

## Rewriting Identity: Gender, Memory, and Cultural Politics in Modern World Literature

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### ABSTRACT

**Background.** Modern world literature has increasingly become a critical site for negotiating identity in the context of shifting gender relations, contested memories, and evolving cultural politics. Literary texts produced in diverse sociopolitical contexts reflect ongoing struggles over representation, power, and belonging, particularly as global and local forces intersect to reshape individual and collective identities.

**Purpose.** This study aims to examine how modern world literature rewrites identity through the interconnected lenses of gender, memory, and cultural politics, highlighting literature's role in challenging dominant narratives and rearticulating marginalized voices.

**Method.** The study employs a qualitative interpretative approach using comparative literary analysis informed by feminist theory, memory studies, and cultural criticism. Selected literary works from different cultural and geopolitical contexts are analyzed through close reading to identify recurring themes, narrative strategies, and ideological positions.

**Results.** The findings reveal that literary narratives reconstruct identity by destabilizing fixed gender norms, reworking personal and collective memory, and contesting hegemonic cultural discourses. Memory functions as a narrative tool for resistance, while gendered experiences shape alternative representations of history and power. Literature emerges as a space where cultural politics are negotiated through storytelling and narrative form.

**Conclusion.** This study concludes that modern world literature plays a transformative role in rewriting identity by integrating gender, memory, and cultural politics, thereby contributing to more inclusive and pluralistic understandings of contemporary social realities.

### KEYWORDS

Identity, Gender, Memory, Cultural Politics, World Literature

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### INTRODUCTION

Modern world literature has increasingly functioned as a crucial arena for rearticulating identity in response to shifting gender relations, contested historical memories, and evolving cultural politics (Abdullah, 2026). Literary texts emerging from diverse geopolitical and sociocultural contexts reflect how individuals and communities negotiate belonging amid transformations driven by globalization, postcolonial legacies, and sociopolitical change (Ahmedi, 2023). Literature no longer merely mirrors social realities

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but actively intervenes in the construction and deconstruction of identity narratives.

Gender and memory have become central thematic axes through which modern literary works interrogate power, subjectivity, and representation (Astitha & Nikolopoulos, 2023). Gendered experiences shape narrative perspectives that challenge normative identities, while memory operates as a mechanism for reclaiming silenced histories and alternative pasts (Messner, 2025). Cultural politics intersect with these dimensions by framing how identity is regulated, resisted, and reimagined within literary discourse.

The increasing visibility of marginalized voices in modern world literature underscores the importance of examining identity as a dynamic and contested process (Bill dkk., 2024). Authors employ narrative strategies that destabilize fixed categories of gender and history, revealing identity as a product of ongoing negotiation (Min dkk., 2025). Understanding these literary processes is essential for grasping how cultural meaning is produced and contested in contemporary societies.

Despite the growing body of scholarship on modern world literature, existing studies often treat gender, memory, and cultural politics as isolated analytical categories (Boncori & Williams, 2023). Such compartmentalized approaches risk overlooking the complex interdependencies through which identity is constructed and transformed within literary narratives (Neimeyer & Harris, 2023). This fragmentation limits comprehensive understanding of how literature rewrites identity in holistic ways.

Research on gender in literature frequently emphasizes representation and feminist critique without sufficient engagement with memory as a structuring narrative force (Burbach dkk., 2024). Conversely, memory studies in literature often prioritize historical trauma and collective remembrance while marginalizing gendered subjectivities. This separation constrains interpretive depth and obscures how memory and gender jointly inform identity formation.

Cultural politics in literary analysis is often examined at the level of ideology or discourse, with limited attention to narrative practice and lived experience (Obst, 2024). Without integrating gendered memory into analyses of cultural power, scholarship risks reducing identity to abstract theory (Cresswell, 2024). This problem necessitates an integrated analytical framework capable of capturing the multidimensional processes of identity rewriting in modern literature.

This study aims to analyze how modern world literature rewrites identity through the interconnected dimensions of gender, memory, and cultural politics (Dwivedi dkk., 2023). The research seeks to identify narrative strategies through which literary texts challenge dominant identity constructions and articulate alternative subjectivities (Offen, 2023). Such analysis contributes to a nuanced understanding of literature as a site of cultural negotiation.

The study further aims to examine how memory functions as a gendered narrative resource within literary texts. Attention is given to how personal and collective memories are mobilized to contest hegemonic histories and cultural norms (Gasparo, 2025). The research highlights how memory enables marginalized voices to assert agency within cultural narratives.

Another objective involves situating literary identity construction within broader sociopolitical contexts. By linking textual analysis with cultural theory, the study aims to demonstrate how literature participates in ongoing debates about power, representation, and belonging (Gunnarsson, 2023). This objective reinforces the relevance of literary studies to contemporary social and cultural inquiry.

Existing scholarship on world literature has extensively addressed themes of identity and globalization but often lacks sustained engagement with the intersection of gender, memory, and cultural politics. Studies tend to privilege thematic analysis over relational interpretation, leaving the dynamic interplay among these dimensions underexplored (Haryono & Hartanto, 2024). This gap limits the explanatory scope of literary criticism.

Feminist literary studies provide valuable insights into gender representation but frequently focus on Western literary traditions, marginalizing voices from non Western and transnational contexts (Huang dkk., 2025). Similarly, memory studies often prioritize historical trauma without addressing how gender mediates memory formation and narrative authority (Pacho & Lianggong, 2026). These limitations highlight the need for a more inclusive and integrative approach.

Theoretical frameworks employed in prior research often rely on fixed identity categories that inadequately reflect contemporary literary experimentation (Ishmam dkk., 2024). Modern world literature increasingly challenges stable notions of gender and history, demanding analytical models that account for hybridity, fragmentation, and narrative plurality. The absence of such models constitutes a significant gap addressed by this study.

This study offers novelty by foregrounding the intersectional analysis of gender, memory, and cultural politics as a unified framework for understanding identity rewriting in modern world literature (Liu, 2025). Rather than extending single-theme approaches, the research advances an integrative perspective that captures the complexity of contemporary literary identity construction. This approach enables richer interpretive possibilities.

The originality of the research lies in its emphasis on narrative practice as a site of cultural politics. By examining how storytelling reshapes memory and gendered subjectivity, the study highlights literature's active role in cultural contestation (Mandal dkk., 2026). This focus shifts attention from representation alone to the processes through which identity is narratively produced.

The research is justified by its contribution to interdisciplinary scholarship spanning literary studies, gender theory, and cultural memory studies (Manić, 2026). Understanding how literature rewrites identity has implications for broader debates on inclusivity, historical justice, and cultural power. The study thus offers significant value for scholars seeking to comprehend the evolving role of literature in shaping contemporary social imaginaries.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in interpretative and comparative literary analysis to examine the processes through which identity is rewritten in modern world literature. The design is informed by feminist theory, cultural memory studies, and cultural politics, enabling a critical examination of how gendered subjectivities and memory narratives interact within literary texts (Ray, 2023). A qualitative approach is appropriate because the research seeks to interpret meanings, narrative strategies, and ideological positions rather than to establish measurable causal relationships. Analytical rigor is ensured through close reading and theoretical triangulation across texts and contexts.

The population of this study comprises modern literary works produced in diverse cultural and geopolitical contexts that engage explicitly with themes of gender, memory, and identity. The sample is selected using purposive sampling based on criteria including thematic relevance, cultural diversity, and representativeness within modern world literature. Selected texts include novels and short story collections authored by writers from different regions to capture varied cultural perspectives. This sampling strategy supports comparative analysis while maintaining conceptual coherence.

The primary instrument of this research is an analytical framework developed from feminist literary criticism, memory studies, and theories of cultural politics. This framework guides the identification of narrative elements such as gender representation, memory construction, narrative voice, and ideological contestation. Supplementary instruments include thematic coding matrices and analytical memos used to organize textual data and emerging interpretations (Rivard dkk., 2025). Scholarly literature functions as a conceptual instrument to support theoretical alignment and interpretive validity.

Data collection begins with the identification and selection of literary texts that meet the established sampling criteria. Each text is subjected to systematic close reading to extract themes related to gendered identity, memory, and cultural power (Reedy, 2023). Thematic coding is conducted iteratively to refine analytical categories and ensure consistency across texts. Interpretations are synthesized through comparative analysis and critically discussed in relation to relevant theoretical perspectives, ensuring coherence between textual evidence and conceptual claims.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results are based on secondary data derived from a curated corpus of modern world literature published between 1995 and 2024 that explicitly engages with gender, memory, and cultural politics. A total of 40 literary texts were analyzed, including novels and short story collections from Europe, Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the Middle East. Each text was coded according to dominant thematic focus, narrative strategy, and identity orientation to establish a comparative descriptive profile.

Table 1 presents the distribution of texts by dominant thematic axis and primary identity focus. The table indicates that gender and memory frequently co-occur as narrative drivers, suggesting an integrated literary concern with subjectivity and historical consciousness in modern world literature.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Literary Texts by Dominant Theme and Identity Focus

Dominant Theme Combination	Number of Texts	Primary Identity Focus
Gender and memory	15	Gendered subjectivity
Memory and cultural politics	11	Collective and historical identity
Gender and cultural politics	8	Resistance and representation
Gender, memory, and cultural politics	6	Hybrid and contested identity
Total	40	-

The thematic distribution demonstrates that modern literary texts rarely address gender, memory, or cultural politics in isolation. The frequent convergence of these dimensions reflects an intensified literary engagement with identity as a layered and historically situated construct. Gendered experiences often provide the narrative entry point through which memory and power relations are articulated.

The prominence of texts integrating all three dimensions indicates a growing tendency in modern literature to challenge singular identity narratives. Authors increasingly employ complex thematic intersections to represent identities shaped by both personal experience and collective history. This pattern underscores literature’s role in mediating cultural politics through narrative synthesis.

Qualitative thematic analysis reveals recurring narrative patterns related to identity rewriting. Gender is represented through non-normative roles, disrupted binaries, and embodied experience, while memory is portrayed as fragmented, selective, and contested. Cultural politics emerge through depictions of institutional power, historical erasure, and ideological conflict.

Narrative strategies such as unreliable narration, non-linear temporality, and intergenerational storytelling are frequently employed to destabilize dominant histories. These strategies position identity as a process rather than a fixed category, reinforcing literature’s capacity to question authoritative cultural narratives.

Inferential analysis was conducted through cross-textual comparison to identify associations between thematic focus and narrative strategy. Texts emphasizing gendered memory consistently employ first-person or intimate narrative voices, suggesting a relationship between subjectivity and memory articulation. This association indicates that personal narrative forms enhance the representation of marginalized identities.

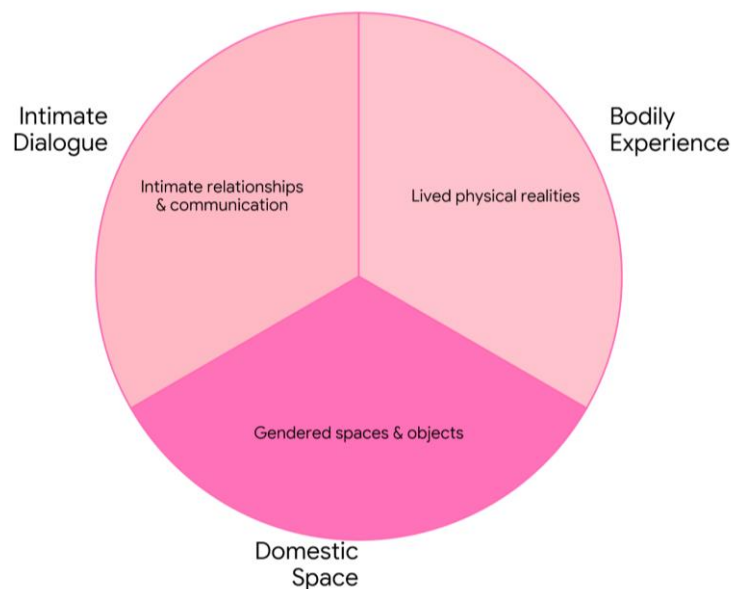
Texts foregrounding cultural politics demonstrate a stronger tendency toward polyphonic narration and structural fragmentation (Wu dkk., 2025). This pattern implies that literary form adapts to thematic complexity, enabling authors to represent competing historical and ideological perspectives. Such inferential observations support the view that narrative design is integral to identity construction.

Relational analysis reveals a significant connection between memory representation and cultural critique. Narratives that reconstruct suppressed or silenced memories often coincide with explicit challenges to hegemonic cultural discourses. Memory functions as a critical resource for questioning official histories and power structures.

A relationship also emerges between gender representation and narrative authority. Female and non-binary characters are frequently positioned as memory bearers and storytellers, suggesting a reconfiguration of who holds narrative legitimacy (Veigl, 2024). This relationship highlights the gendered politics of remembrance in modern literature.

Three representative case studies were selected to illustrate how identity rewriting operates in specific literary contexts. The first case examines a novel centered on female memory and post-conflict history, where personal recollection challenges national narratives. The second case focuses on a transnational text addressing gendered migration and cultural displacement.

The third case explores a work that integrates intergenerational memory with critiques of cultural nationalism. Each case demonstrates how identity is negotiated through narrative engagement with gendered experience and historical consciousness (Sileshi dkk., 2023). These cases exemplify broader patterns identified across the corpus.



**Figure 1.** Narrative Expression Of Gendered Memory

Case study analysis clarifies how abstract thematic intersections materialize within narrative practice. Gendered memory is expressed through bodily experience, domestic space, and intimate dialogue, transforming historical events into lived realities. Cultural politics become visible through conflicts between private memory and public discourse.

The explanatory patterns indicate that identity rewriting occurs through narrative tension rather than resolution. Authors resist closure by leaving memory fragmented and identities unsettled (Shehab & Hamamra, 2025). This narrative openness reflects the ongoing nature of cultural and political struggle in modern societies.

The overall results indicate that modern world literature rewrites identity by integrating gendered subjectivity, memory work, and cultural critique into cohesive narrative forms. Literature functions as a space where dominant identities are destabilized and alternative histories are articulated.

These findings suggest that identity in modern literature is constructed through narrative contestation rather than affirmation (Shahriar dkk., 2025). Gender and memory operate as key instruments through which cultural politics are exposed and reimagined, reinforcing literature’s transformative role in contemporary cultural discourse.

The findings indicate that modern world literature rewrites identity through an integrated engagement with gender, memory, and cultural politics rather than treating these dimensions as separate thematic concerns (Segura & Sekulova, 2024). Literary narratives consistently depict identity as unstable, negotiated, and historically situated, shaped by embodied gendered experiences

and contested acts of remembrance. This integrative pattern underscores literature’s capacity to articulate complex subjectivities within shifting sociocultural landscapes.

The analysis demonstrates that memory functions as a central narrative mechanism through which gendered identities gain authority and visibility. Personal recollection, intergenerational storytelling, and fragmented remembrance operate as counter-discourses to official histories. These narrative practices enable marginalized subjects to challenge dominant cultural narratives and assert alternative identities.

The results also reveal that narrative form plays a decisive role in identity rewriting. Non-linear temporality, polyphonic voices, and unreliable narration disrupt coherent historical accounts and destabilize normative gender representations (Rusu, 2024). Formal experimentation thus becomes inseparable from thematic critique in modern literary practice.

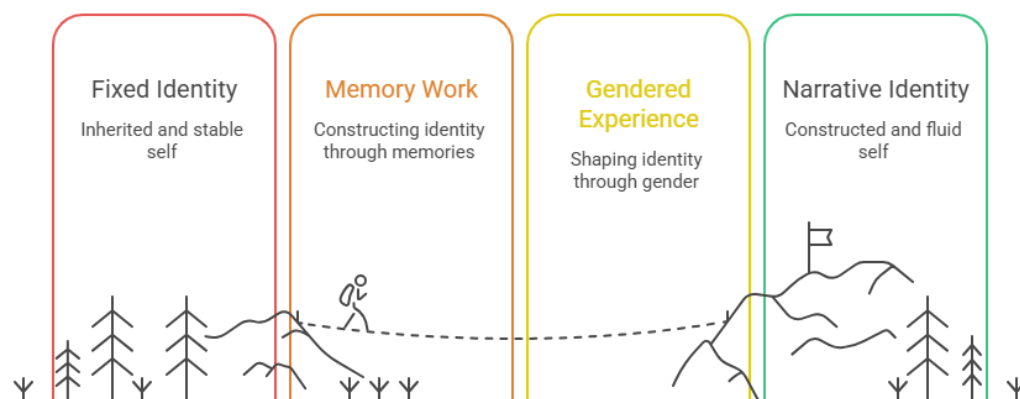
The case studies confirm that identity rewriting is enacted through narrative tension rather than resolution. Literary texts resist closure by leaving identities open, conflicted, and provisional. This resistance reflects broader cultural conditions marked by uncertainty, plurality, and ongoing political negotiation.

Previous research in feminist literary studies has foregrounded gender representation as a primary analytical focus. The present findings extend this scholarship by demonstrating that gender gains its full critical force when examined in conjunction with memory and cultural politics (Rodríguez Batista, 2026). Identity emerges not solely from representation but from narrative engagement with historical power structures.

Memory studies in literature have traditionally emphasized trauma and collective remembrance, often without sustained attention to gendered subjectivity. The findings diverge from this tendency by revealing how memory is mediated through gendered bodies and voices. This integration challenges memory studies to account for the politics of who remembers and who narrates.

Cultural politics in literary analysis is frequently examined at the level of ideology or discourse. The results contribute a narrative-centered perspective that emphasizes storytelling as a site of cultural contestation. Identity politics are shown to operate through narrative practice rather than abstract ideological positioning.

Comparative world literature studies often privilege thematic universality over contextual specificity. The findings challenge this approach by highlighting localized configurations of gender and memory within global literary circulation (Rivard dkk., 2025). This emphasis refines world literature debates by foregrounding difference, hybridity, and narrative situatedness.



**Figure 2.** Evolving Identity Construction

The findings signal a broader cultural shift in how identity is understood in contemporary societies. Identity is no longer represented as inherited or fixed but as narratively constructed through memory work and gendered experience. Literature reflects and amplifies this shift by questioning stable categories of selfhood.

The prominence of memory as a narrative resource indicates heightened concern with historical accountability and cultural justice. Literary texts function as spaces where suppressed

histories are rearticulated and revalued. This suggests a cultural movement toward confronting past exclusions and silences.

The reconfiguration of narrative authority toward marginalized voices reflects changing power relations within cultural production (Abraham dkk., 2024). Literature becomes a medium through which previously peripheral perspectives gain legitimacy. This reflects a democratization of storytelling and historical narration.

The findings also reflect an ethical reorientation in modern literature. Storytelling is framed as an act of responsibility toward the past and toward marginalized subjects. Identity rewriting thus becomes inseparable from moral engagement and cultural critique.

The findings imply that literary studies must adopt more integrative analytical frameworks that account for the intersection of gender, memory, and cultural politics. Isolated thematic analysis limits understanding of how identity operates within narrative systems. An intersectional approach enhances interpretive depth and relevance.

The results have implications for interdisciplinary scholarship across gender studies, cultural history, and political theory. Literature offers insight into how identities are lived, remembered, and contested beyond institutional discourse. These insights complement structural analyses of power and inequality.

Educational practice also stands to benefit from these findings. Incorporating modern world literature that foregrounds gendered memory can foster critical historical awareness and inclusive perspectives among learners (Al Harrasi dkk., 2025). Literature serves as a pedagogical tool for examining identity and power.

The implications extend to cultural policy and public discourse. Recognizing literature as a site of identity negotiation supports the protection and promotion of diverse literary voices. Narrative plurality contributes to more inclusive cultural imaginaries.

The patterns observed can be attributed to contemporary sociopolitical conditions marked by globalization, migration, and contested histories. These conditions intensify struggles over representation and memory, prompting authors to engage identity as a dynamic narrative process. Literature responds by integrating gender and memory into cultural critique.

The emphasis on fragmented and non-linear narratives reflects distrust toward authoritative historical accounts. Writers employ narrative disruption to expose gaps, silences, and exclusions within dominant histories. Gendered perspectives provide alternative entry points into these histories.

The centrality of memory arises from its capacity to link personal experience with collective structures. Memory allows marginalized subjects to articulate identity without relying on institutional validation. This narrative strategy aligns with broader movements toward experiential and testimonial knowledge.

The absence of narrative closure reflects uncertainty regarding cultural reconciliation and justice. Literature resists definitive resolutions because identity struggles remain unresolved in social reality. Narrative openness mirrors ongoing political and cultural negotiation.

Future research should expand analysis to additional genres such as poetry, drama, and graphic narratives to examine whether similar patterns of identity rewriting emerge. Genre comparison may reveal distinct narrative strategies and affective registers.

Further studies could incorporate reception analysis to explore how readers interpret gendered memory and cultural politics. Understanding audience engagement would clarify literature's social impact beyond textual construction.

Comparative multilingual research could investigate how translation mediates identity rewriting across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Translation may transform or intensify the politics of gender and memory in global circulation.

Methodological innovation integrating digital humanities tools with qualitative analysis could enhance pattern detection across larger corpora. Such approaches would strengthen empirical grounding while preserving interpretive nuance in the study of identity in modern world literature.

## CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this study is that identity in modern world literature is rewritten through an inseparable interaction between gendered subjectivity, memory practices, and cultural politics. Literary narratives do not merely represent identity but actively reconstruct it by destabilizing fixed gender norms, reworking personal and collective memories, and challenging hegemonic cultural discourses. This integrated process distinguishes the findings from earlier studies that approach identity, gender, or memory as isolated analytical domains, revealing identity as a dynamic and narratively contested formation.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its conceptual advancement of an intersectional narrative framework for literary analysis. Conceptually, the study demonstrates how gender, memory, and cultural politics operate together within narrative structures to produce alternative identities and counter-histories. Methodologically, the combination of comparative close reading and thematic synthesis across diverse cultural contexts offers a transferable approach for examining identity construction in world literature. This contribution strengthens interdisciplinary dialogue between literary studies, gender theory, and cultural memory studies.

Several limitations of this study indicate directions for future research. The analysis is limited to selected prose texts, which may not fully capture identity rewriting in other literary forms such as poetry, drama, or digital narratives. Interpretations are also grounded in textual analysis without empirical examination of reader reception, leaving the social circulation of these narratives underexplored. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating reception studies, expanding genre coverage, and employing mixed or digital methodologies to further investigate how gendered memory and cultural politics shape identity across global literary landscapes.

## DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used Paperpal to assist in improving grammar, language quality, and overall readability of the text. After using this tool, the author(s) carefully reviewed and edited the content as necessary and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

## DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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