The main distinguishing feature of the ideal wife and woman in the ancient Greek tradition is the fact that “she lives in constant anxiety for her husband, who is destroying himself with his valor”. The fate of this type of heroine in ancient Greek literature is most often deeply tragic, and it is through tragedy that the entire depth of her greatness is embodied. This message serves as an example of a literary reflection of the social role of women in society (Alexiou, 2002). The tradition of such a display was preserved in the course of the further development of the European literary tradition, including in the Middle Ages.

In medieval European society, all the main areas of social life were tightly controlled by the

Christian Church and based on Christian canons. In this regard, the main tendency emerged in European literature, which consisted in the fact that religious literature occupied the predominant place in medieval literature. Religious literature in the Middle Ages included not only a wide range of liturgical literature developed over many centuries. Along with it, religious pathos was characteristic of many literary works that were not clerical in their general attitude, for example, French epic poems, in particular, “The Song of Roland”, where the ideas of defending the homeland and Christianity are indissoluble unity. Sometimes a religious component was introduced into the originally secular genre over time. However, in the era of the late Middle Ages, the opposite tendency also emerged. In particular, Dante Alighieri in his “Divine Comedy” endowed the traditional religious genre of “vision” with a humanistic pathos, and the Englishman Langland, in “The Vision of Peter Pahar”, with a rebellious and democratic pathos, antagonistic relationship with a religious tendency (Auerbach, 2007)

On the border of the Late Middle Ages and the early modern era, the great Florentine poet Dante Alighieri introduced a new word in the tradition of representing the philosophical aspects of female images in European literature. In his main poem, *The Divine Comedy*, he created the image of a woman, not only not standing below the man in the system of images of the work, he elevated the woman to a divine pedestal, creating the image of Beatrice. Almost all of Dante Alighieri’s works are inspired by and dedicated to Beatrice. In one of his poems, Dante Alighieri writes that “the good soul of Beatrice, full of all-mercy, ascended” (Ryan, 1993). Dante turns to the deceased beloved as the highest, most holy woman of Christianity - to the Mother of God herself. Beatrice in *The Divine Comedy* is a female “analogue” of Christ, although symbolically, in some parts of the poem, she is assigned an even higher role in relation to Christ. Thus, female love is elevated to Dante to the rank of Di-

vine and saving Love. And this is the pinnacle of Dante’s glorification of his beloved. The promise given to Dante as a poet was kept since no poet in world history wrote such words about a single woman (Grayson, 2003).

In the literature of the modern era and in the era of the Enlightenment, the representation of female images in European literature was closely connected with the philosophical aspect of public discussions about the rights of women and the problems of emancipation, about the role of women in society. In the eighteenth century, during the Age of Enlightenment, the most vivid representation of female images is present in the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In his works such as “Julia, or New Eloise” and “Emil, or On Education” (Rousseau, 2006). The representation of female images in these works expresses the personal philosophical attitude of Jean-Jacques Rousseau to the difference between the sexes and to the difference in the roles that men and women must correspond to. The appointment of a woman in Rousseau’s understanding is completely different from that of a man. She must be brought up exclusively for the home. The lot of a woman, according to Rousseau, is to adapt to the opinion of others, in the absence of any independent judgments, even of her own religion. The ideal of women’s life, thus, according to Rousseau, is reduced to blind submission to someone else’s will. Rousseau believed that the “natural state” of a woman is absolute dependence, and “girls feel made to obey,” that no serious mental work is needed for a girl (Rousseau, 2013).

In the nineteenth century, the French writer Georges Sand pioneered the feminist approach to the representation of female images in works such as *Indiana*, *Valentina* and *Consuelo*. In fact, Georges Sand’s novel *Indiana* became the first novel in the history of European literature to raise the problem of women’s equality, the first deeply feminist novel to postulate a woman’s independence and her right to personal happiness.

From the point of view of the problem of representing the philosophical aspects of female images in European literature, the work of George Sand became a fundamentally new trend, proclaiming the revolutionary idea of the need to recognize a woman as a hero worthy of the central role, both in literature and in life. This issue and a new look at the place and role of female images in the system of images in literature were

subsequently actively developed in the works of European writers of the 19th and 20th centuries (Eckert & MacConnell-Ginet, 2003).

To systematize the historical evolution of the images of women in fiction, we have formed a matrix of structural elements of the image of a woman in fiction in the context of different time frames and a Morphological analysis of the image of a woman in fiction (*Table 1*).

Table 1.

Morphological Analysis of Philosophical Aspects of the Image of a Woman in Fiction

Literary image	faithful and loving wife (Homer "Iliad"); the ideal woman is part of the divine principle (Dante Alighieri "Divine Comedy"); a woman is a housekeeper (Jean-Jacques Rousseau "Julia, or New Eloise"); a woman is equal concerning her husband (Georges Sand "Indiana").
Purpose	to be close to her husband, to help him (Homer "Iliad"); to be a muse (Dante Alighieri "Divine Comedy"); do household chores (Jean-Jacques Rousseau "Julia, or New Eloise"); the right to personal happiness and freedom (Georges Sand "Indiana").
Direction of activity	constant anxiety for the fate of her husband (Homer "Iliad"); loving husband with "extraterrestrial" love (Dante Alighieri "Divine Comedy"); to establish a life for human comfort (Jean-Jacques Rousseau "Julia, or New Eloise"); fight for equality and freedom of opinion and freedom (Georges Sand "Indiana").
The result that brings to the plot	a tragic end, which is another sign of her greatness (Homer "Iliad"); love between a man and a woman is unattainable, since it is not ideal and not divine (Dante Alighieri "Divine Comedy"); adjusting to the opinions of others (Jean-Jacques Rousseau "Julia, or New Eloise"); female emancipation and the development of feminism (Georges Sand "Indiana").
Role level in prose	1. Key person. Jean-Jacques Rousseau "Julia, or New Eloise"; Georges Sand "Indiana" 2. One of the main roles. Dante Alighieri "Divine Comedy" 3. Role of the second plan. Homer "Iliad";

The matrix of structural elements of philosophical aspects of the image of a woman in fic-

tion in the context of different time frames is in *Fig. 1*.

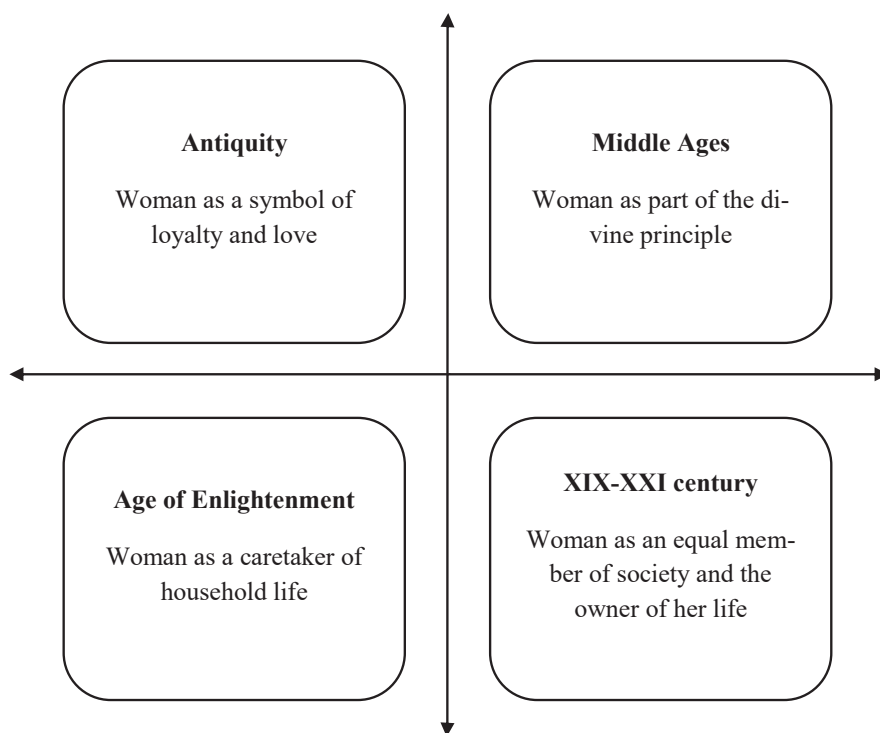


Figure 1. Matrix of philosophical aspects of structural elements of the image of a woman in fiction in the context of different time frames

The discourse of violence against women in European culture clearly emphasizes the attitude towards the feminine as weak, secondary, inert. The dominance of the husband and father in all spheres of life is established in society, and latent types of violence against women appear as a reaction to the gradual emancipatory movement in society. However, violence cannot be openly legalized in a society that professes a common Christian position. Therefore, it enters mainly in latent forms. The existential problems of women in European culture are presented as a set of repressive factors that become an obstacle to the socialization of women and their development as a person. In this context, it is important to understand that the discourse of violence acts as a special cultural phenomenon that has developed in the European culture of the 19th century due to the interaction of the established norms of patriarchal society and emancipatory tendencies. Violence against a woman is revealed as a threat of physical violence and as a system of social co-

ercion and restrictions that distort a woman's self-esteem and attitude to the outside world.

Violence is the main theme in the works. It is not revealed with modern simplicity when the author frankly points out to the reader an existing problem or hints at his attitude. In the writings of European writers, the scenes of violence, veiled in emotions, form a special metatext, revealed on the pages of the book. Such labour in the works of J. Austin, sisters Brontë, J. Eliot, E. Gaskell. It was they who, relying on biographical data, described in detail the violence against women as a silent social experience.

The English writer Brontë in her work "Willet", depicts the double conflict of a woman's inner world with those around her. The main character Lucy Snow feels that she is "haunted" by ghosts, which reveal to her an undesirable, negative meaning of events. Dividing the world in her own way, closed and external, hostile, she transfers all unsuccessful attempts at socialization into private life. This leads to the illusion of

persecution when something external prevents her from being herself. The author emphasizes her internal conflicts by playing with reality and a mirror. Looking in the mirror, Lucy cannot separate her own vision of herself and her evaluation by those around her. The girl got confused in the choice of which one wants to be, what it can be and, most importantly, which one needs to be in order to avoid conflict with society. Here the conflict of personality is revealed, which consists in the coexistence of two people inside her - the woman she feels herself to (the one who does not take into account her appearance) and the woman as a long-standing feminine stereotype. This woman should behave as a person and society expect from her.

Researcher Bledsoe points out that such behaviour is understood to be true “feminine” in society. It is this “acquired” artificial femininity that makes Lucy suffer and live in the cycle of her mistakes and actions (Bledsoe, 1980). Ms Fanshaw, Lucy’s friend, believes that the girl fulfils a certain role, so it is not known who she is. Lucy describes herself as a “character in disguise” herself (Brontë, 1985). The girl perceives life as a negative experience, and the only time she felt pleasure from the surrounding beauty was during the night festival. Under the influence of opium, she was walking at the street carnival: “I enjoyed what I saw: I drank the elastic night air - an echo of sound, a suspicious light, disappeared and appeared. I clasped the hands of Happiness and Hope, and right now I despised despair (Brontë, 1985)”. The state of the girl and the uncommonness of the street visualized her desire to abandon the dullness of the routine and look at the world differently. In addition to Lucy’s rejection of the outside world through internal conflict, there is also an inverse problem – her perception within society.

Brontë shows the attitude of others towards Lucy with her “home drama” through the performance of a dramatic work by actress Vashti. The violence that Vashti showed on the stage with her acting aimed to overcome, changing the

rock that pursued the hero she played. Her struggle on stage is an analogy to the experience of Lucy’s life roles, which the girl cannot perceive as a game, and as a game, she cannot reject. Vashti’s game aims to show the disclosure of the female essence, which is breaking free from oppression: “I saw in her something, not from a woman or a man: there was a devil in her eyes. They wrote hell on her straight, pompous eyebrows. They turned her voice into the sounds of torture. They changed her proud face into a demonic mask. Hatred and murder, and madness embodied in her. It was a breathtaking sight - in the grandeur of exposure. It was a low, horrible, immoral act” (Brontë, 1985).

Vashti’s peculiar performance of the role with the help of art shows the limitations of female sexuality, which is revealed in chaos and suffering, which turns the game not into manipulating people (as other actors in Willett do) but for revealing oneself. Her art is an aggressive reaction to the patriarchal limitations of aesthetic perception. It is not perceived as acting as an actor but rather as an attack of frenzy. The originality of the name “Vashti” is the result of a patriarchal calamity. Gubar and Gilbert (1979) point out that this pseudonym, which does not give out the sex of the actress, is intended to deprive December of the feminine, that is, the predetermined defective. Snow’s rejection of society, with its rooted traditions and certain roles (which the girl still tries on to herself), is revealed both in her aggressive attitude towards the environment and in society’s rejection of such an asocial person. Her aggression is expressed in outright fits of rage towards others and in a masochistic attitude towards herself. However, Brontë points out that Lucy does not belong to this society. The author introduces characters of different types, in contrast to which the degree of Lucy’s socialization is understandable. For example, her acquaintance with Madame Valreivens is like a fairy tale, when a little girl, carrying a basket and not suspecting anything, falls into the mouth of a beast. Lucy was asked to bring in Madame Valrei-

vens's basket of home decorations. Wandering from house to house in a downpour, she gets to the right room with the help of a priest. The horror that the heroine experienced when she saw the disgusting body of Madame Valreivens, who is a respected resident of the city, confirms his unwillingness to socialize and realize the need to establish contacts with people (Gubar & Gilbert, 1979). Lucy attaches a specific mystical meaning to Madame Valreivens, and in particular to her body, because a real person, in her opinion, cannot be like this: fairy tale... Her face was huge and was not kept in the neck, which did not seem to be but went somewhere from the chest... How frantically they looked at me... (Brontë, 1985).

By this opposition, Lucy and Madame Valreivens form a pair of opposites, but here they do not complement each other but form an alliance, where one, by virtue of his endowed abilities, slows down the vital forces of the other. However, Lucy, having voluntarily come to this woman, who symbolically descends from the attic (the attic of the Brontë sisters is the place where they close what the patriarchal-traditional society cannot control) only temporarily forms this pair of opposites with Madame Valreivens.

Lucy looks small, pale, frightened, asking to take the basket, but Madame Valreivens - plump, strong and dismissive refuses to take the basket. If these two images are opposite and cannot co-exist together, and society accepts Madame Valreivens as a noble lady who influences others, then Lucy, from a socially adaptive perspective, is a marginal element. Lucy experiences her juxtaposition with Madame as a moment in which she experiences a fear similar to Vishti's influence (Faraudello, Songini, Pellegrini, Massimiliano, & Gnan, 2017).

Through the description of the next couple, Brontë shows the dramatic development of events when a woman cannot overcome the feeling of fear as a constant awareness of the existence of a hidden self. The priest tells Lucy about the relationship between the young girl Justine Maria and Madame Valreivens. Valreivens, gui-

ded by her own convictions, "rebelled with all the rage of character, which turned into demonic time" and did everything possible to break the relationship between Mary and her young man, who was a financially unsuccessful candidate. The girl could not stand the confrontation, and therefore "she abandoned her first admirer, but, having accepted the other with a heavier purse, went to the monastery, where she died" (Brontë, 1985). Mary chooses to escape from the proposed life, which has no social meaning for her to a more ascetic one. However, sudden death, which can be understood as a conscious desire not to live, that is, to commit suicide, testifies to her inability to adapt to life after the social intervention. Flaubert also portrayed self-abuse as an inevitable period in a woman's life. Conflict with society expresses his behaviour, and appearance Bovary turned into her self-denial as a woman. To whom the patriarchal society attributes certain roles, the woman could not come to terms with this limitation. Society needs it the way society requires it, and not otherwise. Her husband approved her flirting and lover trips for his own satisfaction of the need for home peace. Even her suicide was more necessary for Justin (the assistant pharmacist) than her salvation because, at that moment, it depended on whether he would be punished or not.

Images of violence against women became an important element of European culture in the 19th century. The authors tried to emphasize the repressive basis of patriarchal society and its influence on the formation of women's personalities to show the reader the psychological crisis of each woman separately, who independently overcame this resistance.

Violence has ceased to be a denunciatory phenomenon of social and philosophical problems but has turned into a metalanguage of society's culture. That is why, in the XIX century, the "phenomenon of hunger" arises as a value-worldview position of self-restraint and self-torture.

Conclusion

Throughout the centuries-old history of the development of European literature, the representation of female images has served as one of the most effective mechanisms for creating complete literary works in their large-scale form.

The main goal of the research was to reveal the philosophy of the female image in the context of social circumstances in fiction. It was investigated that the philosophical aspect of the image of a woman in fiction has undergone significant transformations, starting from the image of a “faithful wife” and transforming into a “free-thinking and self-sufficient heroine of the first plan.”

In addition, the problems and social position of women in literary works were considered on the example of such writers as the Brontë sisters, J. Eliot and others. The disclosure of the facts of social and domestic violence against women has become an integral part of European culture. With the help of this, the authors tried to show how strong patriarchal influence reigns in society and how much women are limited in society.

References

- Agarwal, N. (2009). Voice of protest against ‘Universal Male Sexual Sadism’: An interview with Sarojini Sahoo. *Nebuna: A Journal of Multidisciplinary Scholarship*, 6(2), 1-10.
- Alexiou, M. (2002). *The ritual lament in Greek tradition*. (2nd rev. ed.). (D. Yatromanolakis & P. Roilos, Eds.). Lanham, Boulder, New York and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Auerbach, E. (2007). *Dante: Poet of the secular world* (R. Mannheim, Trans.). New York: New York Review of Books.
- Bledsoe, R. (1980). *Snow beneath snow: A re-consideration of the Virgin of Villette*. New York, Lon: Penn State University Press.
- Brontë, Ch. (1985). *Villette*. London: Penguin books.
- Cairns, L. (2001). *Introduction*. In *Oxford readings in Homer’s Iliad*. (D. L. Cairns, Ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eckert, P., & MacConnell-Ginet, S. (2003). *Language and gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Faraulello, A., Songini, L., Pellegrini, M., & Gnan, L. (2017). *The role of women as entrepreneurs in family business*. Routledge. Retrieved from <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315098531-5/role-women-entrepreneurs-family-business-alessandra-faraulello-lucrezia-songini-massimiliano-pellegrini-luca-gnan>
- Gaca, L. (2011). Girls, women, and the significance of sexual violence in ancient warfare. In E. D. Heineman, *Sexual violence in conflict zones. From the Ancient World to the era of human rights* (pp. 73-88). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Grayson, C. (2003). *Dante’s theory and practice of poetry*. In R. Lansing (Ed.), *Dante, the critical complex. Vol. 1. Dante and Beatrice: The poet’s life and the invention of poetry* (pp. 2-21). (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Gubar, S., & Gilbert, S. (1979). *The Madwoman in the Attic*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- Rousseau, J. (2006). *Emile, or, on education*. (A. Bloom, Trans). New York: Basic Books.
- Rousseau, J. (2013). *Mineola*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Ryan, C. (1993). The theology of Dante. In R. Jacoff (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Dante* (pp. 136-152). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Simonton, D. (1987). Historical trends in art and art criticism: Historiometric perspective. *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought*, 3(2), 687-703.