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LEXICAL AND SEMANTIC MEANS OF REPRESENTING ANDROGYNRY IN LITERARY TEXTS

The article offers a comprehensive linguistic analysis of androgyny as represented in Orlando by Virginia Woolf. It situates the novel within the anthropocentric paradigm of modern linguistics and gender studies, emphasizing that gender in Woolf's prose is constructed not only narratively but lexically and grammatically. Drawing on the theoretical framework of A Room of One's Own, the study highlights Woolf's concept of the "androgynous mind," where masculine and feminine principles coexist harmoniously.

The article argues that androgyny in Orlando is achieved through specific lexical-semantic strategies: ambivalent nominations, oxymoronic constructions (e.g., "He was a woman"), and deliberate manipulation of gendered pronouns. Particular attention is given to the symbolic function of clothing vocabulary, which operates as a semiotic system shaping gender perception. Masculine and feminine lexical fields (breeches vs. crinolines) reflect shifting social roles and constraints.

The system of mirror characters—Sasha, Archduke Harry, and Shelmerdin – illustrates stages of gender awareness: fascination with ambiguity, parody of rigid roles, and harmonious synthesis. Through irony, allegory, and lexical repetition (vacillation, ambiguity, multiplicity), Woolf constructs gender as fluid process rather than fixed category.

The article concludes that Woolf deconstructs binary gender oppositions at the level of language itself, demonstrating that identity is dynamic and linguistically mediated.

Key words: androgyny, gender identity, lexical-semantic means, gender-marked vocabulary, Orlando.

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Криворізький ліцей «Кредо» Криворізької міської ради

ЛЕКСИЧНІ ТА СЕМАНТИЧНІ ЗАСОБИ ВІДОБРАЖЕННЯ АНДРОГІННОСТІ В ЛІТЕРАТУРНИХ ТЕКСТАХ

Стаття пропонує комплексний лінгвістичний аналіз андрогінії, представленої у романі «Орландо» Вірджинії Вулф. Вона розміщує роман в антропоцентричній парадигмі сучасної лінгвістики та гендерних досліджень, підкреслюючи, що гендер у прозі Вулф конструється не тільки наративно, але й лексично та граматично. Спираючись на теоретичну основу «Кімнати для себе», дослідження висвітлює концепцію Вулф про «андрогінний розум», в якому чоловічі та жіночі принципи гармонійно співіснують.

У статті стверджується, що андрогінність в «Орландо» досягається за допомогою конкретних лексико-семантичних стратегій: амбівалентних назв, оксиморонних конструкцій (наприклад, «Він був жінкою») та навмисного маніпулювання гендерними займенниками. Особлива увага приділяється символічній функції лексики одягу, яка функціонує як семіотична система, що формує сприйняття гендеру. Чоловічі та жіночі лексичні поля (штани проти кринолінів) відображають мінливі соціальні ролі та обмеження.

Система дзеркальних персонажів – Саша, ерцгерцог Гаррі та Шелмердін – ілюструє етапи гендерної свідомості: захоплення двозначністю, пародію жорстких ролей та гармонійний синтез. За допомогою іронії, алегорії та лексичного повторення (вагання, двозначність, множинність) Вулф конструє гендер як плинний процес, а не як фіксовану категорію.

У статті робиться висновок, що Вулф деконструє бінарні гендерні протилежності на рівні самої мови, демонструючи, що ідентичність є динамічною і опосередкованою мовою.

Ключові слова: андрогінність, гендерна ідентичність, лексико-семантичні засоби, гендерно-маркований словник, Орландо

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INTRODUCTION

At the current stage of linguistic development, there is a sustained interest in the anthropocentric paradigm, where language is viewed through the prism of human personality and social roles. Gender studies, which emerged as a separate field about 50 years ago, are now taking on a new meaning, transforming from a simple study of binary oppositions to an analysis of gender fluidity and variability.

The work of Virginia Woolf, a key figure in English modernism, is a key subject for such research. In her novel Orlando: A Biography (1928), the writer was ahead of her time, realising the concept of the 'androgynous mind,'

which she theoretically substantiated in her essay 'A Room of One's Own' (1929): 'Only when the male and female are fused does the mind reach its fullness' [3, p. 97]. While the literary aspect of the novel (particularly in the context of feminist criticism) has been thoroughly researched in the works of Western and Ukrainian scholars (S. Pavlychko, N. Zborovska, O. Polishchuk), the linguistic mechanisms of creating an androgynous image require more detailed study.

The relevance of the article is determined by the need to study the lexical level of the novel, where, in our opinion, the author's main 'game' with gender takes place: not only at the level of the plot, but also at the level of the selection of nominations, epithets and pronouns that destroy stereotypical ideas about "masculine" and 'feminine'.

The purpose of the article is to identify and systematise the features of gender-marked vocabulary as a means of creating an androgynous image in Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando*.

Based on the theoretical and methodological foundations outlined in the previous section, we consider the language of the novel *Orlando* as a social practice that not only reflects but also constructs gender identity. Analysis of the lexical level of the work requires consideration of the extralinguistic context — the intellectual atmosphere of early 20th-century English modernism, which largely determined Virginia Woolf's authorial strategies.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The novel *Orlando* (1928) appeared at a time when Victorian values were being re-evaluated and psychoanalytic theories were flourishing. The Bloomsbury Group, to which the writer belonged, became the centre of intellectual inquiry. As researchers note, gender issues interested the Bloomsburyites primarily in the context of the psychology of creativity. The central question of the discussions was the connection between gender and creativity: which mind is more productive — a clearly differentiated one (male/female) or one capable of synthesis?

Literary scholar Barbara Fassler points out in her essay 'Theories of Homosexuality as Sources of Bloomsbury's Androgyny' that the members of the group shared the belief that an artist must have 'a unique combination of masculine and feminine elements, characteristic of hermaphrodites and homosexuals' [1]. It should be noted that the term 'hermaphrodite' in the discourse of that time was often used not in a biological sense, but in a psychological sense — as a metaphor for the combination of opposite principles. Homosexuality, which in contemporary sexology (G. Ellis, E. Carpenter) was often regarded as 'inversion' or 'psychic androgyny,' became a model for modernists to go beyond binary logic.

Parallel to the aesthetic explorations of modernism, the suffragist movement (the first wave of feminism) developed, bringing women into the public sphere. One of the strategies of emancipation was an attempt to reject the traditional 'feminine essence.' Historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg notes that in the 1920s, the phenomenon of the 'new woman' was often associated with androgyny — a concept that allowed one to think of oneself as a 'social hermaphrodite,' a representative of an 'intermediate sex' that existed outside the patriarchal order [5].

However, Virginia Woolf went beyond a simple inversion of roles (where a woman simply adopts male attributes). For her, androgyny was not a rejection of gender, but a liberation from the 'tyranny of gender.' It is a state in which a person realises their full potential without being limited by gender norms.

The theoretical key to understanding the image of *Orlando* is Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929), written almost simultaneously with the novel. Reflecting on the nature of genius (using Shakespeare as an example), the author formulates the concept of the 'androgynous mind': "There are two forces in each of us, one masculine, one feminine... The normal and comfortable state is when these two live in harmony, cooperating spiritually. If you are a man, the feminine part of your brain must still function; likewise, a woman must maintain contact with the man within herself" [3, p. 97].

Woolf emphasises that a purely masculine or purely feminine mind is 'barren' because it is limited by a one-sided perception of the world. It is this ideal of a 'resonant and porous' mind, free from anger and dogmatism, that she artistically embodies in *Orlando*.

The realisation of such a complex philosophical concept required the author to make radical changes at the level of language. It is impossible to create a character who lives for 350 years and changes gender while remaining within the boundaries of traditional realistic discourse. Therefore, Woolf resorts to specific linguistic mechanisms:

lexical ambivalence – the use of words that can refer to both genders, or their unexpected combination;

grammatical play – manipulation of pronouns he/she and agreement of definitions;

ironic stylisation – parodying 'masculine' (biographical, historical) and 'feminine' (sentimental) writing styles.

It is the analysis of these means that will allow us to prove that *Orlando's* androgyny is not so much a physical fact of the plot as an effect achieved by the skilful selection of gender-marked vocabulary.

In the complex architecture of the novel *Orlando*, the system of characters serves not only to develop the plot, but also to provide psychological and philosophical reflection. Virginia Woolf skilfully uses secondary characters as specific 'mirrors' in which the protagonist sees reflections of various aspects of his own identity. These images are not static; they change along with the eras and transformations of *Orlando* himself, creating a dynamic dialogue between the 'I' and the 'Other.'

Analysis shows that each of *Orlando's* three key romantic partners — Princess Sasha, Archduke Harry, and Marmaduke Bontrop Shelmerdin — corresponds to a specific stage of understanding gender: from fascination with

ambiguity and ambivalence (Sasha), through rejection of the grotesque parody of gender roles (Harry), to the achievement of a harmonious androgynous synthesis (Shelmerdin).

The action in which Sasha appears takes place during The Great Frost, a historical event in the early 17th century, which Woolf transforms into a surreal carnival. This chronotope is key to understanding why 'exotic otherness' becomes possible here.

Woolf describes Sasha's figure using vocabulary that deliberately confuses the reader and the protagonist: '... a figure, which, whether boy's or woman's, for the loose tunic and trousers ... served to disguise the sex, filled him with the highest curiosity' [4, p. 26]. The key words here are 'loose tunic' and 'trousers.' In an era when the female body was strictly regulated by corsets and skirts, the presence of trousers becomes an act of radical transgression.

A linguistic analysis of Orlando's internal monologue demonstrates how language attempts, but fails, to grasp Sasha's fluid essence. Orlando initially identifies her as a 'boy' based on the dynamics of her movement: '... no woman could skate with such speed and vigour.' The words 'speed' and 'vigour' are semantically associated with the masculine principle. Woolf reinforces this mistake through rhythmic repetition: 'Legs, hands, carriage, were a boy's' [4, p. 27]. However, this certainty is shattered when confronted with details that do not fit into the masculine code: '... but no boy ever had a mouth like that; no boy had those breasts'. The use of contrast emphasises that Sasha exists in a state of vacillation between categories, embodying the ideal of androgyny that will become central to Orlando himself.

Sasha's 'exotic otherness' is further reinforced through a system of natural metaphors that displace her from human society into the realm of the elements. Orlando compares her to a 'fox,' an 'olive tree,' and an 'emerald.' The metaphor of the fox appeals to wildness and cunning, but also to an animalistic attractiveness that does not obey the laws of morality.

This fundamental difference is also evident at the linguistic level. The English language, which Woolf characterises as 'too frank, too candid' [4, p. 32], proves incapable of describing Sasha, whose essence is 'hidden'. Communication in French becomes a code for intimacy that goes beyond formal discourse.

If Sasha represents the tragic and poetic aspect of gender ambiguity, Archduke Harry (originally introduced as Archduchess Harriet) embodies the comical, farcical side of this phenomenon. This character is perhaps the most vivid illustration of the theory of gender performativity in the novel, demonstrating how gender can be not a natural given, but a costume worn to achieve certain social goals.

The appearance of Archduchess Harriet Griselda in Orlando's life (still married) evokes feelings of disgust and incomprehensible horror in the hero. Woolf describes Harriet as a bulky, awkward figure resembling a 'hare' or a 'tower' [4, p. 78]. This description is a caricature of femininity taken to the point of absurdity. Harriet is a man trying to 'play' a woman, but doing so ineptly, exaggerating the external attributes of gender.

The situation becomes maximally ironic when Orlando, having become a woman and returned to England, meets this figure again, who now takes off his mask and appears as Archduke Harry. A mirror inversion occurs:

- Orlando: was a man – became a woman (organic, magical transformation).
- Harry: pretended to be a woman – 'became' a man (social manipulation, cross-dressing).

This symmetry allows Woolf to expose the artificiality of social conventions. Harry admits that he dressed as a woman to be closer to Orlando, because his passion did not fit into the framework of male friendship. This confession makes Harry a kind of 'crooked mirror' for Orlando, showing a distorted, awkward version of transgender transition, motivated not by internal need but by external circumstances.

As a male suitor, Harry turns out to be boring, pedantic, and sentimental. He embodies everything that Orlando-woman finds burdensome in relationships with men. The scene where Harry cries, demanding sympathy, and Orlando is forced to play the role of a 'shocked woman' is a brilliant example of social criticism.

Orlando reflects: 'Orlando knew from her own male experience that men cry as often and as causelessly as women; but she was beginning to realise that women must be shocked when men show emotion.'

Here, Harry serves as a catalyst for Orlando's realisation that gender roles are a script imposed by society. Harry is not a true partner; he is a burden, a symbol of the past that tries to drag Orlando back into the trap of binary thinking.

If Sasha was a mystery and Harry was a mistake, then Marmaduke Bontrop Shelmerdin becomes the solution to Orlando's identity equation. He appears at the end of the novel, in an era approaching the present day, and his appearance marks the end of the hero/heroine's search.

Orlando and Shelmerdin's meeting in the marshes is characterised by instant mutual understanding. The culmination of their acquaintance is an exchange of lines that deconstructs all the previous gender tension in the novel: 'You're a woman, Shel!' she exclaimed.

'You're a man, Orlando!' he exclaimed. [4, p. 174]

This paradoxical exchange does not negate their biological gender, but points to a deeper psychological essence. Shelmerdin is a courageous sailor who has rounded Cape Horn, but he possesses empathy, intuition and tenderness, which are traditionally considered 'feminine' traits. Orlando is a socialite, but she retains the determination, independence, and adventurousness of her masculine past. In Shelmerdin, she finds a mirror that reflects her own complexity without distortion [2].

Shelmerdin is constantly associated with wind, storms, and movement. He is a sailor who is always ready to set sail. This resonates with Orlando's nature, which is also in constant motion through time. Shelmerdin does not try to 'anchor' Orlando in the role of a housewife (as Victorian society demanded). On the contrary, their marriage is a paradoxical union of two free spirits. Shelmerdin allows Orlando to be a woman, a man, a poet, and an aristocrat all at once. He is the perfect mirror that confirms the possibility of integrity in diversity.

An analysis of the system of mirror images in the novel Orlando allows us to conclude that Virginia Woolf constructs characters not as independent personalities, but as functional elements for revealing the central theme — the fluidity of identity.

1. Sasha acts as a catalyst, demonstrating the appeal of transcending binary gender roles and initiating Orlando's inner search. She is a mirror of desire.

2. Archduke Harry serves as an instrument of satire, exposing the absurdity of rigid gender roles through grotesque travesty. He is a mirror of social coercion.

3. Shelmerdin represents Woolf's philosophical ideal of androgyny, where masculine and feminine do not oppose but complement each other. He is a mirror of *truth and harmony*.

Thus, through interaction with these characters, Orlando goes from unconscious ambivalence to conscious integration of his multifaceted personality.

In the novel Orlando, language is not just a medium for conveying meaning, but an active participant in the creation of meaning. Virginia Woolf, experimenting with the form of biography, faces a challenge: how to describe an experience that goes beyond traditional linguistic experience, where every word, and above all pronouns, is marked by gender? Analysis of the text reveals that the author uses a complex system of linguistic devices – from grammatical games to lexical-semantic fields of clothing and allegory – to verbalise the process of gender transgression.

The most obvious and at the same time most radical linguistic experiment in the novel is the treatment of grammatical gender. Although English has a less pronounced category of gender than Ukrainian, it still rigidly links personal pronouns (he/she) to gender.

The culminating moment of gender change is a short sentence that divides the novel in half: 'He was a woman' [4, p. 97].

From a linguistic point of view, this sentence is a syntactic oxymoron. The subject He (a masculine marker indicating the past and continuity of the hero's memory) comes into direct conflict with the predicate a woman (a feminine marker indicating a new biological reality). Woolf deliberately avoids transitional constructions such as 'He became a woman,' choosing the linking verb was, which affirms the fact of being. This creates the effect of the simultaneous existence of two genders in one subject.

This phrase is accompanied by the narrator's comment: 'The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity' [4, p. 98]. The use of the possessive pronoun their is significant here. In the context of modernism, this can be read as a reference to the multiplicity of Orlando's 'I' (he+she), but in a contemporary reading, it resonates with the use of singular they as a non-binary pronoun.

After the transformation, the narrator (biographer) demonstrates deliberate confusion in the choice of pronouns. The text is replete with apologies and clarifications: 'we must now say "she" for convention's sake' [4, p. 98]. By using the word convention, Woolf emphasises that language is a social construct. She shows how language tries to 'catch up' with reality, but often proves to be insufficiently flexible. This play with pronouns creates the effect of a 'flickering' image, where the reader sees both a man and a woman at the same time.

Clothing in Orlando is not just a decoration, but a language spoken by the body. Woolf unfolds a whole philosophy of clothing, stating: 'Clothes wear us, not we them' [4, p. 132]. A lexical analysis of clothing names allows us to trace how the protagonist's perception of the world changes.

An analysis of lexemes denoting wardrobe reveals a clear dichotomy:

Masculine vocabulary: breeches, boots, cloak, sword. These words in the text are associated with verbs of movement: stride, flung, act. They connote freedom of movement and the right to power.

Feminine vocabulary: petticoats, crinolines, skirts, lace. This group of words is often accompanied by adjectives denoting weight, complexity and obstruction: heavy, encumbering, coiling.

Lexicon describing the 'Eastern' period (Constantinople) occupies a special place. The following words are used here: Turkish trousers, tunic, robe. In the text, these lexemes are marked as 'disguising the sex' or gender-neutral. 'Turkish trousers' become a symbol of a transitional state. They allow Orlando-woman to retain the freedom of movement characteristic of a man. When Orlando returns to England and is forced to wear a European dress, the text records a change not only in clothing but also in psychology: "She felt dragged down by the weight of the crinoline which she had submissively adopted. High battlements of thought, habits that had seemed durable as stone, went down before it" [4, p. 167]. The vocabulary of clothing here acts as a determinant of behaviour.

The transformation scene is unique in terms of style. Woolf introduces allegorical characters — Purity, Chastity, and Modesty — who try to prevent or conceal the sex change.

The language of these characters contrasts sharply with the ironic tone of the rest of the novel. It is a lofty, pathetic style, saturated with archaisms and biblical allusions.

Lady Purity: 'I am the guardian of the sleeping fawn; the snow is dear to me...' Her speech is full of images of coldness and sterility (snow, moon, silver).

Lady Modesty: 'I cover the speckled hen's eggs...' Her key action is to cover (hide) [4, p. 96].

Woolf uses these images to parody Victorian discourse, which attempted to silence physicality. The key lexeme here is *Truth*. The maidens fear Truth, calling it 'horrid' and 'naked.' A linguistic conflict unfolds between the maidens' verbose, euphemistic speech and the short, sharp sounds of trumpets calling for Truth: 'The Truth! The Truth!' The victory of Truth (the fact of gender reassignment) over allegory (social morality) is marked by a change in style: from poetic pathos to a dry statement of fact.

For a deeper understanding of the text, a number of specific lexemes that are regularly used to characterise Orlando's condition were identified and analysed.

Vacillation. This noun is often found in phrases such as 'vacillation from one sex to the other.' Unlike the word change, which implies a one-time transition from point A to point B, vacillation denotes a constant, rhythmic movement back and forth (pendulum). This word perfectly conveys Woolf's concept that gender is not a stable point, but a process of constant movement between poles.

Ambiguity. A lexeme with a positive connotation in the novel. It is used to describe the most attractive moments (Sasha's appearance, the morning of transformation). Ambiguity in Woolf is not a lack of clarity, but an excess of possibilities, a richness that cannot be contained in a single definition.

Unity vs. Variety. Orlando is constantly searching for Unity (found at the end with Shelmerdin), but her/his inner world is described through Variety. The text mentions the 'thousands of selves' that make up a personality. Woolf uses the vocabulary of multiplicity (multitude, many, diverse) to counter a simplified understanding of personality.

Thus, linguistic and stylistic analysis confirms that Virginia Woolf deconstructs gender at the level of the very fabric of language.

Violation of grammatical rules of gender agreement allows the author to emphasise the priority of psychological identity over biological sex, while the semiotics of clothing demonstrates how vocabulary associated with material attributes shapes the perception of gender (the thesis that 'clothing shapes us').

The stylistic contrast in the allegorical scene exposes the hypocrisy of social morality, which attempts to hide the 'naked truth' of the body behind euphemisms.

The use of specific terms, such as vacillation, allows the author to create a new language to describe non-binary experiences that go beyond static categories.

CONCLUSIONS

A comprehensive analysis of the novel *Orlando* in terms of its system of images and linguistic devices allows us to make the following generalisations. The novel is an innovative experiment in which Virginia Woolf not only addresses the issue of gender identity, but also seeks an adequate language to express it.

The system of mirror images (Sasha, Harry, Shelmerdin) allows the protagonist's inner states to be objectified, demonstrating various models of gender interaction: from fascination with ambiguity to parody and, ultimately, to harmonious synthesis. Each of these characters broadens Orlando's understanding of himself, proving that gender is not a sentence, but only one aspect of a multifaceted personality.

On a linguistic level, Woolf destroys the automatism of text perception through her play with pronouns, ironic use of allegory, and profound symbolism of clothing. She proves that language, like clothing, is a social construct that can and should be changed to reflect the complexity of human experience. The novel *Orlando* remains relevant today, offering a profound insight into the nature of identity, which, according to Woolf, 'is never just one thing.'

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