

OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE ON THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN LITERATURE

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INTRODUCTION

Women writers have played a significant role in the world literature, despite the historical obstacles they faced in accessing education and publishing opportunities. Their contributions to literature have been instrumental in shaping cultural and social narratives, and challenging patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes. Moreover, women writers have also contributed to the development of literary genres, such as the novel and the memoir. Women writers were instrumental in shaping the form of the novel, with writers such as Jane Austen and the Bronte sisters, who explored the complexities of women's lives and relationships. Similarly, women writers have been influential in the development of memoir as a literary genre.

Historically, women writers faced numerous obstacles that limited their opportunities to write and publish. Women were often denied access to education, which was seen as a masculine privilege, and their writing was often dismissed as frivolous or amateurish. Additionally, the publishing industry was dominated by men, who were often reluctant to publish works by women. However, despite these obstacles, women writers persevered and their works have had a profound impact on literature and society.

Key words: dominated, inferior position, publishing industry, representing, expectations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women's literature has often been defined by publishers as a category of writing done by women. Though obviously this is true, many scholars find such a definition reductive. What makes the history of women's writing so interesting is that in many ways it is a new area of study. The tradition of women writing has been much ignored due to the inferior position women have in male-dominated societies. Occasionally there were men who spoke out alongside women. Some of the first recorded attempts to note women's contributions to literature were catalogs published in the 18th century and were written by men. *Feminead* (1754) by John Duncombe and *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain Who Have Been Celebrated for their Writing or Skill*

in the Learned Languages, Arts, and Sciences (1752) by George Ballard are two such manuscripts. Yet for the most part, the majority of people interested in reading and responding to works written by women were other women. (By Adrienne Rivera. April 12, 2020)

One of the most significant contributions of women writers to world literature is their ability to challenge and subvert traditional gender roles and expectations. Women writers have been instrumental in representing the experiences and perspectives of women, and highlighting the ways in which gender inequality impacts women's lives.

DISCUSSION OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS FOR UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S ROLES AND EXPERIENCE IN LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

Women writers have also contributed to diversity and inclusivity in literature by bringing forth new perspectives and experiences that were often marginalized or ignored. Women writers from diverse cultural backgrounds have challenged the dominant narratives and represented their own cultures and experiences in their works. Despite their significant contributions to literature, women writers have faced numerous challenges in accessing education, publishing opportunities, and critical recognition. Women writers were often denied access to education, which was seen as a masculine privilege, and their writing was often dismissed as frivolous or amateurish. Additionally, the publishing industry was dominated by men, who were often reluctant to publish works by women. Women writers also faced critical biases, as their works were often judged according to gendered stereotypes and expectations. The relationship between gender, power, and representation in literature has been a central theme in the discourse on women writers in world literature. Feminist literary theorists have argued that women's voices and experiences have been systematically excluded from the canon of literature, which has been dominated by male writers. Women writers have challenged this exclusion by creating new literary forms and genres, and by representing the lives and experiences of women in their works. For example, the works of Virginia Woolf, such as "A Room of One's Own" and "Mrs. Dalloway," challenged the patriarchal norms of her time and advocated for women's rights and independence. Women writers were and are, still today, often held as inferior to their male writing counterparts, even for the most trivial piece of information about them or their work, and are therefore treated as copycats or imposters. Emmanuel Roidis, a Greek novelist and critic, who lived mostly in the 19th century, said that women should write "about needlework and cooking," and that if they are to address social, political or other such issues in fiction or nonfiction, they are only imitators of the male gender: a truly

infuriating thing to read, but an opinion that was held by most, at the time. Pen names, however, although utilized by men for different reasons, often, helped women in breaking out of the stereotypes, which they had been forced to endure.

DISCUSSION OF KEY THEMES IN THE NOVELS, SUCH AS SOCIETAL NORMS AND EXPECTATIONS, GENDER ROLES, RELATIONSHIPS, AND PERSONAL FULFILLMENT

Women's literature often explores key themes related to societal norms and expectations, gender roles, relationships, and personal fulfillment. One common theme is the societal expectations placed on women, particularly in relation to marriage and motherhood. Novels often explore how these expectations can limit women's choices and opportunities, and how women navigate these expectations while still seeking personal fulfillment. Gender roles are another important theme in women's literature. Novels often examine the ways in which gender roles are constructed and enforced, and how they can impact women's lives and relationships. Some authors challenge traditional gender roles and offer alternative visions of what it means to be a woman. Relationships are also a frequent theme in women's literature, particularly romantic relationships. Novels often explore the complexities of relationships and the challenges that women face in navigating them. This can include issues related to power dynamics, communication, and the expectations placed on women in relationships. Finally, personal fulfillment is a key theme in women's literature. Novels often explore how women find meaning and purpose in their lives, and how they can achieve personal fulfillment despite the obstacles they may face. This can include challenges related to societal expectations, gender roles, and relationships.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, women writers have played a significant role in world literature, challenging traditional gender roles and norms, creating new literary genres, and bringing forth diverse perspectives and experiences that were often marginalized. Despite the challenges they faced, women writers have persevered and their contributions to literature have been instrumental in advancing women's rights and independence, promoting diversity and inclusivity in literature, and shaping cultural and social narratives. The existing research on the roles of women writers in world literature highlights the significance of their works and their impact on literature and society. The representation of women in literature is a complex and nuanced topic that has been explored by scholars for decades. From the early feminist movements to contemporary literary studies, researchers have been interested in understanding how women are portrayed in literature and how these representations impact our cultural

understanding of gender. Through this overview of literature on the representation of women in literature, we can see that women have been both celebrated and marginalized in literary works throughout history. While some authors have given voice to the experiences and perspectives of women, others have perpetuated harmful stereotypes and limited representations. However, recent years have seen an increase in diverse representations of women in literature, reflecting the changing social and cultural contexts of the contemporary world. Women authors and female characters have become more visible and prominent in literature, exploring issues related to gender, identity, power, and agency. As we move forward, it is important to continue exploring and interrogating representations of women in literature, ensuring that they are complex, nuanced, and diverse. By doing so, we can create a more inclusive and representative literary landscape that reflects the experiences and perspectives of all women, and helps to challenge and transform cultural understandings of gender.

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