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THE EVOLUTION OF WOMEN'S SOCIAL ROLES IN 20-TH CENTURY UZBEK AND ENGLISH LITERATURE (ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE NOVEL "A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN" BY VIRGINIA WOOLF)

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Abstract:
The twentieth century was marked by sweeping social, political, and cultural shifts that fundamentally reshaped the status of women in society. These transformations were mirrored in the literary world, where female protagonists progressively transitioned from passive, dependent figures into self-reliant individuals with distinct identities and personal ambitions. While both Uzbek and English literature capture this evolution, each body of work reflects its own distinct historical, cultural, and ideological landscape. English authors frequently delved into themes of feminism, individuality, higher education, and equal rights. In contrast, Uzbek writers centered their narratives on women's involvement in social reforms, the preservation of family values, and the negotiation of national identity. Through a comparative analysis of selected literary texts, this article investigates the changing social roles of women throughout the twentieth century. Ultimately, the study uncovers key similarities and contrasts in how women are portrayed, illustrating the powerful ways in which literature mirrors broader societal shifts.

Keywords: social roles of women, comparative literature, Uzbek literature, English literature, gender studies, feminism, twentieth century.

Introduction

Literature has always reflected the social realities of its time. The representation of women in literary works is closely connected with historical developments, cultural traditions, and changing social values. During the twentieth century, the position of women underwent remarkable transformation in many parts of the world. Industrialization, educational reforms, political movements, and the struggle for equal rights encouraged women to redefine their roles both within the family and in society. These developments inevitably influenced literary representation, making female characters more complex, independent, and socially active.

In English literature, the emergence of feminist thought inspired writers to challenge traditional gender stereotypes. Virginia Woolf argued that women required intellectual freedom and economic independence in order to realize their creative potential [Woolf, 1929. – P. 4–6]. Her ideas became fundamental for modern feminist literary criticism and encouraged later writers to reconsider women's position in literature and society.

Similarly, Uzbek literature experienced significant changes throughout the twentieth century. The modernization processes of the early Soviet period, educational reforms, and increasing public participation of women influenced literary themes. Female characters gradually transformed from obedient daughters and wives into educated women capable of contributing to society while preserving national traditions [Karimov, 2015. – P. 74–79].

The purpose of this article is to investigate how women's social roles evolved in twentiethcentury Uzbek and English literature through a comparative literary approach. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between literary representation and historical reality.

The Historical Background of Women's Social Transformation

The twentieth century introduced dramatic changes in women's lives. In England, the suffrage movement, increased educational opportunities, and participation in both World Wars expanded women's social responsibilities. These developments encouraged writers to create heroines who questioned traditional expectations and sought personal independence [Beauvoir, 1949. – P. 35–38].

Virginia Woolf became one of the most influential voices advocating women's intellectual equality. In A Room of One's Own, she maintained that financial independence and personal space were essential for female creativity [Woolf, 1929. – P. 52–57]. Rather than portraying women merely as wives or mothers, Woolf presented them as thinkers capable of shaping culture and literature.

In Uzbekistan, women's social transformation followed a different historical path. The early twentieth century was characterized by educational reforms and campaigns promoting women's participation in public life. Literature reflected these changes by portraying women who balanced family responsibilities with education, employment, and social engagement [Allworth, 1990. – P. 118–123].

Despite cultural differences, both English and Uzbek literature reveal a gradual shift from traditional female roles toward greater autonomy. However, English literature primarily emphasized individual freedom, whereas Uzbek literature often highlighted the harmony between personal development and collective responsibility.

Comparative Analysis of Women's Social Roles in English and Uzbek Literature

The evolution of women's social roles in twentieth-century literature can be clearly observed through the comparison of English and Uzbek literary traditions. Although both literatures portray women experiencing social change, the historical circumstances and cultural values shaping these representations differ considerably. English literature primarily emphasizes personal freedom, self-realization, and gender equality, whereas Uzbek literature highlights women's contribution to family stability, national identity, and social development.

In English literature, female protagonists increasingly challenge patriarchal norms. Rather than accepting traditional expectations, they seek education, professional opportunities, and intellectual independence. Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway presents Clarissa Dalloway as a woman whose internal reflections reveal the limitations imposed by society despite her privileged social status [Woolf, 1925. – P. 37–44]. Woolf's stream-of-consciousness technique allows readers to understand the psychological complexity of female identity and demonstrates that social expectations often conflict with personal aspirations.

Another important English writer, Doris Lessing, explores women's search for identity in The Golden Notebook. The protagonist, Anna Wulf, struggles to reconcile her roles as a writer, mother, political activist, and independent woman. Lessing argues that female identity cannot be confined to a single social role and that women possess multiple dimensions shaped by personal experience and historical change [Lessing, 1962. – P. 82– 91].

Simone de Beauvoir's philosophical ideas also influenced twentieth-century literary discussions of gender. In The Second Sex, she famously argues that womanhood is socially constructed rather than biologically predetermined, emphasizing that society often defines women's opportunities and limitations [Beauvoir, 1949. – P. 267–272]. These ideas encouraged many English writers to reconsider female characters as active participants in social transformation.

Uzbek literature reflects a different yet equally significant process of change. Female characters often represent moral strength, devotion to family, and commitment to education while gradually gaining greater social visibility. Their development reflects the transformation of Uzbek society during modernization and educational reform.

Abdulla Qodiriy's O'tkan kunlar portrays Kumush as an intelligent, compassionate, and morally strong woman. Although she lives within traditional social structures, her wisdom, loyalty, and emotional resilience make her one of the most respected female characters in Uzbek literature. Kumush demonstrates that women possess moral authority even when their public opportunities remain limited [Qodiriy, 1926. – P. 145–156].

The poetry of Zulfiya represents another stage in the evolution of women's social roles. Her lyrical works celebrate women's dignity, education, patriotism, and emotional strength. Rather than depicting women solely within domestic settings, Zulfiya presents them as active contributors to society whose personal experiences reflect broader national development [Zulfiya, 1985. – P. 54–61].

Despite their cultural differences, both English and Uzbek authors challenge simplistic stereotypes of women. Female characters increasingly become independent decisionmakers who influence not only their families but also their communities. Nevertheless, the emphasis differs: English literature tends to focus on individual autonomy and personal freedom, while Uzbek literature frequently stresses the balance between individual growth and social responsibility.

These similarities and differences illustrate how literature reflects each society's historical experience. While feminism became a central literary theme in England, Uzbek writers often integrated women's emancipation into broader discussions of cultural continuity, national identity, and collective progress [Showalter, 1977. – P. 13–18].

The Influence of Feminism, Modernization, and Historical Change on Women's Social Roles

The transformation of women's social roles in twentieth-century literature cannot be understood without considering the historical events and ideological movements that shaped modern society. Feminism, industrialization, educational reforms, political revolutions, and globalization all influenced literary representations of women. Writers from both English and Uzbek literary traditions responded to these changes by creating female characters who reflected the evolving realities of their societies.

In England, the feminist movement became one of the most influential forces behind literary innovation. During the first half of the twentieth century, women increasingly gained access to higher education, professional careers, and political participation. The achievement of women's suffrage and the expansion of employment opportunities after the First and Second World Wars transformed traditional perceptions of gender roles [Showalter, 1977. – P. 24–31]. Consequently, literature began to portray women as independent individuals capable of making their own intellectual and moral choices.

Virginia Woolf argued that literature should represent women's authentic experiences rather than idealized stereotypes created by male authors. In A Room of One's Own, she emphasized that economic independence and educational opportunities were essential conditions for female creativity and self-expression [Woolf, 1929. – P. 65–73]. Woolf's ideas

inspired later generations of writers to question patriarchal traditions and expand the representation of women in fiction.

Similarly, Doris Lessing examined the psychological consequences of social expectations placed upon women. In The Golden Notebook, the fragmentation of Anna Wulf's identity symbolizes the difficulties women encounter while balancing family responsibilities, professional ambitions, and personal freedom [Lessing, 1962. – P. 214–226]. Lessing suggests that modern women should not be confined to a single social identity but should be free to define themselves according to their own aspirations.

In Uzbekistan, women's social transformation developed within a different historical and cultural framework. The early Soviet modernization campaigns promoted female literacy, education, and employment while encouraging women's participation in public life. Literary works of this period increasingly portrayed educated women as teachers, doctors, writers, and community leaders who contributed to national development [Allworth, 1990. – P. 171–178].

However, unlike many English literary works that emphasize individual liberation, Uzbek literature often presents women's progress as compatible with family values and cultural traditions. Female protagonists are frequently depicted as preserving moral integrity while embracing education and social responsibility. This combination of tradition and modernization distinguishes Uzbek literary representations from many Western feminist narratives.

The poetry of Zulfiya illustrates this balance particularly well. Her female characters are emotionally resilient, intellectually capable, and socially responsible. Rather than rejecting traditional values, they demonstrate that education, patriotism, and family commitment can coexist successfully [Zulfiya, 1985. – P. 82–90]. Such portrayals reflect the belief that women's social advancement strengthens both the family and society as a whole.

Despite differences in historical experience, English and Uzbek literature share several important characteristics. In both traditions, female characters gradually become active participants in shaping social life instead of remaining passive observers. Their personal development reflects broader historical changes and demonstrates literature's ability to document evolving cultural values.

Furthermore, twentieth-century literature increasingly recognizes women's voices as central rather than peripheral. Female authors, including Virginia Woolf and Zulfiya, challenged conventional literary perspectives by presenting women's experiences from their own viewpoints. Their works contributed significantly to expanding the representation of women in world literature and inspired future generations of writers to continue exploring questions of gender, identity, and equality.

The comparative study of these literary traditions demonstrates that although English and Uzbek societies experienced modernization differently, literature in both cultures portrays women's evolving social roles as an essential indicator of historical progress. The female image becomes not only a reflection of changing social realities but also a powerful symbol of cultural transformation and human development.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of twentieth-century Uzbek and English literature demonstrates that the evolution of women's social roles reflects broader historical, cultural, and ideological transformations. Throughout the century, female characters gradually developed from passive figures confined to domestic responsibilities into active participants in intellectual, cultural, i public life. Literature not only recorded these changes but also contributed to shaping new perceptions of women's identity and social significance.

English literature primarily presents women's emancipation through the concepts of individual freedom, self-expression, and equality. Writers such as Virginia Woolf and Doris Lessing challenged patriarchal assumptions by portraying women as intellectually independent individuals capable of determining their own futures. Their works emphasize education, economic independence, and psychological self-awareness as essential components of female identity [Woolf, 1929. – P. 108–114; Lessing, 1962. – P. 512–519].

In contrast, Uzbek literature portrays women's social development within the framework of national traditions, family values, and collective responsibility. Authors such as Abdulla Qodiriy and Zulfiya demonstrate that women's education, moral strength, and active participation in society contribute to both personal fulfillment and national progress. Rather than rejecting traditional culture, many Uzbek literary heroines successfully combine modern aspirations with respect for cultural heritage [Qodiriy, 1926. – P. 287–295; Zulfiya, 1985. – P. 143–149].

Despite these cultural differences, both literary traditions reveal significant similarities. Female characters become increasingly independent, educated, and socially influential while remaining central to the moral and emotional structure of society. Literature illustrates that women's changing roles are not isolated phenomena but essential indicators of broader social development.

The comparative perspective also highlights the importance of literature as a historical and cultural document. Through literary representation, readers gain insight into changing attitudes toward gender, family, education, and social responsibility across different societies. The evolution of women's social roles therefore reflects not only the transformation of female identity but also the modernization of society itself.

Future comparative studies may further examine contemporary twenty-first-century literature to explore how globalization, digital communication, migration, and intercultural dialogue continue to influence the representation of women in both Uzbek and English literary traditions.

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