

## **GENDER IDENTITY IN A POSTMODERN TEXT: SCHOLARLY CONCEPT, MEDIA STEREOTYPE, LITERARY IMAGE**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Transformation of scholarly paradigms in the epoch of postmodernism as well as reaction to the challenges of the globalized world result in revision of the principles of social interaction and relocation of the crucial figures on the chessboard of moral and value. Here belong such concepts as “sex”, “gender”, “sexuality”, the correlation and representation of which generally constitute the present-day widely acknowledged understanding of gender identity. The traditional sex dichotomy man/woman used to be actualized as “male/female”, the inherent properties of those latter being synchronically formed and approved by society. As long as this established alliance provoked no doubts, the terms “sex” and “gender” alongside with the corresponding phenomena were considered synonymic. Hardly the scholars (S. de Beauvoir, S. Freud, E. Fromm, R. Lakoff, M. Mead, A. Oakley, G. Rubin, R. Stoller etc.) entered upon the first studies of distinctions between these and the inborn nature of sex and constructivist character of gender, a well-defined line of differentiation was drawn.

Like in philosophy and social sciences, the concept of gender has not got a homogeneous linguistic representation, either. The spectrum of gender lingual nominations counts dozens. These come both from self-defined gender identities and the socially apprehended nominated respectively phenomenon in question, what may be considered as a right of any society being a speaking community at the same time.

### **1. Gender Identity in a Scholarly Text**

The contemporary world development is notable for progressive technology and scientific investigations widely introduced in each sphere

of human existence. It results in the autonomy of personal problems and human rights<sup>1</sup>. Science penetrates both human consciousness and human activity as the most objective and unbiased way of treating and using real facts. Science boasts of strict rules and norms in accordance with which certain theoretical regulations are approved and accepted. Representation of scholarly research achievements in a verbal form reflects both scientific principles (factography, evidence, truthfulness, objectivity, clarity) and cultural norms of making these achievements public. The lingual format of scholarly texts rests on the following two positions: 1) information of the verified facts with 2) their accurate scientific explanation.

There is no unified definition of a **scholarly discourse**. It is understood as a phenomenon of lingual and social nature which due to its structural and semantic characteristics forms a milieu for a specific variety of communication, i.e. it constitutes a type of discursive activity according to the sphere of communication undertaken by a definite social/professional group in order to let the members of this group realize their status and role potentials within the institutional limits. Thus, scholarly discourse is an element of a more general **institutional discourse** – a constituent of **professional discourse**. Like a particular type of institutional discourse, it represents a specific worldview. Moreover, this worldview is considered to be the most objective.

Being a multifaceted phenomenon, a scholarly discourse is realized in various ways. The knowledge obtained in the course of scientific investigation is represented, preserved and transferred by numerous means among which a text is most widely employed. Here, linguistic characteristics of this medium come to the fore. So, a **scholarly text** is considered to be a component of institutional discourse which provides interaction in scientific sphere by means of verbal units. It is a communicative phenomenon in which a lingual aspect is combined with extralingual and cognitive<sup>2</sup>. **Postmodern scholarly text** is derived from the general concept of a scholarly text and embodies the paradigm of

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<sup>1</sup> Козловски П. Культура постмодерна: общественно-культурные последствия технического развития. Москва: Республика, 1997. С. 207.

<sup>2</sup> Лук'янова Т. Об'єктивація гендерних стереотипів англomовними атрибутивними сполученнями, що позначають природні характеристики людини. *Вісник Житомирського держ. ун-ту*. 2008. Вип. 39. Філологічні науки. С. 209.

postmodern philosophy while interpreting ontological basis, empirical data and their verbalization.

The idea of a society, people, their abilities, possibilities and strivings to realize themselves in a given society is revealed in new aspects in the postmodern period. Gender identity represented in a scholarly text is a culturally, socially and lingually constructed entity, a result of combination of stereotypically fixed images with synchronically variable principles of style, genre etc. The interest towards social gender stratification penetrates into scholarly spheres and acquires its adequate reflection by verbal means in a text.

Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the differences between men and women used to be explained by their biological specifics, and this approach was approved by religious postulates. But progressive trends like technical and industrial development caused transformation of labour distribution and shifts in social and gender stratification. Scientists were no longer limited by biological determinism and religion and felt free to investigate various socio-cultural manifestations of human inborn sex attributes.

So, a postmodern scholarly text appeals to both traditional (biological) semantics of gender (as an absolute synonym to sex) and a new one, which is treated as the socio-cultural manifestation of the latter. The following fragment may serve an example where “gender” is used in the meaning “sex, male or female”<sup>3</sup>:

One half of the sample drew even tangentially on biological explanations to explain **gender differences** in life expectancy: there were no discernible differences by generation. These accounts ranged from general descriptions of women being ‘tougher’, ‘stronger’, having a different ‘makeup’ or having increased ‘stamina’ compared to men<sup>4</sup>.

Here, in the course of life expectancy research, the authors observed groups of men and women. The biological stratification according to physiological (predominantly) and psychological characteristics into women and men is presented as gender differences. The title of the analyzed article, taken from the journal “Social Science & Medicine”, proves that the authors consider the lexemes “sex” and “gender” absolute

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<sup>3</sup> American Dictionary of the English Language. URL: <http://websterdictionary1828.com>

<sup>4</sup> Emslie C., Hunt K. The weaker sex? Exploring lay understandings of gender differences in life expectancy: A qualitative study. *Social Science and Medicine*. Glasgow, 2008. Vol. 67. P. 811.

synonyms: “The weaker sex? Exploring lay understandings of gender differences in life expectancy: A qualitative study”.

The late 20<sup>th</sup> century is marked by a ‘gender’ expansion in the natural, humanitarian and social sciences. It results in the appearance of numerous texts where a clear line of differentiation between gender and sex is drawn. Here, sexuality (not just a body) is taken into consideration as a leading criterion of gender identification. H. Cixous proclaims the relevance of gender, unlike the stability of body parameters (mind the year of publication):

... sexual opposition, which has always worked for man’s profit <...> is only a historico-cultural limit<sup>5</sup>.

Scholars of various fields undermine “a fixed identity, be it genetic, biological, or existential” and suggest ideas which “challenge the gender binary system that produces and maintains binary constructions such as male/female and hetero/homo”<sup>6</sup>. Gender identity is treated as no longer being based on physiological and anthropomorphic attributes; it results from a broad discursive practice and, unlike the inborn qualities of biological sex, is consciously chosen, self-defined<sup>7</sup>. The academia come to understanding that sex is what people are born with, gender is what people perform. Hence, quite naturally a theory of performative genders (J. Butler) takes its leading positions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century humanities. According to J. Butler<sup>8</sup>, gender is constructed in the process of human intercourse by means of speech acts and non-verbal communication. These ‘performances’ are portrayed in different kinds of texts where certain peculiarities may be picked up.

The most notable feature among these is vocabulary. The selection of gender relevant lexicon is determined by the stylistic peculiarities of scholarly texts. Though the analyzed articles used as the material for investigation were picked from journals of different humanitarian areas, there are some common features characterizing the gender vocabulary. Firstly, this is terminology. It is not homogeneous in etymology and

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<sup>5</sup> Cixous H. The Laugh of the Medusa. *Signs*. 1976. Vol. 1. № 4. P. 883.

<sup>6</sup> Tilsen J., Nylund D. Resisting normativity: Queer musings on politics, identity, and the performance of therapy. *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*. 2010. № 3. P. 66.

<sup>7</sup> Escudero-Alias M. Long Live the King: A Genealogy of Performative Genders. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009. P. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Butler J. Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. New York: Routledge, 1990. 172 p.

semantics. This is the typical situation with the new branches of science which are in the process of development. Their terminological systems are developing, too. Gender linguistics of postmodern period may be regarded as one of such paradigms.

The scholarly authors who follow the biological determinism of sex/gender correlation use lexemes man and woman as both indicators of inborn physiological attributes and their gender realization in social and cultural milieu. Alongside with these key nominations, the adjectives male/female, masculine/feminine serve to signal a person's sex and/or gender identity. The spread of interest towards gender problems and the "coming out" of queer identity caused the need of adequate lexical units to stand for non-normative identities. There emerged the whole clusters of words which can be classified according to different criteria.

The first group may be called semantic neologisms. These are words which alongside with their neutral meaning have acquired gender relevant semes. Here belong the adjectives queer and gay which in scholarly texts are most frequently found in terminological collocations like queer person, queer people, queer identity, gay men, gay partner, gay spouse. The lexemes underwent "positive resignification in the early 1990s, carried out by activist groups of queer people who wanted it to become a weapon of self-representation and self-expression"<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, there is a tendency to substantivize queer and gay so that a noun categories of number and case might be attributed.

The second group comprises compound words with the initial components hetero-, homo-, trans-. Though these formants possess different etymology (homo from ancient Greek meaning "same" through a Latin noun meaning "man"; hetero – from Greek adjective meaning "different"; trans is a former Latin pronoun meaning "through", but in its present usage it is just a clipped form of a noun "transition" which signals a change of identity, a shift in gender representation) they are quite productive in formation of different parts of speech in gender relevant lexico-semantic group: homosexual, homophobia, homonegative/positive, homogenized, heterosexual, heteronormative, heterosexism, heterosexualist, transgender, transsexual, transformative.

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<sup>9</sup> Escudero-Alias M. *Long Live the King: A Genealogy of Performative Genders*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009. P. 3.

The third group of terminological units is characteristic of scholarly fields which are developing while being investigated. The terminology is still being coined, so the terms to accurately nominate the new concepts have not been approved yet by the academia working in this sphere. That is why phrasal nominations of gender identity constitute quite a significant part in gender vocabulary. Such units both nominate and describe, e.g. heterosexual/homosexual men/women, genetic mother, surrogate mother, birth mother, non-White men/women, gender binary etc.

## 2. Gender Identity in a Media Text

English postmodern mass media texts reflect the contemporary public opinion and serve the communicative background for formation, functioning and transformation of gender stereotypes. Thus, gender identity is rendered as a stereotype reconstructed by language means. Mass media meet the social mainstream demands for freedom of self-presentation where public disclosure of gender identity is among the ways of liberation from the deep-rooted dual sex-gender correlation the violation of which marks both the marginal status of an individual and the dominance of patriarchal values among moral principles.

The **publicist** discourse “mirrors” gender as both resting on social stereotypes and formed by a journalist’s personal view of the phenomenon. The contemporary nomination of the style – **journalistic** – more adequately designates the social and lingual specificity of the texts it comprises. A present-day journalist is much more responsible for influence on public opinion than public speeches which are no longer a powerful instrument of persuasion but rather a PR necessity: “journalists compose their discourse from the discourses of their sources, taking decisions concerning how and why show or hide them”<sup>10</sup>. The publicist discourse researchers single out two key functions it fulfills: informative and suggestive, which should be realized simultaneously<sup>11</sup>. The suggestive influence is stronger if the information is presented in an expressive way.

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<sup>10</sup> Cunha G.X. The multiplicity of voices in the journalistic discourse: study of polyphony in Journalism in light of a modular perspective of discourse organization. *Intercom: Revista Brasileira de Ciências da Comunicação*. 2015. Vol. 38. № 2. São Paulo July/Dec. P. 159.

<sup>11</sup> Пономарів О.Д. Стилістика сучасної української мови: підручник. Тернопіль: Навчальна книга – Богдан, 2000. С. 12.

Verbal representation of publicist/journalistic discourse is predominantly realized through the texts published in mass media. The latter can boast of a longer “life” compared to the oral discourse. Hence, they become means of fixing and preserving information in the way of describing facts, data, opinions etc. That is why the term “**media text**” has been chosen for the present study to stand for a text component of publicist discourse published in a paper or an electronic mass medium.

It may seem reasonable to apply the lexeme ‘present-day’ in the meaning of “postmodern” considering these two words synonyms as far as the present research focuses on the period of early 21<sup>st</sup> century which is undoubtedly marked by postmodern transformations, at least, in the way of text semantics and structuring.

The gender concepts reflected in the analyzed texts are transformed in order to meet the requirements of the texts recipients. The editorial policies of the majority of media are aimed at receiving profit by enlarging the number of readers which in this sphere is reached by offering them the information they are eager to obtain. It explains the depiction of familiar stereotypes in media texts in which the readers recognize themselves or the people they know.

As the research proves, the gender stereotypes represented in postmodern mass media are usually based on discrepancy between sex and gender as different though interdependent entities. Thus, traditional understanding of sex/gender correlation is depicted as a routine feature of social life:

*Until extremely recently it was accepted that your **gender is what you are born with**, not the subject of personal choice, and that is what most people still believe<sup>12</sup>.*

Here, the author states that in patriarchal tradition the concept of sex (=gender) is treated as an innate constituent but not the result of a personal choice.

The present-day mass media texts split the former biologically determined sex/gender dyad and undermine the traditional concept of a man as a breadwinner and a woman as a born housewife as well as strict division of society members into males and females. **Queer** identity gets

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<sup>12</sup> Brocklehurst S. Philippa York ‘I’m fine with who I am’. BBC News. URL: [http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-40946654?intlink\\_from\\_url=http://www.bbc.com/news/topics](http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-40946654?intlink_from_url=http://www.bbc.com/news/topics)

its interpretation in media discourse and signals a new dimension of personality identification.

The research shows that a media text tends both to represent different stereotypes and construct them. Media transmit the already formed stereotypes of mass consciousness and those where the mediapolitics is directed to. The former fix and spread the familiar concepts and images, the latter signal the genesis and organization, grouping of some amount of new information the community members possess. This information scope gets its verbal signification and appears as a consolidated new entity “legitimized” by a mass medium.

So, several clusters of gender stereotypes as depicted in mass media texts may be singled out. They are as follows:

1) stereotypes of **femininity/masculinity**. This group is grounded on social ideas of psychological traits of men and women which generally oppose each other.

The media texts analysis proves that postmodern **masculine** gender stereotypes are marked by logical thinking, prosperity, financial success, activity, violence, domination, ethnicity, appearance and are rather performed than inborn. Postmodern transformation of a masculine stereotype consists in certain courage to violate the social pattern of masculinity introducing some new features into it.

Postmodern **feminine** stereotypes reveal the revision of patriarchal view of women’s subjectivity, emotionality, lack of logic, specific professionalism, appearance and beauty, social roles, reproductive and matrimonial functions.

What’s more, gender stereotypes are construed via body, social intercourse, labour distribution, cultural norms, hierarchy of values, sexuality. Gender identity in present-day mass media texts implements both traditional and novel ideas about gender, destroys the principles of masculine-feminine subordination and advocates sexual and social egalitarianism. This is adequately reflected by journalists:

*A new study shows **gender stereotypes** are just as strong today as they were 30 years ago <...>*

*The study, published in the journal *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, compared data from 195 college students in 1983 to data from 191 adults in 2014. The participants from each period rated the likelihood that a **typical man or woman** has a set of **gendered characteristics**. The researchers found that despite greater diversity in the 2014 sample,*



*people continue to strongly **stereotype men and women on personality traits.***

*People exaggerate the extent to which **men and women are different from one another**<sup>13</sup>.*

Here, *gender stereotypes* mean *typical man or woman has a set of gendered characteristics*. The form “gendered” instead of just “gender” as an attribute signals their construction, not an innate feature.

**Queer** stereotypes verbalized by queer identity nominations appear in media texts to indicate changes in the social consciousness concerning traditional inviolability of sex-gender dyad.

Among the complexity of decisions any journalist must take in every disputable situation, the concept of queer remains one of the most controversial. The confusion between the lexical meaning of “sex”, “gender” and their correlation result in the public conflicts where the top politicians are involved:

*The Trump administration has also aggressively shifted positions in cases involving **gay rights**, said Human Rights Campaign legal director Sarah Warbelow. In a New York case involving a skydiving instructor who alleged he was fired after telling a customer he was **gay**, the Trump administration’s Justice Department weighed in to argue that a federal law barring “**sex**” **discrimination** means **discrimination based on gender** and doesn’t cover **sexual orientation**. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission under President Barack Obama took the opposite view<sup>14</sup>.*

In the quoted fragment, the notions of “sex” *discrimination* and *discrimination based on gender* are treated semantically similar and do not imply *sexual orientation* what causes a legal collision as it violates personal rights (*he was fired after telling a customer he was **gay***). The nomination *gay* stands for a queer identity meaning social and cultural representation of sex, sexuality and a corresponding appearance and behavioral model known as gender.

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<sup>13</sup> Beech S. Men really ARE from Mars: Gender stereotypes still strong today despite rise of feminism. *Sunday Express*. URL: <http://www.express.co.uk/life-style/life/651175/Men-from-mars-gender-stereotypes-strong-today-despite-rise-feminism>

<sup>14</sup> Gresko J. At high court and others, Trump reverses legal course. *The Times Record*. URL: [http://www.timesrecord.com/news/2017-09-29/Nation%7CWorld/At\\_high\\_court\\_and\\_others\\_Trump\\_reverses\\_legal\\_cour.html](http://www.timesrecord.com/news/2017-09-29/Nation%7CWorld/At_high_court_and_others_Trump_reverses_legal_cour.html)

The present-day newspaper text makes differences between queer identities and euphemistically calls them *transgender people*, the nomination often serving an umbrella term for each member of LGBT abbreviation (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender). Moreover, contemporary media texts do differentiate between them and apply appropriately regarding the mentioned above identities as particular, as can be seen, for example, in the title “*Joining a public battle changed this private **transgender** woman's life*” (The Washington Post, April 30, 2016) where the contents reveal the life of a person with male-to-female transition.

It is generally known that mass media direct the society in formation and regulation of moral values, communication schemes, ethical norms. If the present-day agenda includes gender identity representation and apprehension, media fulfill the task. Thus, queer identity nominations are characteristic of newspaper texts of late 20<sup>th</sup> – early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Let's consider the example:

*After decades of fighting her family, her community and herself over her **gender identity**, Kendall Balentine finally made peace with it. She became content to live out her retirement quietly, for the first time in her life as a woman, with her wife and dogs in the relative isolation of Deadwood, S.D.*

*<...> "All my life, I put myself in harm's way because **I couldn't be who I was**," said Balentine, 49, a retired Marine and deputy sheriff who fully **transitioned from living as a man to a woman** last year. "I decided now I was willing to die for who I am and fight for those who didn't have a voice."*

*Balentine is part of a **new wave of transgender people** stepping out of the shadows to fight a surge in state bills requiring people to use the bathrooms, locker rooms and dressing rooms that differ from their **gender identity** – measures they consider unnecessary, dangerous and rooted in **offensive stereotypes**.*

*Many, like Balentine, have been recruited for the spotlight by national **lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender** rights groups, scrambling to address a critical weak spot in their broader fight for rights: the country's unfamiliarity with **transgender people**<sup>15</sup>.*

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<sup>15</sup> Somashekhar S. Joining a public battle changed this private transgender woman's life. *The North Jefferson News*. URL: [http://www.njeffersonnews.com/cnhi\\_network/joining-a-public-battle-changed-this-private-transgender-woman-s/article\\_a611211b-4817-5cdc-9e81-c0c46fe6cc4d.html](http://www.njeffersonnews.com/cnhi_network/joining-a-public-battle-changed-this-private-transgender-woman-s/article_a611211b-4817-5cdc-9e81-c0c46fe6cc4d.html).

This fragment depicts several stereotypes: 1) the society traditionally recognizes gender identity by birth certificate; 2) state authorities carry out the regulatory policy according to sex but not gender; 3) queer-identity is formally designated by a limited number of types abbreviated as LGBT; 4) there is no social understanding of queer diversity, i.e., gay and transgender are synonyms in this fragment (though they are not); moreover, the lexeme “*transgender*” is taken as a generic term for all queers. Such verbal confusion is perceived by the readers and influences the formation of queer as a concept;

2) **professional** activity characteristic of men and women. It is based on social practices and often demonstrates the masculine gendered dominance. Women are traditionally employed in executive spheres and service, men – in creative, instrumental and representative<sup>16</sup>. But the present-day politics witnesses the shift of gender distribution and more and more ladies become leaders of nations and countries thus ruining the ancient stereotypes. The British Prime Minister is one of the best examples:

*May is paying the price for **mismanaging Johnson** during **her period of political hegemony** after she became leader. After he was betrayed by Michael Gove and lacking any particular faction in the parliamentary party, she brought him back from the brink of political death by making him Foreign Secretary, but also used her strength and his weakness to shrink his empire<sup>17</sup>.*

The fragment depicts female dominance what is marked by the lexeme *hegemony*. Teresa May saved Boris Johnson from political death which showed *her strength* and *his weakness* – word combinations, stating the postmodernist confusion among the social distribution of stereotypical gender roles. The traditional nominations of conventional male/female attributes – **strength** and **weakness** – are preserved, though;

3) norms and manners of social behavior, depicted in mass media, are sufficiently dependent on **sexuality** and its adjustment to conventional forms. Sexuality is one of the chief components of gender identity, its most recognizable sign. Congruence between a biological sex and sexual

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<sup>16</sup> Магдюк Л. Гендерні стереотипи. Вплив гендерних стереотипів на представлення чоловіків і жінок на ринку праці. *Маркетинг в Україні*. 2011. № 5–6. С. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Bush S. Theresa May is paying the price for mismanaging Boris Johnson. *New Statesman*. URL: <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/staggers/2017/09/theresa-may-paying-price-mismanaging-boris-johnson>

orientation forms a traditional heterosexual gender identity which is supported by a widespread social moral and approved by social status. Deviations of normative sex-gender combination is regulated by mechanisms of social influence, among them – vistas, from which such phenomena are given in mass media. Hence, the traditional sexual female portrait abounds in subjectivity, weakness, dependence, victimization and lack of self-confidence. Stereotypes stress differences in male and female sexuality and treat them as naturally expected. Therefore, media publish numerous materials of such kind:

*The judge pointed out **the victim had not attained the age of consent** at the time of the incident.*

*“She has categorically stated in her cross-examination that the applicant had **repeatedly sexually assaulted her**,” he said.*

***The man**, a resident of Nashik, was convicted and sentenced by a POCSO court in 2016 to imprisonment for 10 years.*

*He, however, approached the HC for bail arguing he had not committed the said offence and that he deserved to be let out on bail since **he was the sole breadwinner of his family**<sup>18</sup>.*

Here, the most striking issue doesn't lie in the fact that a female under age had been *sexually assaulted*, but the reason which the criminal considers valid enough to release him from prosecution – *he was the sole breadwinner of his family*. The man had been brought up in the community where women were dependent on men in financial provision, and the latter used this status to commit crimes.

But the postmodern outlook makes it possible for alternative sexualities to appear on the printed page. Liberation of social apprehension of those with queer identity increases politicians' popularity as can be seen in the following example:

*But why is **Merkel** still seen as **a strong, almost unchallengeable chancellor**? A Guardian writer says one of **her key strengths** is her ability to disarm her opponents and demobilise their supporters by integrating their more left-wing policies into her own party's narrative. There is some truth to this, as shown in her moves on the **gay-marriage***

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<sup>18</sup> Having a boyfriend doesn't mean a woman can be sexually assaulted. *The Tribune*. URL: <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/having-a-boyfriend-doesn-t-mean-a-woman-can-be-sexually-assaulted-hc/472751.html>

*bill, the renewable energy bill, the minimum wage and the refugee question*<sup>19</sup>.

One of the reasons why the German Chancellor won the election is her intention to support *the gay-marriage bill*.

Mass media employ various means of verbal representation of gender identity. Here belong stylistically neutral nominative lexemes, scholarly terms, colloquialisms, word-building and semantic neologisms, idioms.

So, it may be stated that gender identity in contemporary mass media is a mirror of social life and moods. But, on the other hand, the readers should keep in mind the manipulative function of the press which is determined by the editorial policies. In postmodern theory of text interpretation, a reader is a co-author, so s/he has not only to perceive what is offered by a journalistic text but be active in transformation and decoding the information in order to make its cognitive influence most positive.

### **3. Gender Identity in a Literary Text**

Verbalization of gender identity in a postmodern literary text is an artistic process the result of which is an image with clearly defined attributes allowing the reader to identify him/her as a representative of a definite gender. No matter how realistic an author wants his/her characters to look from the pages of a fiction text, they are always of dual nature bearing some real features and those developed by the author's power of imagination. So, if the author's aim is to represent an individual with a definite gender identity, the depicted character will be endowed with the identifying attributes to the greatest degree. Asking herself a question why image is so central to a man's consciousness, Carolyn F. Gerald suggests it is because "all images, and especially created images, represent a certain way of focusing on the world outside, and therefore they represent a certain point of view"<sup>20</sup>. So, literary text images, bearing characteristic features of a gender identity, reflect the perception of the world by a gender identified individual.

Gender identity in a literary text is derived from the existing model of sex-gender correlation. Besides, the idea of cultural relativity should be

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<sup>19</sup> Beppler-Spahl S. Why Merkel and Co want to keep politics 'boring'. *Spiked*. URL: <http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/why-merkel-and-co-want-to-keep-politics-boring/20321#.Wclh1jVx3cs>

<sup>20</sup> Gerald C. F. *The Black Writer and His Role. African American Literary theory: a Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 2000. P. 81.

taken into consideration<sup>21</sup>. So, postmodern understanding of gender arises and develops from a pre-postmodern period of its interpretation which is traditionally dual: a masculine/feminine dichotomy. This is where the analysis should be started.

Postmodern **masculine identity** in a literary text splits into a group of images. The key concept is marked by a lexeme “man”. In a text, it reveals the semantics of dominant social position due to the biological sex:

“*We waited a long time for you. In a family, **the man is the king**. Without you, I die – no king*”<sup>22</sup>,

and may be used metaphorically and ironically to expose the loss of former dominance (or, rather, “hegemonic masculinity” as R. Connell calls it) over women:

*Men stand around her, a **black-suited** afforestation rooted with brief-cases to the sleek, carpeted lounge. They talk and move from one leg to another like ninepins in a bowling alley. In the midst of the **wood** Charity glimpses one **tree**, the upstanding, blue-eyed, far from honourable Mark Carleton*<sup>23</sup>.

The other masculine images include such types as “husband”, “father”, “son”, “professional man”, “boy”, “lover (boyfriend)”. There are few instances when a literary character embodies a single type of identity. As a rule, a personage performs several identifying functions, depending on the social context.

Sufficient changes in society’s perception of a woman originate from the publication of Simone de Beauvoir’s book “*The Second Sex*” (French: “*Le Deuxième Sexe*”) in 1949. Since then, the academia, media, socio-cultural communities began to focus their attention on a woman as a subject of social progress, not just an object following a man. The phenomenon of “woman” penetrates into the centre of empirical research signaling a formation of a new paradigm – *anthropology of women*<sup>24</sup>. So, the present-day understanding of **feminine gender identity** is determined by social roles associated with biological female sex. It comprises the

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<sup>21</sup> Кісь О. Жінка в традиційній українській культурі (друга половина XIX – початок XX ст.) : монографія. Львів, 2012. С. 56.

<sup>22</sup> Fu K. For Today I Am a Boy. URL: <https://www.goodreads.com/reader/49839-for-today-i-am-a-boy?percent=1.385412>

<sup>23</sup> Oakley A. The Men’s Room. London: Flamingo, 1991. P. 301.

<sup>24</sup> Кісь О. Жінка в традиційній українській культурі (друга половина XIX – початок XX ст.) : монографія. Львів, 2012. С. 45.

acquired psychological, behavioral, social and cultural attributes which are stereotypically associated with a woman's function in a community.

“Woman” is a collective image which generalizes the attributes traditionally referred to as feminine. Social attempts to transform the stereotypical concept of a woman became obvious in a postmodernist period, among them was the second wave of feminism. Traditional moralists resisted the inevitable changes in the social status of women what may be illustrated by a fragment of A. Oakley's novel “The Men's Room”:

*She wanted Rachel to be like her, like her mother, and not to have cropped her hair and lack finesse and argue all the time. She wanted **women** to give **womanhood** to **women**, and saw feminism as an attack on this<sup>25</sup>.*

The image of a woman can be identified without the key lexical unit nominating it:

*Her **hourglass figure** shimmied away with the distinct **ticktock of her shoes**<sup>26</sup>.*

Here, a feminine character is easily recognized by a stature (*hourglass figure*) and the sound stereotypically produced by women's shoes (*ticktock of her shoes*).

Postmodern fiction exposes new feminine characters which could hardly be found in the pre-postmodern period, among them – single mothers, divorced or just single women:

*I'm divorced, you see, and I've got four children, so I have to work quite hard to fit everything in.'*

*She could see he was interested in this information. 'An **independent woman**?' he asked.*

*“An **independent woman**,’ she confirmed<sup>27</sup>.*

The character from the fragment has to work hard to raise her four children but she consciously gave up her previous status of a wife to get a new one – an *independent woman*.

Feminine characters in postmodern literary texts are grouped into such types: “wife”, “mother”, “housewife”, “professional woman”, “girl”, “daughter”, “bride”, “mistress/girlfriend”. Quite often, feminine

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<sup>25</sup> Oakley A. The Men's Room. London: Flamingo, 1991. P. 53.

<sup>26</sup> Fu K. For Today I Am a Boy. URL: <https://www.goodreads.com/reader/49839-for-today-i-am-a-boy?percent=1.385412>

<sup>27</sup> Oakley A. The Men's Room. London: Flamingo, 1991. P. 117.

characters combine different identifying types fulfilling gender relevant functions in corresponding surrounding. It proves the suggestion that a postmodern gender identity is a multifaceted phenomenon, socially and culturally constructed, where the biological sex is no longer a nucleus. On the contrary, the latter is not fixed but seems to be diffusive and fluctuating.

Postmodernism as a philosophy paradigm reveals the transformation of biological sex dichotomy into plurality of genders. According to J. Derrida, it is a natural way of things when “binary and hierarchized oppositions”<sup>28</sup> split into variety. Such variability of sex/gender correlation caused the appearance of a generalized phenomenon of “otherness” which advocates gender identities different from archaic masculinity and femininity. Since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is known as **queer identity**. The semantic background of the phenomenon combines “non-normative sexualities intersected with other identity categories such as race and class, calling for a positive resignification of homosexual identities and practices”<sup>29</sup>. So, sexual practices with partners of the same biological sex constitute the main feature of a queer identity:

*Perhaps from the way I sat there staring at the floor, he added quickly, “I am not **queer**. I’ve got a **girl** up in Innisfil”*<sup>30</sup>.

The character from the quoted fragment proves his heterosexuality by mentioning that he has a girlfriend (*I’ve got a girl*).

Synonymic to “queer” in fiction texts are identity nominations with a component “trans” which may stand for transgenders, transsexuals, transvestites etc. The enlisted lexemes are no longer considered marginal and informal in the polite vocabulary. They identify individuals brave enough to expose their “otherness”:

*“...and I found out all kinds of history on **TG’s**. For instance, did you know in ancient Greece and Rome, Philo writes about men transforming into women?”*

**TG’s. Transgenders**<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Derrida J. *Of Grammatology*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. P. 31.

<sup>29</sup> Escudero-Alias M. *Long Live the King: A Genealogy of Performative Genders*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009. P. 8.

<sup>30</sup> Fu K. *For Today I Am a Boy*. URL: <https://www.goodreads.com/reader/49839-for-today-i-am-a-boy?percent=1.385412>

<sup>31</sup> Peters J. A. Luna. URL: <http://www.bestfreenovels.net/Young-adult/Luna/>



Queer identity individuals have developed a wide system of lexical nominations and their derivatives where abbreviations are quite often: *T-girl* (*Trans-girl*), *MtoF* (male-to-female transsexual), *FtoM* (female-to-male transsexual) etc.

Beside the already mentioned, such gender identities as “homosexual”, “transsexual”, “butch”, “stone-butch”, “femme”, “drag-queen”, “drag-king”, “gay”, “lesbian”, “crossdresser”, “intersex(ual)” appear in postmodern literary texts.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of theoretical sources and scholarly, media and literary texts enables to deduce the following positions: 1) the nature of gender as a socio-cultural representation of sex is characterized by ontological duality: it is culturally constructed and culturally constructing, a process and a result; 2) postmodern gender identity is a heterogeneous entity comprising physiological, social, psychological, cultural, natural etc. factors which come to the fore depending on the context of personal intercourse; 3) signification of gender identity by lingual means reveals the its contents as far as it employs the available lexical, morphological, word-building and syntactic patterns with either a familiar or resignified semantics and stylistic properties.

The most notable feature of postmodern gender linguistics is vocabulary. The research proves that scholarly texts apply stylistically marked formal lexemes constituting the terminology of the field. The developing stage of gender terminological system is marked by numerous compounds and phrasal terms used to nominate gender identity types. Media texts represent both stereotypical view and novel tendencies in nominating gender identity. Journalists practice formal, neutral and even informal gender markers to make their texts comprehensible for the vast strata of readers. Postmodern literary texts experiment in introducing various lexemes and lexical clusters to stand for gender identity nomination and signification.

Postmodern gender identity is not interpreted as a synonym to sex identity, it has a broader semantics where the latter is one of the components. Unlike biological attributes, gender is an option of personal choice adopted by an individual after sufficient consideration, experience of feelings and sensations. It may not be stable, but can fluctuate due to the inner or/and outer conditions of an individual.

## SUMMARY

The paper considers the manifestation of gender identity in English postmodern texts of three functional styles: scholarly, media and literary. In scholarly texts, gender identity is interpreted as a scientific object possessing a fixed set of attributes. Here belong a biological sex, physiological and psychological peculiarities verified by the relevant research. The academia's interest towards queer identity reveals the influence of postmodern ideology upon the scholarly world.

Media texts both broadcast mass stereotypes of gender identity and form new ones. They bear nominations and descriptions of masculinity/femininity, professional activity and sexuality stereotypes introducing new dimensions and nominations of them.

In postmodern literary texts, gender identity is a fictional image represented by various lingual means of morphological, lexical, word-building and stylistic means. Instead of traditional duality of male/female, a fiction text abounds in plurality of masculine, feminine and queer characters.

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