

GENDER ROLES IN "LAPPIN AND LAPINOVA" BY VIRGINIA WOOLF

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Virginia Woolf's "Lappin and Lapinova" as a profound exploration of individual identity that contradict with societal expectation. This writing utilizes the critical framework established by Constantinople (1973), which analyzes the construction and representation of gender in literature. Additionally, it incorporates insights from Thompson and Bennet (2015) regarding the impact of these norms on interpersonal dynamics. In "Lappin and Lapinova," Woolf intricately portrays the transformation of Rosalind and Ernest into Lapinova and Lappin, respectively. Rosalind's shift into the empowered Lapinova symbolizes liberation from stereotype gender roles, while Ernest's discomfort reflects societal anxieties surrounding masculinity. This dual transformation of both characters on a journey of self-discovery challenges foundational societal expectation. Ultimately, their experiences reveal the complexities of gender identity and provoke critical questions about authenticity in a societal expectation. This research contributes to the understanding of gender roles in literature and underscores the positive impact of challenging societal expectations on gender identity.

Keywords: short story, gender identity, societal expectation, power dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

Gender stereotypes refer to the widely held beliefs and assumptions about the typical traits, behaviors, and roles associated with a collective group of individuals of a particular gender in the society. These typical people's beliefs of how a particular gender are described in text can cause harmful effects to individuals that leads to unfair treatment (Jeyaraj & Delany, 2024). This article aims to identify the shift of gender role between Rosalind as a wife and Ernest as a husband in short story "Lappin and Lapinova" by Virginia Woolf.

The convergent validity of measures for self-reported conventional masculinity and femininity is evaluated in this study. It described them as lasting sets of characteristics, actions, looks, and interests generally identified with males and women, respectively, in accordance with (Constantinople 1973). While acknowledging larger studies on many elements of gender, including gender-role norms (Athenstaedt, 2000; Thompson & Bennet, 2015; Klocke & Lamberty, unpublished manuscript), the study focuses on people' self-assessments.

Deaux and Lewis' groundbreaking study from 1984 examined the connections between a wide range of variables that influence how we conceptualize gender. They examined how our judgments of gender and sexual orientation are influenced by the interactions of personality characteristics, occupations, role behaviors (such as childcare versus leadership), and physical qualities (such as size compared to voice tone). The findings show that individuals may readily infer one aspect of gender from another, lead to the formation of a logical theory of gender identity. Additionally, the study demonstrated that physical appearance had a considerable impact on perceptions of the relationships between gender components. This suggests that gender stereotypes may hold a fundamental notion of "core" masculinity and femininity along with a variety of associated traits, behaviors, and occupations. It's noteworthy that individuals might utilize this "fundamental" idea to influence how they see their gender.

Also, (Eagly 1987) proposes that social roles play a key part in shaping our behavior historically, women have taken care of others (communal), while males have held positions of more authority and were viewed as forceful (agentic). Our behavior in social situations might be influenced by these prejudices and disparities in expertise. Stereotypes spread when a person's gender is more significant to the circumstance. However, certain positions such as manager or employee dictate conduct when those roles have greater significance. Men and women may respond somewhat differently even in situations when stereotypes aren't completely in charge because of the abilities they've acquired in their regular social positions.

In Virginia Woolf's short fiction "Lappin and Lapinova" has a married couple named Ernest Thornburn and Rosalind. The narrative centers on Rosalind's initial years of marriage to Ernest Thornburn, a union motivated by their mutual fantasy of becoming Queen Lapinova (hare) and King Lappin (rabbit). A wonderful story about love, class, sadness, connection, escape, independence, and control is Lappin and Lapinova by Virginia Woolf. During the first few years of their marriage, Rosalind started to see her husband as a rabbit because of his nose-twitching habit, which she connected to King Rabbit Lappin, who establishes regulations for all rabbits. She carried on living in her dream world with his spouse at her side, evolving as King Lappin and Queen Lapinova.

Different and constricting images might be created for men and women based on traditional gender conventions. The masculine role, which is characterized by authority defined as possessing societal power and control over decision-making is frequently associated with the involvement of men. They are responsible for the funds, jobs and other responsibilities. Conversely, women are usually allocated the feminine role, which is defined as taking care of the family and organizing household chores are

examples of domestic obligations. Inside the sphere, their primary focus is on commitments to their family and the house. There are limits on the power and influence to make decisions.

These rigid divisions can be deceiving and limiting as they fail to adequately capture the variety of experiences and personalities that exist among people of all genders. These roles may have had historical value, but generally they limit opportunities and promote negative views toward both men and women. It's critical to realize that these are only social constructions and that true fulfillment and social contributions shouldn't be limited by outmoded ideas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper exploring gender roles and identity has been a significant area of inquiry in literary studies, particularly in the context of modernist literature.

(Fernandez, 2023) The journal paper offers a thorough examination of gender dynamics, highlighting the complexity of gender experiences influenced by social expectations and cultural conventions. This is consistent with your interpretation of Woolf's writing, which challenges gender norms and encourages a reexamination of identity fluidity.

Intersectionality and Identity, The study emphasizes how identity is intersectional, which is essential to comprehending Woolf's Rosalind and Ernest characters. The paper and Woolf's narrative both highlight the complex structure of gender roles and the social forces that shape them by looking at the interactions between different identities.

Educational Empowerment, The article discusses the impact of educational opportunities on gender dynamics, suggesting that empowerment through education can challenge existing norms. This concept can be linked to Woolf's narrative, where the characters' experiences reflect the potential for liberation from societal constraints through self-awareness and critical thought.

Virginia Woolf's short story "Lappin and Lapinova" serves as a rich text for examining the complexities of gender identity and societal expectations. This writing employed theoretical frameworks from scholars such as Constantinople, Deaux and Lewis, and Eagly, this review underscores the significance of understanding gender as a social construct that shapes individual experiences. Woolf's narrative not only critiques traditional gender roles but also invites readers to reconsider the fluidity of identity and the potential for liberation from societal constraints. Through the characters of Rosalind and Ernest, Woolf challenges foundational societal norms, offering an advanced exploration of gender identity that remains relevant in contemporary discussions of gender role in literary works.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive qualitative method was employed in this writing. According to (Nassaji 2015), descriptive research seeks to depict and categorize phenomena. As a result, this study used a qualitative design since it characterized the gender role in Lappin and Lapinova short story by Virginia Woolf to frame the analysis. This writing utilizes the critical framework established by (Constantinople 1973), which provides a comprehensive lens for investigating the construction and representation of gender roles in literature. This framework is essential for understanding how Woolf's characters navigate and respond to societal expectations within their interpersonal relationships.

Additionally, the study incorporates insights from (Athenstaedt 2000) that emphasizes the psychological internalization of gender norms, as well as the findings of (Thompson and Bennet 2015), which focuses on the implications of these norms for interpersonal dynamics. By synthesizing these perspectives, the research aims to illuminate the complex interplay between gender roles and

character interactions in Woolf's narrative, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of her literary contributions.

DISCUSSION

In the enchanted realm of the rabbit world, two spirits go on a journey that will change their lives. Rosalind was initially bound by the stifling demands of domesticity, and then she shed her flesh and became Lapinova. The meek wife was replaced with her moniker, which is an echo of the French term "lapin" (rabbit), which signifies agility and boldness. In this fantastical environment, she was able to repress long-suppressed animal urges and assert her agency by hunting fiercely and defending her territory. This was a fearless reclamation of her own self and a defiance of the stereotype of the subservient woman.

Ernest likewise took on the mask of "Lappin," initially he enjoyed portraying the archetypally masculine role of the strong protector. Being in command and in control felt wonderful, it was fulfilling to assume the roles of provider and protector in society. However, this satisfaction proved to be fleeting. Lapinova's growing independence and confidence undermined his enjoyment, making the illusion a burden. He was resentful because he questioned the traditional "masculine" role. Lapinova's rise to prominence undermined his concept of masculinity and reflected the anxieties of a culture adjusting to shifting gender standards.

Their personas extended beyond their attire. In the roles of Lapinova and Lappin, they surpassed human limitations by voicing primal desires and questioning gender expectations. The rabbit world's whole geography shifted and developed, reflecting how arbitrary and ever-evolving their identities were. Their studies became an escape as they discovered aspects of themselves concealed beneath social standards. Not only were they playing roles, but they were also challenging and pushing back against gender and masculine norms.

When power dynamics shifted, favoring Ernest first and Lapinova later, traditional ideas of male dominance were called into question. This was not only a personal transition; it was a remark on the complex co-dependency that is fostered by societal conventions. The fact that each person relied on the dream for a different reason demonstrates how deeply ingrained roles may affect people's desires and aspirations. The blurring of borders and shifting power dynamics caused Ernest and Rosalind to start questioning their true identities. Their allocated roles crumbled, leaving them vulnerable to the malleability of identity. When they entered the rabbit realm, it was more than just pretend play; it was a journey within themselves, a dance of uncertainty and liberation. that tested not just their own perspectives but also the very fabric of societal expectations.

Additionally, the data demonstrates Rosalind's transformation from a reserved wife within the prevailing societal hierarchies of gender, women frequently resort to somewhat submissive (Syeda Mumduha Masab Zaidi, Sana, Zaibunnisa, Sahar Zahoor, 2024) to a self-assured Lapinova. The "chintz and mahogany," which are symbols of domesticity, first "satisfied" her. But there's a subtle discontent underneath, like a seed craving for sunlight. This discontent turns into action when Lapinova shows up. Rosalind defies the stereotype of "passive femininity" now that she is armed with a rifle and lantern. Her boldness challenges societal conventions and restores control, upending the existing quo. The French name "Lapinova," which means "rabbit," itself suggests this transformation; it suggests swiftness and dexterity in stark contrast to the gentle "Rosalind."

Ernest's journey is equally intricate. He enjoys himself much when he plays the "King," first basking in the power of "Lappin". It was him who conformed to the stereotyped "masculine" image by "strutting, he commanded, he protected." However, this satisfaction proves to be fleeting. Lapinova's

growing aggression alters the dynamic, making the fantasy difficult. His developing dissatisfaction stems from the fact that his prescribed "masculine" position is being challenged. Woolf deftly depicts this with Ernest's inner monologue: "The game had become one-sided. It was all Lapinova now." This shift reflects the anxieties of a society trying to adapt to shifting gender roles and the dismantling of long-standing power systems.

These interconnected tales prompt us to consider the power dynamics at play, Power dynamics in couple therapy are defined as patterns of influence between partners, affecting their perceptions and behaviors(Young & Seedall, 2024).

The early power that favors Ernest evolves as Lapinova gains autonomy, challenging conventional ideas of masculine authority. This shift in power highlights the complex codependency that is supported by societal standards in addition to being personal. Due to their different reasons for depending on the dream, both characters demonstrate how deeply ingrained roles may influence individual aspirations, however there are successful collaborations often require navigating these power imbalances to create equitable arrangements (Macaulay, 2025).

Ultimately, the story brings up unanswered questions about identity. The blurring of lines and shifting dynamics of power drive Ernest and Rosalind to confront who they really are. The rigid roles they had been portraying start to break apart, and their identities become more fluid. Their journey via the rabbit world is not just a place for role-playing; it's a dance of uncertainty and liberation that challenges not just their own views but also the fundamental assumptions of society. From this short story we can learn that Lappin and Lapinova explore 3 gender roles in few ways as shown below:

a. Confinement and Escape

Rosalind, the main character, feels confined and unable to leave her home life. She has an opportunity to break free from the restrictions imposed on women in her day by entering the fantasy realm of Lapinova. This demonstrates the expectations society had of women in that time period.

b. Power Dynamics

Rosalind (as Lapinova) is able to assume a more dominant position as queen thanks to the fantasy realm. This stands in contrast to her actual restricted power.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Woolf's "Lappin and Lapinova" takes us to a fantastical universe where Rosalind and Ernest, instead of wearing human skins, are covered in the fur of Lapinova and Lappin. This goes beyond simple costume wear. Here, freed from domesticity, Rosalind explores her wild tendencies as Lapinova, shattering gender stereotypes by wielding a gun rather than a needle. At first, Ernest takes pleasure in playing the protector, but as Lapinova asserts herself, Ernest is forced to rethink his definition of what it is to be a man.

Beyond clothes, their figures defy strict classifications and represent universal emotions. The way the surroundings shifts reflects their moods and reflects the mobility of their evolving identities. As Lapinova gains autonomy, the power dynamic changes, upending preexisting hierarchies and highlighting the complex codependency that is supported by cultural norms.

The merging of lines and the sharing of power force both characters to confront who they really are. Their journey becomes more than just a fun distraction; it becomes a profound introspection that

challenges not only their personal opinions but also the basis of social norms. "Lappin and Lapinova" concludes with a complex examination of gender that challenges gender stereotypes and emphasizes the subtleties of individual identity. But it begs the question, what does it actually mean to be an individual apart from the roles we carry out?

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