

Ministry Of Education And Science Of Ukraine
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
Educational and Scientific Institute of Philology
Department of English Philology and Intercultural Communication

Bachelor's thesis

**FEMALE BEAUTY IN ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE:
DIACHRONIC ASPECT**

Yuliia Loboda

4th year student of the Education Programme

‘English Studies and Translation
and Two Western European Languages’

Field of science: 03 “Humanities”

Specialty: 035 “Philology”

Supervised by

Dr. Natalia Neborsina

«Допущено до захисту»

Протокол засідання кафедри англійської філології
та міжкультурної комунікації

Протокол № 10 від 27.05.2024

Зав. кафедри _____ д. філол. н., проф. Алла БЄЛОВА

KYIV – 2024

ABSTRACT

Loboda Y. O. Female beauty in anglophone literature: diachronic aspect — Qualification (bachelor's) thesis for obtaining the educational and qualification level of higher education specialization 035 “Philology” of the educational and professional programme “English Studies and Translation and Two Western European Languages.” — Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv, 2024.

The paper is devoted to the concept of female beauty in Anglophone fiction. To achieve this goal, the paper examines the concept from the perspective of cognitive linguistics and traces the development of beauty standards over the centuries. Considering various theories that emerged in certain epoch, the evolution of the ideals of female appearance was investigated.

The research involves a diachronic analysis of the depiction of female images according to the ideals of a certain period based on three literary works from the 19th and 21st centuries. Female figures are considered from the point of view of lexical and stylistical choices not only for appearance reflection but also from the point of an ideal female behavior model, which uncovers intrapersonal relationships: women in society, women among sisters and brothers, mother-daughter, wife-husband relationships.

Key words: *concept, concept of beauty, female appearance, female figures, diachrony, figurative language, realism, contemporary literature.*

АНОТАЦІЯ

Лобода Ю. О. Жіноча краса в англомовній літературі:

діахронічний аспект — Кваліфікаційна (бакалаврська) робота на здобуття освітньо-кваліфікаційного рівня вищої освіти спеціалізації 035 «Філологія» освітньо-професійної програми «Англійська філологія та переклад, дві західноєвропейські мови». — Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка, Київ, 2024.

Робота присвячена концепту жіночої краси в англомовній художній літературі. Для дослідження поставленої мети розглядається поняття концепту з точки зору когнітивної лінгвістики і простежується розвиток уявлень про красу протягом століть. Розглядаючи різні теорії, що виникали в певних часових межах, було досліджено еволюцію ідеалів жіночої зовнішності.

Робота передбачає діахронічний аналіз зображення жіночих образів та інтерпретацію ідеалів певного періоду на основі трьох художніх творів 19 та 21 століть. Жіночі постаті розглядаються з точки зору лексико-стилістичних та образних мовних засобів не лише для відображення зовнішності, але й з точки зору моделі поведінки ідеальної жінки, що розкриває внутрішньоособистісні стосунки - жінки в суспільстві, жінки серед сестер та братів, стосунки матері та доньки, дружини та чоловіка.

***Ключові слова:** концепт, поняття краси, жіноча зовнішність, жіночі постаті, діахронія, художня мова, реалізм, сучасна література.*

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	5
1. FEMALE BEAUTY: THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE RESEARCH ..	7
1.1. Theoretical framework of the concept.....	7
1.1.1. The definition and classical understanding of the concept of beauty	10
1.2. The evolution of the notion of female beauty	13
Summary	18
2. THE CONCEPT OF FEMALE BEAUTY IN MAY ALCOTT’S “LITTLE WOMEN”	20
2.1. May Alcott L. “Little women”.....	21
2.1.1. Female characters in “Little Women”	21
2.2 Lexical analysis of the novel	26
2.3. Stylistic analysis of the novel	28
Summary	31
3. THE CONCEPT OF FEMALE BEAUTY IN CONTEMPORARY FICTION ..	33
3.1. Saunders G. “The Semplica-Girl Diaries”.....	33
3.1.1. The Semplica-Girl Diaries Analysis. Emotional appearance	35
3.1.2. Lexical and stylistic levels	37
3.2. Machado C. M. “Eight Bites”.....	39
3.2.1. Women's Figures in “Eight Bites”. Physical appearance.....	40
3.2.2. Lexical and stylistic levels	43
Summary	47
CONCLUSIONS.....	49
REFERENCES	52
SUMMARY	58

INTRODUCTION

The concept of female beauty has been a subject of fascination and contention throughout human history, encompassing a diversity of cultural, philosophical, and aesthetic dimensions. In today's world, where social standards of beauty are constantly evolving, understanding the portrayal of female beauty in literature becomes increasingly significant.

In fiction, from classic tales to contemporary novels, writers employ various linguistic approaches to shape how female beauty is perceived. By analyzing the language used to describe female characters, valuable insights into the prevailing beauty ideals of a specific era or culture may be gained. Word choice, figurative language, and even narrative structure all play a role in constructing these portrayals.

The **relevance** of this topic lies in its profound implications for the construction of female identity, its reflection of cultural norms and values, and how it may be achieved in terms of language choices. By analyzing textual representations of female beauty and character, the study provides insights into societal perceptions, gender dynamics, and the shifting paradigms of women across different epochs.

This **theoretical value** contributes to the field of linguistics by exploring the intricate relationship between language and the construction of beauty ideals. It reveals how specific lexical choices and stylistic patterns contribute to the portrayal of female beauty across different eras.

The **practical value** includes enrichment of the study of how language constructs female beauty in literature, and providing valuable insights for future research into the evolution of these portrayals across various cultural contexts.

The **purpose** of the work is to explore linguistic peculiarities of conveying the concept of female beauty in fiction. This involves delving into classical and contemporary interpretations of beauty, examining its portrayal in historical contexts, and conducting analyses of both classic and modern literary works. Through this exploration, the research aims to uncover emerging trends, novel approaches, and

underlying paradigms that shape an understanding of female image and its implications for gender identity and societal norms.

The **tasks** of the study can be outlined as follows:

1. Analyze the theoretical foundations of the concept of beauty, both classical and contemporary interpretations.
2. Investigate the evolution of perceptions of female beauty in historical contexts.
3. Perform lexical and stylistic analysis of the chosen texts
4. Identify emerging trends and novel approaches to representing female beauty in contemporary literature.

The **object** of this research is a representation of female beauty in literature within a linguistic focus on how beauty is portrayed and interpreted in works from classic to modern historical art periods.

The **subject** of this research is the linguistic methods of formation of the concept of female beauty as depicted in literature. Specifically, the study delves into the depiction of female beauty in May Alcott's "Little Women" and contemporary fiction such as George Saunders's "The Semplica-Girls Diaries" and Carmen Maria Machado's "Eight Bites".

The **method** used in the paper can be outlined as a comparative study of female figures in different times, reflecting on aspects of appearance, behavior and societal expectations of women. The analysis was conducted in the review of the chosen narratives - May Alcott's "Little Women", George Saunders's "The Semplica-Girls Diaries" and Carmen Maria Machado's "Eight Bites", taking into account lexical and stylistic analysis, incorporating diachronic review of the female beauty and identity within the passages. Within the analysis of lexical choices of depicting the concept, the quantitative and qualitative methods were included to trace the frequency of usage and trends of lexeme choices in the literary works of different epochs and the ideas conveyed throughout the texts.

The work consists of an Introduction, 3 Chapters with Summary to each of them, General Conclusions, List of References and Summary (In Ukrainian).

1. FEMALE BEAUTY: THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE RESEARCH

1.1. Theoretical framework of the concept

In today's evolving world with the advancements in science and education, there is a growing demand for studying languages to transmit knowledge and cultural heritage, information, and gained experience to others. This development leads to an increased interest in exploring aspects and theories concerning philology. A notable example of this trend is the deepening research in fields like applied linguistics, cognitive linguistics, textual linguistic and cultural studies among others.

Within cognitive linguistic, which, according to S. Coulson and T. Matlock, refers to studying how the human mind works like a complex system: takes in information, stores it, changes it, and shares it with others is one of the points of study is the concept [13, p. 5]. A fundamental element that sheds light on how individuals think, perceive their surroundings, and engage in communication. The term "concept" originates from the word "conceptus " denoting a "notion." While contemporary scientific discussions often use "concept" and "notion" interchangeably they do carry distinctions. Unlike a notion which tends to be more superficial a concept delves deeper into cognition, culture and history, imbuing words with meanings. These mental constructs continually. Acquire layers of significance over time. As such concepts provide avenues, for contemplation, creativity, and emotional interpretation of language [3, p. 62].

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. claim that it is possible to imagine concepts as a kind of ideal models, metaphors, frames, and scenarios - they structure our experience and interaction with the world [23, p. 7]. One of the key differences between a concept and a notion is the presence of an associative layer. It is responsible for a special way of cognition and reflection of reality. According to Zaichenko, "Concepts are the subject of emotions, likes and dislikes, sometimes conflicts and disputes, they allow a person to think, understand and worry" [4, p. 79].

Compared to concepts, notions have a simpler structure. They are characterized by clear and unshakable principles that make them similar to "iron rules" or "pure rationality".

In their research, Gaiduk described concepts as mental representations of the world that form a conceptual system in the human imagination [2, p. 44-45]. The signs of the human language encode the content of this system using words.

The lack of a clear and universal definition of a concept is due to its complex multidimensional structure [5, p. 57]. In addition to the conceptual basis, the concept includes a socio-psycho-cultural component, which is not so much comprehended by a native speaker as experienced by them [34, p. 54]. This component includes associations, emotions, evaluations, national images, and connotations inherent in a particular culture [1, p. 39].

Numbers of linguistics offer different interpretations of the term "concept". Potapenko in their study described that it can be viewed from three key aspects:

- The imagery side: visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory characteristics of objects, phenomena and events that are imprinted in our memory.
- The conceptual side: how the concept is fixed in the language, its meaning, description, structure, definition, and comparison with other concepts.
- The value (interpretive) side: the importance of this mental formation both for the individual and for the language community as a whole [5, p. 61]

As for the approaches, modern linguistic research on concepts is divided into two main areas [43, p. 224]:

- The linguistic cognitive approach considers concepts as the embodiment of not only concepts, but also knowledge about the world, associations and personal experiences associated with a particular word. A concept that originates as an image in the mind of an individual is subsequently

transformed into various ideas and concepts, being generalised, and stored in the cultural memory of an ethnic group or nation.

- Linguistic and cultural approach focuses on the connection of concepts with the culture and mentality of a particular people. Concepts are studied as elements of the cultural picture of the world, reflecting the values, beliefs and traditions of the ethnic group.

According to Croft and Cruse concepts have several important functions:

- Cognitive: they help people learn about the world by summarizing and categorizing information.
- Communicative: they enable understanding and communication between people.
- Cultural: reflect the values, beliefs, and traditions of a particular people [14, p. 74].

To conclude, a concept is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that is studied in various scientific fields, such as linguistics, psychology, cultural studies and philosophy.

The value component of a concept is its ability to evaluate objects and phenomena of reality. This assessment can be both positive and negative, and it is realized through various linguistic units, such as words, phrases, sentences, and texts [5, p. 75].

The openness and variability of a concept is a consequence of constant changes in the external environment and internal value system due to the fact it is not static, but constantly evolving, adapting to new conditions of life [1, p. 38].

1.1.1. The definition and classical understanding of the concept of beauty

The concept of beauty has captivated humanity for millennia. From the ancient Greeks' emphasis on harmonious proportions to the diverse aesthetics embraced across cultures, beauty has served as a powerful force shaping art, influencing social norms, and even guiding behavior. Yet, despite its undeniable presence, the essence of beauty remains a question.

In most cases the lexeme “beauty” is considered to convey the meaning of the inherent quality possessed by something that evokes aesthetic pleasure, whether through the sensory experiences it offers or the intellectual enjoyment it provides to the mind [27]. But meanwhile, different sources provide variable definitions of the term due to its complicated nature. The concept of beauty has been a subject of study, admiration, and discussion in world philosophy for thousands of years, serving as one of the fundamental pillars of goodness, truth and justice. Beauty has been one of the main objects of depiction and glorification in all spheres of art, including literature. Throughout history, philosophers and artists of different eras and traditions have struggled with the elusive nature of beauty, trying to unravel its essence and meaning. From ancient Greek treatises to contemporary feminist narratives, ideas about beauty have evolved to reflect changing cultural perspectives and values.

Talking about a basic word denoting the concept, W. Tatarkiewicz in their work “The Great Theory of Beauty and Its Decline” described that in ancient Greece and Rome, beauty was often connected to the Greek term "kalon" and Latin "pulchrum". These concepts included not only physical attractiveness but also qualities such as moral kindness and aesthetic harmony. In general, the semantic history of the word "beauty" is as follows: The Greek concept of beauty was broader than the usual one; it included not only beautiful things, shapes, colours and sounds, but also beautiful thoughts and customs [37, p. 165]. A prime example is when, in the dialogue *The Great Hippias*, Plato gives examples of beauty in the form of beautiful characters and beautiful laws. What he calls in the *Symposium* the idea of beauty, he might equally well have called the idea of goodness [28, p. 94].

The Latin term persisted through the ancient and medieval periods, but disappeared during the Renaissance and was replaced by a new term, "bellum". This replacement was the result of a unique evolution: it came from "bonum", then a further transformation took place through the diminutive "bonellum", eventually adopting the shortened form "bellum". The word was originally used only to describe the beauty of women and children, but later the meaning expanded quite a bit to encompass beauty in all its manifestations, supplanting the earlier term "pulchrum". Although no modern language has directly borrowed a derivative of "pulchrum", many languages have adopted variations of "bellum": for example, "bello" in Italian and Spanish, "beau" in French, and "beautiful" in English [37, p. 166].

Throughout the centuries, beauty has been a central theme in the works of philosophers such as Shaftesbury, Hume, Kant, and Hegel, who explored its metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical dimensions. The central debate in the theory of beauty revolves around whether it is subjective, existing solely in the perception of the observer, or if it is an objective quality inherent in beautiful objects themselves [10]. Later for scholars who were eager to examine and define what beauty is, the concept was not merely a subjective preference but a universal principle that transcended individual perspectives. The classical understanding reflects the idea that beauty is derived from the organization of individual components into a unified and harmonious entirety, characterized by proportion, symmetry, harmony, and related principles. Immanuel Kant, for instance, proposed that beauty is tied to the harmony of form and function, invoking notions of "purposiveness without purpose" to explain aesthetic judgments [15, p. 6].

Zemach argues that cultural background heavily influences our perception of beauty, not just personal taste. Despite this cultural influence, Zemach proposes that beauty can still be considered objective, exploring this concept by examining the connection between aesthetic and scientific realism, suggesting a two-way relationship between them [45, p. 249-250].

When evaluating beauty, definists consider a vast array of qualities. This focus on numerous properties leads them to debate which ones are truly essential for a work

of art to be successful. This debate splits them into two camps: objectivists and non-objectivists. Objectivists prioritize the inherent properties of the artwork, arguing that these internal qualities are crucial and shouldn't be compromised. In contrast, non-objectivists place greater emphasis on external properties, particularly how the audience interacts with the work, rather than its internal makeup [23, p. 114].

Naomi Wolf, building on Bourdieu's idea of beauty as a tool for ruling classes' social control, claims that males take advantage of women's sensitivity to enforced beauty standards. This exploitation, however, is not limited to the unique character of these standards. Wolf stresses the power dynamics at work, implying that any set of beauty norms may be weaponized to perpetuate the status quo and limit female agency [44, p. 10].

There are many theories describing beauty. Some of them focus on facial symmetry, body proportions, and a healthy glow to the skin. However, it is important to remember that ideas about beauty are fluid and depend on culture and personal preferences.

1.2. The evolution of the notion of female beauty

A wide range of shifting perspectives about the perfect appearance can be observed by looking at beauty descriptions from different pieces of art of different epochs.

In antiquity, symmetrical features, swarthy complexion, and luscious proportions were highly valued. In contrast to the idea of beauty being subjective, the Ancient Greeks had a different view. They believed there was a scientific formula for beauty, called the General Theory of Beauty. This theory stated that beauty arises from the way different parts of something are proportioned and arranged. It wasn't just about size, but also the quality and number of parts, and how they all fit together to create a pleasing whole. Moving to the representation of the Ancient Greek and Roman ideals of beautiful humans, we can refer primarily to the sculpture as it reflected the perception of perfect appearance back then. One of the first characters coming to mind is the goddess of beauty herself as an absolute portrayal of female body and face aesthetics - Aphrodite. Rosemary Barrow in "The Body, Human and Divine in Greek Sculpture" described the statue of Cnidos focusing on specific physical attributes that are considered aesthetically pleasing in a woman's body: elongated limbs, small, high breasts, and a rounded abdomen as an ideal model in that time perception [16, p. 96].

The Middle Ages celebrated fragility and compassion. Moreover, there occurred and became popular some approaches to maintain beauty ideals. Within medieval European beauty ideals, blonde hair held particular favor. For those lacking this attribute, a variety of techniques were employed to achieve a lighter shade. These included applying solutions derived from stale sheep's urine, onion skins, or saffron, or utilizing the natural bleaching power of sunlight. However, to maintain the desired pale complexion, sun exposure on the face was avoided, necessitating the use of specialized hats with strategically placed openings. Similarly, achieving flawless skin was essential. Women employed various methods, including lead-based powders, extracts from the Madonna lily, or even wheat flour, as evidenced by

a recipe for a whitening face powder found in the 13th-century text, *L'ornement des Dames*:

“Put very pure wheat in water for fifteen days, then grind and blend it in the water. Strain through a cloth, and let it crystalize and evaporate. You will obtain a make-up which will be as white as snow. When you want to use it, mix it with rosewater, and spread it on your face which has first been washed with warm water” [26].

The Renaissance, a period of innovation and change roughly in 1400 to 1650, also witnessed a shift in self-perception. Historian Jill Burke highlights the significance of the full-length mirror, introduced in the early 1500s. For the first time, women could critically examine their appearance in relation to the prevailing beauty ideals [12].

Titian's "Venus of Urbino" (1538) exemplifies the Renaissance woman. This voluptuous figure embodies the desired form: strawberry blonde hair, fair skin, and a curvy physique described by Burke as a "fleshy hourglass." This ideal aligns with the earlier portrayal of Laura in Petrarch's sonnets (early 1300s), characterized by "golden hair, spacious forehead, benign eyes, rosy cheeks, ruby lips, sweet breath, white throat, apple breasts and white hands" [12, p. 67].

Beyond unattainable beauty standards, Renaissance women resorted to elaborate methods to achieve the desired look. This included concocting unpleasant potions, bleaching hair blonde, and using formulas for hair removal. Even dietary practices were dictated by the prevailing medical theories. A 16th-century text, reflecting the complex concept of bodily "humors," recommended specific foods like eggs, wheat, and fatty meats to help women gain weight and achieve the desired curvaceous figure [30].

The eras of Baroque and Rococo, spanning roughly from the 17th to mid-18th centuries, offer a fascinating glimpse into the changing perception of female beauty. During the Baroque period, artists like Rubens celebrated a woman of ample curves, pale skin, and rosy cheeks. This voluptuous figure symbolized fertility and

motherhood, aligning with societal values of the time. Elaborate gowns further accentuated this silhouette, reflecting a taste for luxury and display [11, p. 4].

However, the 18th century ushered in a shift. The Rococo era embraced a more delicate and graceful form. Paintings by Boucher showcased women with elongated torsos, small waists, and youthful features, often paired with lighter complexions. This change mirrored the Rococo style's emphasis on lightness, playfulness, and courtly life. Fashion followed suit, incorporating lighter fabrics and more whimsical silhouettes. This evolution in beauty ideals reflects the broader cultural shift from the grandeur of the Baroque to the playful spirit of the Rococo [11, p. 7].

The 19th century in Europe and America was a time of strict beauty ideals, particularly for middle and upper-class women. In their work "Consuming Female Beauty" Smith has described an ideal woman of the 19th century with pale, almost translucent skin, often achieved through potentially harmful cosmetics. Her figure would be slender, with a dramatically cinched waist thanks to the uncomfortable practice of corsetry. Large, expressive eyes and rosy cheeks were considered attractive. This focus on a somewhat fragile and youthful look reflected the Victorian emphasis on domesticity and feminine virtue. It was a time when beauty was seen as a reflection of a woman's inner qualities, with a focus on purity and innocence [35, p. 47].

Furthermore, the 19th century saw a major shift in how British women accessed fashion trends. Increased literacy rates, lower printing costs, and other social changes fueled a booming print culture. These publications specifically targeted women, turning fashion, health, and beauty into prominent themes. Through articles, ads, and visuals, magazines offered practical advice for women to achieve the latest styles. This period also saw changes in the fashion industry itself, with department stores emerging and creating cyclical trends. These developments fueled a new consumer culture, making shopping a leisure activity for the middle class [35, p. 112].

The twentieth century was a period of fast change. From the androgyny of the 1920s to the rich forms of the 1950s, from the geometric haircuts of the 1960s to the

naturalness of the 1970s, from the athleticism of the 1980s to the thinness of the 1990s, each era established its own set of beauty norms [9].

According to Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, despite its historical significance, the concept of beauty underwent something of a decline in philosophical studies in the early twentieth century, coinciding with changes in artistic movements and cultural values [10]. By the 1980s, however, interest in beauty had been revived, enhanced in part by feminist critiques of traditional aesthetic norms and standards. Feminist scholars such as Susan Sontag and Elaine Scarry challenged conventional notions of beauty as passive and objectifying, arguing for a more inclusive and empowering understanding of aesthetic experience [36], [33].

In modern terms, the definition of beauty remains elusive, ambiguous and includes many perspectives and interpretations. The nature of beauty is often understood as multifaceted, encompassing not only appearance but also qualities of character, creativity and cultural significance. Beauty is also closely intertwined with identity, representation and power, reflecting broader social dynamics and inequalities.

The cosmetics entrepreneur Helena Rubinstein claimed “There are no ugly women, only lazy ones” [29] reflecting the idea that modern developments in the cosmetological sphere provided women of any age and physique obtain beauty standards.

Apparently, the concept of beauty extends to various academic disciplines, including psychology, sociology and cultural studies and of course to linguistics as well, demonstrating new stylistic forms and textual interpretations. Researchers have investigated the cognitive mechanisms underlying aesthetic perception as well as the socio-cultural factors that shape individual preferences and judgements. In addition, subsequent advances have fostered a variety of new forms of aesthetic expression and representation, questioning traditional boundaries and customs.

Ultimately, the concept of beauty continues to fascinate and inspire, inviting artists and scholars to contemplate the mysteries of human perception and creativity. Facing the complexities of a rapidly changing world, the pursuit of beauty serves as a

reminder of our common humanity and our constant search for meaning and transcendence.

Summary

Modern developing society dictates a demand in technological advancements, science significant progress in a wide range of areas, including linguistics. Studying linguistics, particularly cognitive linguistics, offers a unique glance into how a human perceives and understands the world. By exploring the concepts – mental categories that shape our experiences – cognitive linguistics reveals the complicated link between language and thought. Analyzing how language structures transmit these concepts allows us to observe how different people reflect reality in unique ways, particularly in the world of art and literature.

Understanding of concepts transcends individual minds. They emerge from the interplay between consciousness, culture, and language. Concepts don't exist in isolation; instead, they form a complex network of knowledge about the world. This connections highlight the multifaceted nature of concepts and their crucial role in shaping our worldview.

One of the eternal concepts frequently reflected in fiction is the concept of beauty. It has its roots from the beginning of human civilization developing in further generations.

Beauty is a captivating concept, defies a single definition. It was always toggled between subjectivity and objectivity. While cultural ideals, fashion, and historical background undeniably shape what the society finds beautiful, there's also a universal human response to harmony, balance, and certain proportions. This interplay creates a multifaceted experience. Ultimately, beauty lies in the way it influences a person's senses, emotions, and intellect, creating a unique and meaningful connection between individuals and the environment.

The concept of beauty has a long history, with nations interpreting it according to their values and beliefs. From the symmetrical shapes admired in ancient Greece and the Roman Empire to the constantly evolving standards of fashion, social and cultural revolutions have continuously changed the idea of beauty.

By examining the concept of beauty across various historical periods, we observe how societal values, artistic movements, and historical context shape its portrayal. From the delicate features of the Middle Ages to the evolving standards of the 20th century, the concept of beauty has continuously transformed. Ultimately, it lies in the way it influences our senses, emotions, and intellect, forging a unique and meaningful connection between individuals and the world around them. Today's understanding of beauty reflects this complexity, encompassing not just physical appearance but also character, creativity, and cultural significance. This broader perspective acknowledges the ongoing evolution of beauty ideals and their reflection of broader social dynamics and inequalities.

2. THE CONCEPT OF FEMALE BEAUTY IN MAY ALCOTT'S "LITTLE WOMEN"

From ancient times beauty was a crucial point in defining women's power. Great empresses and famous wives of prominent rulers who have left their mark on history were described as incredibly attractive.

In this study, we are focusing on a diachronic aspect of depicting the concept of female beauty. Since the diachronic method refers to analyzing any feature of language by comparing it to two periods of time, it was decided to choose the second half of the 19th century as the first time mark observed.

The latter half of the 19th century was a vibrant era in literature, particularly for English and American writers. Realism emerged as a dominant force depicting the social and psychological realities of the times. In English literature, this period was indicated as the Victorian Era.

The 1800s under Queen Victoria's rule (1837-1901), according to Greenblatt saw a big change in England. More people were learning to read and write, and they weren't afraid to challenge ideas about religion and politics [18]. At the same time, factories were booming, new inventions were popping up everywhere, and the economy was growing. Authors of the time wrote about both the Industrial Revolution acquisition and the problems caused by this rapid change. With more people reading as a leisure activity, literature has become a bigger influence on society than ever before [42].

Moving to American literature, the second half of the 19th century was a period of immense creativity and innovation. It marked a significant shift away from the Romanticism of the earlier half of the century and introduced new movements that reflected the realities of a rapidly changing nation [19].

2.1. May Alcott L. “Little women”

Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888) was an American novelist and poet who rose to prominence in the mid-19th century. Born into a transcendentalist family with a strong emphasis on social reform, Alcott's upbringing instilled in her a sense of justice and a commitment to progressive ideals. Despite facing financial hardships throughout her life, she found success with her sensational fiction, particularly the novel "Little Women" (1868) and its sequels. This coming-of-age story, loosely based on her own family experiences, captured the hearts of readers and established Alcott as a literary icon. Beyond her domestic tales, Alcott also penned sensational stories under pseudonyms and actively participated in the abolitionist and women's suffrage movements. Her life and works offer a fascinating glimpse into the social and literary landscape of 19th-century America [20].

The work chosen for the analysis is “Little Women”. Published between 1868 and 1869, Louisa May Alcott's “Little Women” is a Bildungsroman, a novel of development, that chronicles the lives of the March sisters as they navigate adolescence and young adulthood during the American Civil War [40]. The novel explores themes of family, resilience, and the pursuit of personal aspirations amidst the challenges of wartime. It remains a beloved classic for its insightful portrayal of sisterhood and the enduring power of hope and determination. The novel provides the reader with saturated descriptions of four different female characters. Moreover, it accurately carries the spirit of the age, reflecting the fashion, manners, and social norms of the 19th century.

2.1.1. Female characters in “Little Women”

“Little Women” discloses a story of four central female characters. Family bonds tighten them, but their personalities significantly differ. Growing up in an impoverished family ladies understood their inherent in that era duty to integrate into society properly, marry noblemen, and become reputable women. The main values

the girls received from their upbringing as an example of female ideal can be traced in their mother's words:

“I want my daughters to be beautiful, accomplished, and good. To be admired, loved, and respected. To have a happy youth, to be well and wisely married, and to lead useful, pleasant lives, with as little care and sorrow to try them as God sees fit to send. To be loved and chosen by a good man is the best and sweetest thing that can happen to a woman, and I sincerely hope my girls may know this beautiful experience.” [46, p. 137]

Moving to the characters, the first one represented is the eldest sister Margaret “Meg” March. The author described her as *“very pretty, being plump and fair, with large eyes, plenty of soft brown hair, a sweet mouth, and white hands, of which she was rather vain”* [46, p.7]. Being the first child in the family, at the beginning of the story she is sixteen years old, and she is the most responsible and mature among her sisters. The plight of family fortunes forced her to start working *“teaching those tiresome children”* [46, c. 4] at such a young age which made her feel a bit envious of other young ladies who could afford anything they desired with no effort: *“Margaret found a place as nursery governess and felt rich with her small salary. As she said, she was ‘fond of luxury’, and her chief trouble was poverty”* and *“She tried not to be envious or discontented, but it was very natural that the young girl should long for pretty things”* [46, p. 48, 52]. She is eagerly interested in fashion and fitting the image of the contemporary lady of that time. Meanwhile, Margaret is described as *“a sweet and pious nature, which unconsciously influenced her sisters”* [46, p. 18]. Later throughout the novel, Meg shows commitment to adherence to standards by eagerness to be a perfect woman and wife: *“Like most other young matrons, Meg began her married life with the determination to be a model housekeeper. John should find home a paradise, he should always see a smiling face, should fare sumptuously every day, and never know the loss of a button”* [46, p. 381], and finally succeeded in her plans and goals: *“Jo discovered how much improved her sister Meg was, how well she could talk, how much she knew about good, womanly impulses,*

thoughts, and feelings, how happy she was in husband and children, and how much they were all doing for each other" [46, p. 604].

The next central character is Josephine "Jo" March the second-oldest sister considered to be the novel's protagonist. Alcott infused "Little Women" with a semi-autobiographical quality by basing the ambitious writer Jo March on her own experiences. Jo's fiery personality is characterized by a short temper and sharp wit: "*A quick temper, sharp tongue, and restless spirit were always getting her into scrapes, and her life was a series of ups and downs, which were both comic and pathetic*" [46, p. 54]. This attitude reflects Alcott's own struggles to navigate societal expectations. Josephine is described as a "tomboy" chafing against the restrictions placed on young women: "*I hate to think I've got to grow up, and be Miss March, and wear long gowns, and look as prim as a China Aster! It's bad enough to be a girl, anyway, when I like boy's games and work and manners! I can't get over my disappointment in not being a boy. And it's worse than ever now, for I'm dying to go and fight with Papa. And I can only stay home and knit, like a poky old woman!*" [46, p. 6]. However, maturing she put her efforts into fitting into the lady image, once her mother even left a notice: "*I write a little word to tell you with how much satisfaction I watch your efforts to control your temper*" [46, p. 170]. Unlike the traditional heroines she writes about, Jo finds romance unappealing, prioritizing her unwavering commitment to her family's well-being. One of the other prominent traits Alcott endowed her character with is sensitiveness as more than once Josephine was depicted crying on literature: "*Meg found her sister (Jo) eating apples and crying over the Heir of Redclyffe*", which in some way contrasts her usual "boyish" behavior she is even proud of: "*Jo does use such slang words!*" observed Amy, with a reproving look at the long figure stretched on the rug. Jo immediately sat up, put her hands in her pockets, and began to whistle. "*Don't, Jo. It's so boyish!*" "*I detest rude, unladylike girls!*" "*I hate affected, niminy-piminy chits!*" [46, p. 5]. This attitude Alcott reflected in the character's portrait: "*Fifteen-year-old Jo was very tall, thin, and brown, and reminded one of a colt, for she never seemed to know what to do with her long limbs, which were very much in her way. She had a decided mouth, a*

comical nose, and sharp, gray eyes, which appeared to see everything, and were by turns fierce, funny, or thoughtful. Her long, thick hair was her one beauty, but it was usually bundled into a net, to be out of her way. Round shoulders had Jo, big hands and feet, a flyaway look to her clothes, and the uncomfortable appearance of a girl who was rapidly shooting up into a woman and didn't like it [46, p. 7].

Their younger sister Elizabeth “Beth” is a quiet kind girl, who doesn't talk much. She loves to help people and make them happy. Alcott described her appearance as *“a rosy, smooth-haired, bright-eyed girl of thirteen, with a shy manner, a timid voice, and a peaceful expression which was seldom disturbed. Her father called her “Little Miss Tranquility”, and the name suited her excellently, for she seemed to live in a happy world of her own, only venturing out to meet the few whom she trusted and loved.”* Her biggest passion is music, but due to poverty and sickness, she is limited in her ambitions and forced to spend her time at home keeping the household: *“It's naughty to fret, but I do think washing dishes and keeping things tidy is the worst work in the world. It makes me cross, and my hands get so stiff, I can't practice well at all”* [49, p. 8]. Elizabeth is depicted as a kindhearted, thoughtful, however, sad and obedient little lady: *“There are many Beths in the world, shy and quiet, sitting in corners till needed, and living for others so cheerfully that no one sees the sacrifices till the little cricket on the hearth stops chirping”* [46, p. 56]. Beth is kind and peaceful, like the perfect female characters in classic literature. But unlike the real world the author aimed to depict, Beth is almost too good to be true. By having Beth die, the author, Louisa May Alcott, seems to be saying goodbye to this type of unrealistic character. The other March sisters, who are stronger and more complex, are better suited to survive in reality.

The youngest March sister Amy is represented as possessing both artistic talent and physical beauty: *“A regular snow maiden, with blue eyes, and yellow hair curling on her shoulders, pale and slender, and always carrying herself like a young lady mindful of her manners”* [46, p. 4]. She has a strategic mind and uses her charm to manipulate the world around her: *“Amy, though the youngest, was a most important person, in her own opinion at least”* [46, p. 8]. Among the sisters Amy

pays the biggest attention to her appearance struggling with complexes and striving for perfection: *“If anybody had asked Amy what the greatest trial of her life was, she would have answered at once, “My nose.” ... Amy felt deeply the want of a Grecian nose, and drew whole sheets of handsome ones to console herself”* [46, p. 8]. Unlike Jo, who rebels against expectations, Amy embraces a refined demeanor, finding pleasure in both pleasing others and showcasing her own elegance. The following lines demonstrate how Alcott described the youngest March girl: *“Amy - She was a great favorite with her mates, being good-tempered and possessing the happy art of pleasing without effort. Her little airs and graces were much admired, and so were her accomplishments, for besides her drawing, she could play twelve tunes, crochet, and read French without mispronouncing more than two-thirds of the words. She had a plaintive way of saying, ‘When Papa was rich we did so-and-so,’ which was very touching, and her long words were considered ‘perfectly elegant’ by the girls. Amy was in a fair way to be spoiled, for everyone petted her, and her small vanities and selfishnesses were growing nicely”* [46, p. 57].

Louisa May Alcott in her novel created four close but meanwhile various characters describing the femininity and internal beauty of each of the ladies, the way their personalities grow and develop, and celebrated the family bonds as one of the most important values of 19th-century women. Due to their closeness and character traits complementarity ladies form the pairs the author introduced, as well. Jo, despite her outgoing personality, and Beth, known for her quiet nature, share a common thread – a desire to carve their paths. Both chafe at the limitations placed upon them by societal expectations of femininity. This shared yearning for something beyond the traditional mold likely strengthens their sisterly bond. On the other hand, Meg, known for her generosity, and Amy, with her focus on ambition, find comfort within the existing social structure. Their contrasting personalities might explain their natural closeness – Meg understands and supports Amy's aspirations, while Amy might admire Meg's ability to navigate the social world.

2.2 Lexical analysis of the novel

Louisa May Alcott's novel is rich in descriptions and evaluative adjectives and adverbs which provides us with the opportunity to delve deeper into the lexical selection of a representation of the concept of beauty in the 19th-century literary work.

The author demonstrated an abundance of words denoting attractive appearance. Here are the results in numbers for the most frequently used lexemes of general impression: one of the most popular lexemes representing the lexico-semantic field is the adjective "*pretty*" which the author utilized 122 times, then goes the adjective "beautiful" which was implied 62 times and the noun "*beauty*" (used 39 times), "*nice*" (86 times), "*lovely*" (69 times), "*perfect*" (59 times), "*handsome*" (44 times), "*elegant*" (26 times), "*graceful*" (21 times), "*attractive*" (9 times), "*gorgeous*" (7 times). Then analyzing the lexical units used to describe the physical appearance, we can demonstrate the most popular ones: "*tall*" (45 times), "*pale*" (22 times), "*thin*" (22 times), "*slender*" (3 times) and "*bright-eyed*" (3 times). Another set of words traced utilized for portraits is the face and body parts: the noun "*face*" itself was used by the author for 164 times, "*hair*" was mentioned 174 times, "*lips*" (36 times), "*eyes*" (208 times), "*nose*" (22 times), "*hands*" (185 times), "*shoulders*" (19 times), "*arms*" (23 times), "*legs*" (12 times,) etc.

Additionally, as the concept of beauty implies not only a physical portrait of an individual, it is reasonable to look for vocabulary used to describe the traits of character: the adjective "*kind*" which Alcott used for her heroines 79 times, "*sweet*" which expressed both appearance and temper was mentioned 54 times, "*tender*" (50 times), "*funny*" (55 times), "*quiet*" (53 times) "*sensible*" (20 times), "*gentle*" (18 times), "*ambitious*" (14 times), "*curious*" (11 times), "*clever*" (8 times) and "*sensitive*" (3 times).

In conclusion, Alcott's lexical choices paint a nuanced picture of beauty in her time. While physical attributes like slenderness and pleasant features were important,

the ideal also encompassed kindness, gentleness, and possibly a touch of wit and ambition. This analysis was aimed to demonstrate how an examination of word choices can reveal the values and aesthetics implemented within a literary work.

2.3. Stylistic analysis of the novel

Louisa May Alcott in her novel, “Little Women”, created a vivid portrait of the March sisters' lives not just through plot, but also through a rich tapestry of figurative language. This analysis delves into Alcott's stylistic choices, exploring how she utilized tropes and figures of speech to breathe life into her characters and their world. In this analysis, we examine how different rhetorical categories illuminate the emotions and motivations of the sisters. By studying Alcott's use of language, we may acquire a better understanding of the images built in “Little Women”.

Alcott used quite a wide range of different tropes in figures, so in this analysis, it was decided to focus on those that demonstrate the representation of the concept of beauty by depicting ladies' appearance and character traits. Some prominent examples can be found in these lines: “*Meg had a voice like a flute, and she and her mother led the little choir. Amy chirped like a cricket, and Jo wandered through the airs at her own sweet will, always coming out at the wrong place with a croak or a quaver that spoiled the most pensive tune*” [46, p. 17]

Starting with the simile “*a voice like a flute*” referring to the oldest March sister's talent in music, the author describes the way the ladies sing (being one of the aspects of a 19th-century woman's ideal - a gentle voice and the ability to sing and play various instruments), the next simile “*chirped like a cricket*” points on Amy's high-pitched voice, not necessarily sounding melodious. Then to show the contrast and rebellious nature of a teenage girl despising all feminine, Alcott, created a metaphor “*Jo wandered through the airs at her own will*” denoting the girl's poor musical hearing and effort. This little abstract concentrating figurative language also mirrors characters' personality traits.

Intertextuality is also a distinctive feature of Alcott's prose. There various examples, such as “*When she was a baby, Jo had accidentally dropped her into the coal hod, and Amy insisted that the fall had ruined her nose forever. It was not big nor red, like poor 'Petrea's*” [46, p. 56]. A comic character named Petrea appears in “The Home”, a book young Louisa May Alcott cherished when she was about Amy's

age. Another example brings an instance of antonomasia as well: “*Jo, who had been considered a “Sancho” ever since she was born*” [46, p. 23], referring to a Miguel de Cervantes’s character which was an embodiment of simplicity, curiosity and loyalty. Antonomasia can be traced several more times: “*I don’t see how you can write and act such splendid things, Jo. You’re a regular Shakespeare!*” [46, p. 11] depicting Josephine’s prominent writing talent by mentioning one of the most famous writers of all times; the other sentence containing this trope presented further: “Her father called her “*Little Miss Tranquility*” refers to Beth’s peaceful calm personality.

The novel contains a wide range of similes which helps the gives the narrative a special charm, allowing to create an artistic image. Here are some outstanding illustrations: “*Beth blushed like a rose*”, “*...you always look like an angel in white*”, “*made me look like a fashion plate*”, “*She sang like a little lark*”, etc. [46, p. 84, 117, 134, 56].

Metaphorical expressions play an important role in formation of the author’s style of artistic narration in terms of creating female portraits and depicting the concept of beauty. For instance, in the sentence: “*Beth had her troubles as well as the others, and not being an angel but a very human little girl*” [46, p. 55] the word combination “*being an angel*” used in its transferred meaning denoting being a flawless saint. Moving to another Beth’s description Alcott used metaphor once again: “*... she was by nature a busy bee.*” meaning hard-working nature of a young lady. In Amy’s public punishment description: “*During the fifteen minutes that followed, the proud and sensitive little girl suffered a shame and pain which she never forgot. To others it might seem a ludicrous or trivial affair, but to her it was a hard experience, for during the twelve years of her life she had been governed by love alone, and a blow of that sort had never touched her before*” [46, p. 92-93], the author used a metaphorical expression “*governed by love alone*” highlighting the warm and loving environment the girl was growing up in. In the sentence “*Jo’s angles are much softened, she has learned to carry herself with ease, if not grace*” [46, p. 349] the “*angles*” were used in their transferred meaning of quick-tempered personality.

Referring to some other tropes and figures of speech that helped to create such a vivid picture of the 19th-century family with maturing four young ladies, it's worth to mention also some metonymical expressing, for instance, it was widely used throughout a novel a name of a fabric instead of a dress: "*What's the use of asking that, when you know we shall wear our poplins, because we haven't got anything else?*" answered Jo with her mouth full. *'If I only had a silk!'* sighed Meg" [46, p. 33]. The girls frequently used materials in the meaning of clothes: poplins, tartalans etc.

Additionally, the narration is embellished by abundance of epithets: "*rosy, healthy creature*", "*brilliant colors*", "*gauzy butterflies*", "*fiery spirit*", "*patient effort*", "*restless spirit*", "*sharp tongue*", "*indescribable charm*", etc.

In conclusion, Louisa May Alcott's masterful use of figurative language elevated "Little Women" beyond a simple coming-of-age story. Through various tropes and figures, she breathed life into the March sisters, making their emotions and aspirations tangible. These figures of speech not only paint a vivid picture of their world but also illuminate their inner struggles and triumphs. Furthermore, Alcott's deployment of classic tropes provides a framework for understanding the sisters' journeys.

Summary

Louisa May Alcott's "Little Women" goes beyond the boundaries of a coming-of-age story, offering a nuanced exploration of 19th-century female beauty ideals. Through the storylines of the March sisters, Alcott revealed a multifaceted concept of beauty, showing its intricate connection to physical appearance, social expectations, and moral character.

The 19th century prioritized physical attractiveness as a core of female beauty. "Little Women" supports this notion by presenting Meg March as the typical beautiful young lady of that time. Described as "pretty" and "delicate". Furthermore, Megan represents a perfect female family attitude model: a loyal wife eager to dedicate herself to the household and make her spouse and children pleased.

However, Alcott's portrayal of female beauty extends beyond physical and traditional societal attributes. The novel recognizes the value of inner beauty, embodied by the gentle and selfless Beth. While descriptions of Beth's physical appearance are less prominent, her quiet strength, unwavering kindness, and unwavering devotion to her family created a picture of a different dimension of beauty highly valued in the Victorian era. Beth aligns with the concept of the "angel in the house," a feminine ideal that emphasized domesticity, selflessness, and a nurturing nature. Alcott's portrayal suggests that moral purity and a gentle spirit were just as important as physical attractiveness in defining a woman's worth.

The contrasting character of Jo March adds another layer of complexity to the beauty ideals presented. Jo's tomboyish demeanor and intellectual pursuits create contrast to Meg's focus on social graces. Descriptions of Jo often highlight her spirit, sharp wit, and literary aspirations rather than her physical appearance. This initial resistance to traditional beauty ideals, particularly her aversion to wearing uncomfortable corsets, highlights the limits placed upon women in the 19th century.

However, Jo's eventual compromise with societal expectations, symbolized by her choice to wear a more fashionable dress for a significant social event, underscores the pervasiveness of these pressures. Her internal conflict reflects the struggle many

women faced in reconciling their aspirations with societal expectations of femininity and beauty.

Amy March presents a more nuanced portrayal of beauty standards in the narrative. Initially depicted as being somewhat vain and materialistic, Amy prioritizes aesthetics and social graces. However, Amy's growth and development showcase a more nuanced understanding of these ideals. She learns to balance her artistic aspirations with social conformity, culminating in a successful marriage that combines love with social standing. Amy's journey underscores the idea that beauty and charm were not just superficial traits but crucial tools for women in the 19th century to navigate the social hierarchy and secure their position within society.

Alcott's masterful use of language further elucidates the complexities of 19th-century beauty ideals. Words like "delicate," "charming," "gentle," and "elegant" are consistently used to describe the March sisters, subtly reinforcing the importance of these qualities. Similes and metaphors, such as comparing Beth to a "little dove" or describing Meg's beauty as "blooming like a rose," create a vivid picture of the ideal Victorian woman. These stylistic elements suggest that physical beauty was not an isolated concept but rather intertwined with moral and social virtues, creating a multifaceted ideal that women were expected to aspire to.

Additionally, the author gives us a glimpse into that time fashion as a crucial element of a young lady's image and the object of girls' desires and temptations, highlighting the March sisters' concerns about their poor wardrobe as a status-defining feature.

In conclusion, "Little Women" offers a rich world of female beauty ideals in the 19th century. It shows both the alluring and restrictive aspects of these ideals. While physical attractiveness played a significant role, inner beauty, moral character, and social graces were equally important in defining a woman's worth in the time described. Through the diverse experiences of the March sisters, Alcott delves into the complexities of these ideals and their impact on the lives of young women.

3. THE CONCEPT OF FEMALE BEAUTY IN CONTEMPORARY FICTION

The following works were chosen by their relevancy to the topic of womanhood and the position of women in society, additionally spanning in time of 21st-century modern American literature. They develop and reveal a woman as a mother, daughter, sister, wife, worker, dependent and independent mind, giving the contemporary image of one.

3.1. Saunders G. “The Semplica-Girl Diaries”

George Saunders (1958 - now) is an American writer, famous for his short stories and scenarios. He first debuted in 1996 with *Civiwarland in Bad Decline*. Since then, Saunders has consistently dedicated himself to the short-story format, meticulously composing new works published in the *New Yorker* or other prestigious American magazines every three to four months. His most recent collection marks his first in six years [41]. His work accounts for twelve books, including *Lincoln in the Bardo*, which earned the 2017 Man Booker Prize for best work of fiction in English and was a finalist for the Golden Man Booker [31]. The book mentioned in the following chapter *Tenth of December* provides a collection of ten short stories offering insights into American life, showcasing characters such as Al, Kyle, and Jeff, set within suburban or small-town landscapes. Through his adept use of language, Saunders skillfully draws readers into the inner worlds of these characters, where aspirations frequently collide with harsh realities [41]. With profound insight, Saunders skillfully delves into themes of class, sex, love, loss, work, despair, and war, offering a compelling exploration of the contemporary human experience. Through these stories, he confronts fundamental questions, probing the boundaries of our morality and essential humanity [31].

The Semplica-Girls Diaries (2012) is described by The Quadrangle as “A Short Story That Takes on Big Issues” [41]. The narrator uncovers a troubling social norm: using Semplica Girls as symbols of status. The expression SG appears multiple times

in the text to emphasise the story's social commentary with disturbing demonstrations of wealth. SGs are women from third-world countries, who faced hard times in their lives and consequently became garden accessories: *“Laotian (Tami) applied due to two sisters already in brothels. Moldovan (Gwen) has cousin who thought she was becoming window-washer in Germany, but no: sex slave in Kuwait (!). Somali (Lisa) watched father + little sister die of AIDS, same tiny thatch hut, same year. Filipina (Betty) has little brother “very skilled for computer,” parents cannot afford high school, have lived in tiny lean-to with three other families since their own tiny lean-to slid down hillside in earthquake.”* [48, p. 9]. In the series of diary entries preceding his daughter Lilly's birthday, the narrator delves into themes of wealth, morality, and societal pressures. The disjointed syntax serves to intensify the urgency of the narrative, while the juxtaposition of typical family interactions against unsettling displays of affluence underscores the story's social critique [41].

The *Semplica Girl Diaries* was selected for examination due to its comprehensive investigation of societal values and its relevance to current issues regarding the depiction of women. The narrative provides a distinctive perspective on the commercialization of women and the exploitation of vulnerable populations, particularly those from developing nations. On the other hand, it provides different points of view of the two young ladies - Eva and Lilly. Through the portrayal of the *Semplica Girls*, the story highlights the objectification of women as symbols of status and the ethical implications of such practices. Incorporating “*The Semplica Girl Diaries*” into the study enriches the analysis by providing a thought-provoking reflection on gender dynamics, power structures, and ethical considerations within contemporary society. The story enhances the understanding of gender representation and societal attitudes towards women by exploring the portrayal of women as both victims and agents of change.

3.1.1. The Semplica-Girl Diaries Analysis. Emotional appearance

Throughout the narrative, Pam, the protagonist's wife, emerges as a central and grounding presence within the family, offering unwavering emotional support and stability amidst their challenges. Referred to simply as Pam, her impact is felt during moments of both vulnerability and strength. For instance, the protagonist recalls: "*Pam came out, asked had I been crying?*" [48, p. 124], displaying her keen attentiveness to his emotional well-being. Furthermore, her resilience shines through in difficult times, as illustrated by her reassuring words to the protagonist during a trying conversation: "*Come on inside. Let's get things back to normal. We'll get through this.*" [48, p.124]. This emphasizes Pam's pivotal role as a source of endurance and encouragement in the face of uncertainty. Pam plays a simple carrying-wife role, lacking the unique identity in her husband's eyes. This woman is a commoner, lives like a commoner, and reflects the usual reaction of a blind commoner, when given an outstanding amount of money by chance - following her husband and proceeding to pay for unnecessary things to show off the illusion of wealth.

Similarly, Lilly and Eva, the protagonist's daughters, contribute significantly to the narrative by offering glimpses into childhood innocence and the intricacies of familial dynamics. Portrayed with simplicity and authenticity, their presence enriches the story emotionally. Lilly, the elder daughter, exudes curiosity and perceptiveness, providing a unique viewpoint on family life. This is evident in her meaningful exchanges with her parents and her insightful understanding of their struggles, as exemplified through her Favorite Things Day poster project related to the Semplica Girls' stories, showcasing her empathy and compassion. Meanwhile, the youngest daughter, Eva, is depicted with tenderness and vulnerability, evoking empathy and compassion from readers. Her involvement in the central conflict of the narrative sheds light on the unintended implications of youthful innocence and the complexities of familial love, as evidenced by her fearful revelation to the protagonist: "*I didn't know we would lose the house.*" [48, p.124]. Eva represents

sake and morality in the story, with appealing emotions towards Semplica Girls and helps them to escape the occupation of unbearable life. Her father highlights: “*As I may have mentioned above, Eva = sensitive. This = good, Pam and I feel. This = sign of intelligence*” [48, p.119] giving the reader an idea of Eva being a unique character, with her out-of-box view on The Semplica-Girls trend. The younger daughter appears rebellious: “*Today Eva’s teacher, Ms. Ross, sent home note: Eva acting out. Eva grouchy. Eva stamped foot. Eva threw fish-food container at John M. when John M. said it was his turn to feed fish. This not like Eva, Ms. R. says: Eva sweetest kid in class.*” [48, p. 118]. Comparing the attitude of two sisters, their father, the narrator, mentions: “*At window, Eva quiet. Deep well. So sensitive. Even when tiny, Eva sensitive. Kindest kid. Biggest heart. ... Lilly, on other hand, wrote all thank-you notes tonight in one sitting, mopped kitchen without being asked, then was out in yard w/ flashlight, picking up Ferber area with new poop-scoop she apparently rode on bike to buy w/ own money at Fas Mart*” [48, p. 118]. The disparities between these two young women are clear-cut; while Lilly adheres to the established societal norms, Eva perceives the situation as overwhelming and unjust and tries to aid the Semplica Girls.

Collectively, Pam, Lilly, and Eva symbolize the multifaceted dimensions of womanhood and the intricate nature of family relationships. Through their interactions and experiences, the narrative delves into themes of love, resilience, and self-discovery, challenging conventional gender roles and societal expectations. Pam's role as a nurturing caregiver and emotional pillar underscores the significance of empathy and compassion in fostering familial connections. Meanwhile, Lilly and Eva offer nuanced insights into childhood innocence and the trials of coming of age in an increasingly complex world. Their encounters and relationships with the protagonist illuminate the transformative influence of love, family, and resilience in overcoming adversity and finding purpose in life's challenges. Through their resilience, compassion, and enduring love, Pam, Lilly, and Eva embody the innate strength and dignity of women, prompting readers to contemplate the profound impact of familial ties and the enduring force of love in navigating life's obstacles.

3.1.2. Lexical and stylistic levels

The lexical selections in the text not only encompass everyday language but also subtly communicate the intricacies of womanhood and beauty.

Analyzing the lexical choices of the concept of beauty depiction, we can observe that the author rarely used evaluative adjectives describing women's image: "*beautiful*" was used 3 times in the text, also there were mentioned, "*nice*" (7 times), "*sweet*" in the meaning of being attractive used 10 times, "*pretty*" (4 times). Furthermore, for creating a portrait description the author used nouns identifying parts of the face or hair on several occasions: "*eyes*" (5 times), "*lips*" or rather a singular form "*lip*" (2 times), "*hair*" (2 times), "*curls*" (1 time).

By referring to the female characters without embellished descriptors, the focus is directed toward their actions and interactions rather than external appearance. This choice underscores the narrative's emphasis on internal qualities and emotional connections over superficial attributes. For instance, in the line: "*As I may have mentioned above, Eva = sensitive. This = good*" [48, p.119], the author equates being sensitive to the standards of a good lady. Within the narration, the adjective "*sensitive*" was utilized 5 times for the female descriptions. Examining deeper the notion of sensitiveness in the short story, we can also refer to some other lexemes, such as the noun in the plural "*tears*" (used 11 times), the adjectives: "*kind*" (9 times), "*sweet*" in the meaning of pleasant (4 times). Traits of character reflecting the female figures also include mentioning some other adjectives: "*hopeful*" (2 times), "*joyful*" (2 times), "*quiet*" (4 times), and "*timid*" (3 times).

Due to the peculiarity of the narration, particularly being written in the form of a diary, the short story does not offer a wide range of descriptions with the application of appearance and temper characteristics, but meanwhile, the reader can trace female figures qualities by evaluation of their actions and words. For instance, the narrator's wife used the vocative "*sweetie*" to address the daughters conveying a sense of warmth and familial closeness, emphasizing the motherly roles often assumed by women within family dynamics. Some other examples include verbs

exploiting: “*to cry*” continuing the line of “empathy” notion (used 9 times), “*to care*” (2 times), and “*to smile*” (5 times).

Concluding the analysis of the lexical level, "The Semplica Girls Diaries" utilizes a carefully selected vocabulary that subtly portrays the complexities of womanhood and beauty. By downplaying physical appearance and highlighting positive internal qualities and actions, the text presents a unique perspective on the societal expectations placed upon women.

On a stylistic level, The Semplica Girl Diaries narrative approach deeply involves readers in the protagonist's personal experiences and feelings. By using a first-person perspective, the author encourages readers to connect with the characters' emotions and challenges, creating a sense of closeness and understanding. This stylistic decision highlights the timeless themes of love, family, and strength, going beyond traditional ideas of beauty and highlighting the inherent value and dignity of each character. The narration being held from the point of view of an average working-class man is not versatile with linguistic devices: metaphor - “*Like sin-eaters who, in ancient times, ate sin*” - the author refers to the individuals who carry the burdens or mistakes of others, similar to the sacrifices and responsibilities often linked to womanhood, especially Semplica Girls in the story, who are weighted with the responsibility of their families poverty; irony - “*Won ScratchOff, greatest luck of life, quickly converted greatest luck of life into greatest fiasco of life*” - opposing the luck of winning the lottery with a subsequent disappointment in life, showing the unpredictability of being. Such situations encountered SGs while living their usual lives, drastic changes that lead them to hang in someone`s yard is a hyperbole, but still, shows the struggles women need to overcome while bearing the problems of their own and family life.

3.2. Machado C. M. “Eight Bites”

Carmen Maria Machado (1986 - now), an American author, has made a significant impact across a variety of literary genres, from bestselling memoirs to award-winning collections of short stories and graphic novels. She has received numerous accolades, including being a finalist for the National Book Award and winning esteemed literary prizes such as the Lambda Literary Award and the Shirley Jackson Award, solidifying her reputation as a highly talented writer. Her work delves into themes of queerness, feminism, and the intricate nature of human experience. Machado's writing, which showcases her versatility and distinctive voice, has been featured in prestigious publications such as *The New Yorker*, *Vogue*, and *Harper's Bazaar*. Carmen Maria Machado's debut collection, *Her Body and Other Parties*, released by Graywolf Press in 2017, promptly gained high praise and cultural acknowledgement. *The New York Times* lauded it as a “groundbreaking work”. Its influence reaches beyond the written page [25].

One of the topics Machado reveals in her works refers to eating disorders and women's body image and perception. The story *Eight Bites* addresses one such danger, the toxic messages women internalise about body image [21]. This narrative explores the formation of identity within the context of the family. It delves into the influence of mothers, daughters, and sisters on the aspirations and ultimate paths of self-discovery [17]. As Machado claims in an interview with Rutgers University (2021), *Eight Bites* was initially a retelling of *The Little Mermaid*, where she wanted to imply an idea of body transformations, that undergo both her character and *The Little Mermaid* [8]. The prominent feature of Machado's works - combining folklore and fairytales into the realm of contemporary life and issues, taking into account the mentioned story, about women struggling with their appearance and facing unwanted commentary on their bodies. In *Eight Bites*, multiple female figures emerge, each possessing unique characteristics and fulfilling distinct roles in the protagonist's life. These individuals encompass the protagonist herself, who grapples with body image issues and undergoes a transformative surgery; Dr. U, the surgeon whose demeanour

shifts from warmth to aloofness; and the protagonist's sisters, who offer support and observation throughout her journey. These women assume various roles in shaping the protagonist's narrative and exemplifying different facets of womanhood and societal expectations.

The following subchapter proceeds to deepen the description of female characters in the above-mentioned works, describe their physical and psychological appearance and analyse their role within the narrative. Additionally, to analyse the texts given and pinpoint the linguistic, syntactic and stylistic features and their contribution to the target topic.

3.2.1. Women's Figures in “Eight Bites”. Physical appearance

The Eight Bites narration is more versatile when it comes to the women figures, compared to “The Semplica-Girls Diaries”. There are 2 main female representatives - the protagonist, whose name is omitted, and her daughter, Cal. There are also 3 protagonist`s sisters, Dr. U, and the protagonist`s niece playing the role in the short story.

The protagonist undergoes a physical transformation, her physical appearance is depicted as evolving gradually, with depictions of her body and facial features shifting over time: *“I am transformed but not yet, exactly. The transformation has begun—this pain, this excruciating pain, it is part of the process—and will not end until—well, I suppose I don't know when. Will I ever be done, transformed in the past tense, or will I always be transforming, better and better until I die?”* [50]. The protagonist's experience of physical transformation, described as a gradual process of emergence, symbolizes a journey of self-discovery and acceptance. This portrayal suggests that beauty is not fixed but evolves, shaped by personal experiences and perceptions. Previously she describes herself: *“My stomach was the television set through the window”* [47] - leading the reader to understand one of the reasons for going in for the surgery. Lately, she compares herself with women in the church, who compliment her on her skin, but still, she needs to *“rotate my hips”* [47] unlike them. The protagonist recalls herself before delivering a baby: *“Look how young I am!*

Look at my weird fashion! Saddle shoes—who thought of those? Stirrup pants—are you joking? Squirrel barrettes? Look at those glasses, look at that face: mugging for the camera. Look at that expression, mugging for a future self who is holding those photos, sick with nostalgia. Even when I thought I was fat I wasn't; the teenager in those photos is very beautiful, in a wistful kind of way” [47] giving the reader an idea that the struggle with her appearance dates far earlier than pregnancy and adulthood. Facing such problems with her body image, she seeks support from her sisters and daughter.

The narrator allows to acknowledge her 3 sisters, who have already undergone the surgery. The first sister appears to look *“like a branch stripped bare by the wind”* [47] and the second has *“her cheekbones, high and tight as cherries”* [47]. The third sister looks like the closest to the protagonist emotionally - the woman compares her sibling to their mother: *“Her dark hair reminded me of my mother's; almost too shiny and homogenous to be real, though it was”* [47]. Subsequently, the main character praises her third`s elegance, comparing her nails to roses - *“She held her hands in a way that showed off her red nails, which were so lacquered they had horizontal depth like a rose trapped in glass”* [47]. Through the impression the narrator gives to the reader with the descriptions of her sisters` appearance one can understand that the woman tries to reach their level of beauty by a drastic decision to change her body. She, then, doesn't stop suffering from body dysmorphia and keeps feeling unwell, even worse - when an image of herself as a child appears at her house and accompanies her. Analyzing the given passage in the realm of contemporary women, the sisters represent beauty standards - which the nameless protagonist, an average woman, tries to achieve, giving away her unique traits. Additionally, these standards are represented as unhealthily harsh - when a woman undergoes such surgery without any medical prescriptions. Consequently, a small child reflects a woman`s guilt of betraying herself, which is always with her and resembles the body she will never return.

One other character with a deeper significance than the typical surgeon is Dr. U, who initially comes across as pleasant and accommodating in the hospital

environment. However, by the time of the surgery, her attitude has reversed: “*Gone was the sweetness from her office; her eyes looked transformed. Icy*“ [47]. The doctor implies a deceitful concept of the nowadays beauty industry. “*What was she doing, sending me on this journey she had never taken?*” [47] - the protagonist wonders how a woman, who has never faced such an experience, could claim it to bring happiness. The shift from amiable to cold reflects the main character's experience of becoming disenchanted with the quest for physical perfection. In the end, Dr. U's actions serve as a warning about the risks involved in pursuing an unrealistic standard of beauty.

Despite most characters being drawn into an unhealthy slimming lifestyle, the protagonist's daughter Cal remains steadfast, opposing the mother's idea. She is described as “*Her body was imperfect but it was also fresh, pliable*” [47], which could lead her to make a change as everyone else to fit the standard. She questions her relationship with her mother: “*Do you love every part of me?*” [47] referring to the will of her mother to change her normal body. The protagonist also questions her relationship with her daughter, comparing herself to the third sister: “*She talks to her daughter—who loves her without judgment, I am sure—in the kitchen, so soft I can barely hear her, but then forgets herself and laughs loudly at some joke shared between them*” [47]. The narrative portrays mother-daughter relationships as intricate and fraught with tension. The protagonist attempts to enforce her standards of beauty and perfection on her daughter, while Cal resists these pressures by asserting her agency and self-acceptance. This conflict is evident in Cal's questioning of her mother's love for every part of her, highlighting the strain caused by the mother's obsession with physical appearance.

The last character, the niece, is referred to as the one “*selling knife sets so she could go back to school and become a—well, I missed that part, but she would get paid just for telling me about the knives*” [47]. The passage depicts the niece as hardworking and driven, actively pursuing educational opportunities. Despite some elements of her ambitions remaining unspecified, the protagonist extends support to her niece's pursuits, showcasing familial concern and encouragement.

3.2.2. Lexical and stylistic levels

The lexical choice of Machado's short story emphasizes crucial themes and ideas about femininity and aesthetics of contemporary perspectives. Opposed to classical ideals of female beauty in which more attention was dedicated to the facial criteria, the author reflects on the trend of keeping the body fit, and moreover unhealthy hyperfixation on being thin.

Analyzing the lexical choice used to highlight female beauty in the text, we can again divide the lexemes on several semantic categories. The first one representing the general assessment of having a pleasant appearance, was relatively sparsely used: the adjective "*beautiful*" was utilized 4 times within the text in addition to the noun "*beauty*" which was mentioned 2 times, and "*lovely*" (mentioned once). The use of the word "*imperfect*" indicates the main character's recognition of imperfections or differences from societal beauty norms. It highlights the expectations for women to adhere to idealized concepts of beauty while also questioning the idea that flawlessness is necessary for self-esteem. To pinpoint the protagonist's continuous journey of transformation and development, the narrator provides an expression transformed into the text, implying a significant change in identity or viewpoint. This highlights the catalytic nature of personal growth and introspection. In contrast to imperfect, "*fresh*" conveys a sense of vitality, youthfulness, and renewal. It implies the potential for growth and change, highlighting the protagonist's journey towards self-discovery and acceptance.

The group introducing the body's shape has some more examples: "*slender*" (3 times), "*skinny*" (1 time), "*svelte*" (1 time), "*plump*" (1 time). However, much more attention is paid to descriptions of how parts of the body look like, naming some nouns: "*face*" (6 times), "*eyes*" (6 times), "*hand*" or rather plural form "*hands*" (9 times), "*hips*" (2 times), "*arms*" (4 times), "*legs*" (once), "*hair*" (3 times), "*cheek*" (3 times) and one of the distinctive feature of thinness distinguishing "*cheekbones*" (2 times), "*waist*" (2 times). The row may be sequenced further by the nouns denoting body structure: "*bones*" (5 times) and "*muscle*" (3 times). These terms offer

perspective into the protagonist's inner conflicts and external obstacles as she progresses towards self-acceptance and empowerment.

Talking about inner beauty, the author mentioned adjectives of character traits several times: “*sympathetic*” (2 times) and “sweet” meaning of pleasant attitude. However, not only descriptions were added to create a social portrait of a modern woman, but also the language the person communicates. In the narration the female characters several times resort to the use of vulgarisms blurring the standards set in previous epochs saying that women ought to keep an elegant flawless manner of speaking.

An interesting peculiarity was noticed in the addition of cosmetics objects to highlight the idea of self-care routine as a part of the contemporary female beauty aspect. There were mentioned “*manicure*” and “*nails*” conveying the meaning of being polished, “*perfume*” and “*lotion*”.

The narrative “Eight Bites” intricately utilizes various linguistic devices to construct a compelling depiction of the complexities of womanhood and self-image. Through tropes, such as the metaphor of “*shedding layers of self*”, the protagonist's journey of self-discovery and transformation is vividly portrayed, mirroring the process of shedding old identities and societal expectations.

Machado in their short story created several lively female characters' pictures by the usage of different tropes and figures. In the beginning of the story the narrator recalls her mother describing her as “*Iron will, slender waistline*” [47], reflecting all the ideals of a perfect modern woman in this one line. In terms of stylistics, the sentence “iron will, slender waistline” utilizes two contrasting metaphors. “*Iron will*” compares the character's determination to iron, highlighting their inner strength. Conversely, “*slender waistline*” focuses on the physical aspect, emphasizing a particular body type. This juxtaposition of metaphors draws attention to the interplay between a strong personality and external appearance. Further, in the later mother's description, the author explained the story's title: “*Eight bites lined her stomach like insulation rolled into the walls of houses*” [47] representing the metonymic expression of “*eight bites*” in the meaning of the diet the character used to keep her

body in shape. The simile “*like insulation into the walls of houses*” highlighted the importance of the nutrition approach in the narrator’s mind.

While the narrator emphasizes her imperfection according to her set standards, she also finds an explanation for it in giving birth for her daughter: “*She was a heavy-metal rocker trashing a hotel room before departing*” [47] metaphorically naming her child a disaster provoked the harm to her body shape.

The text is rather rich in other examples of similes making the narration more vivid: “*her eyes were glittering like she had a fever*”, “*silhouetted against the window, looks like a branch stripped bare by the wind*”, “*I can see her cheekbones, high and tight as cherries*”, “*she looked like the ghost*”, “*red nails, which were so lacquered they had horizontal depth, like a rose trapped in glass*” [47]. All of these expressions enrich the story in terms of figurative language and make the reader feel engaged by the way the narrator shares her personal experience and reflections.

An interesting, in terms of stylistics, episode occurred when the characters described post-surgery recovery which included hallucinations and all of the sisters’ stories were embellished by metaphors and similes to highlight on good changes they experienced: “*My joy danced around my house, like a child, and I danced with her. We almost broke two vases that way!*”, “*My inner beauty was set free and lay around in patches of sunlight like a cat, preening itself*”, “*My former shame slunk from shadow to shadow, as it should have. It will go away, after a while. You won't even notice and then one day it'll be gone*” [47].

Hyperbolic language, exemplified by the phrase “*excruciating pain*”, underscores the intensity of the protagonist's struggles with societal beauty standards and self-image. Repetition, as evidenced in the recurring phrase “*Will I ever be done, transformed in the past tense, or will I always be transforming, better and better until I die*” [47], reinforces the ongoing nature of the protagonist's journey toward self-improvement and growth. Together, these linguistic devices contribute to the stylistic richness of the text, fostering emotional resonance and deeper insight into the protagonist's internal conflicts and external challenges.

In conclusion, "Eight Bites" by Machado masterfully utilizes a wide range of linguistic tools to paint a nuanced portrait of womanhood and self-image. Machado employs interesting lexical choices and variety of tropes and figures to highlight the societal pressures impacting body image and the internal struggles women face. Repetition emphasizes the ongoing nature of self-discovery, leaving the reader with the enduring image of a woman transforming and evolving. Ultimately, these stylistic choices elevate the text beyond a simple narrative, allowing readers to connect with the protagonist's journey and gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of female identity.

Summary

The portrayal of female beauty in contemporary literature has surpassed mere physical description, evolving into a rich exploration of identity, societal pressures, and personal journeys. Two captivating narratives, "The Semplica Girls Diaries" and "Eight Bites," demonstrate the power of language to explore the complexities of female beauty, moving beyond traditional, superficial portrayals.

"The Semplica Girls Diaries" by Saunders G. blurred traditional beauty standards by focusing on the subtle nuances of everyday life. The author's deliberate choice of words and sentence structures avoids the trap of elaborate physical descriptions. Instead, the narrative delves into the beauty found in family connections, resilience in the face of challenges, and genuine interactions that enrich everyday experiences. This shift in focus challenges us to redefine the understanding of femininity and beauty. It emphasizes the significance of inner strength, emotional depth, and the enduring importance of human relationships.

The narrative encourages a more expansive understanding of female beauty, one that celebrates empathy, kindness, and the ongoing journey of self-discovery. This portrayal resonates deeply because it reflects a reality often overshadowed by unrealistic beauty standards. "The Semplica Girls Diaries" reminds us that true beauty lies not in physical perfection, but in experiences, emotions, and the connections we build with others.

"Eight bites" by Machado takes a different approach, utilizing language to explore the internal struggles and societal pressures women face about beauty standards. Through a masterful manipulation of style, and word choice, the text delves into the complexities of self-image within the context of womanhood. By carefully crafting sentences and selecting potent words, the narrative exposes the anxieties and challenges women encounter in their pursuit of societal beauty ideals especially in the matters of body shape. This exploration offers a detailed examination of how external expectations and internal narratives shape self-worth and perceptions of beauty.

Furthermore, "Eight Bites" intricately weaves together literary devices like metaphors and similes to navigate the tensions between societal norms and individual identity. The protagonist's journey of self-discovery becomes a potent metaphor for the ongoing struggle to reconcile societal expectations with personal desires. Ultimately, the narrative fosters reflection on the societal pressures that shape female beauty standards, prompting readers to question the narratives they have internalized about themselves and the true meaning of beauty. Additionally, the narration sheds light on new trends in terms of cosmetic application and more freedom women received for their behavior model.

These two works demonstrate the multifaceted nature of female beauty in contemporary literature. By moving beyond superficial portrayals, they challenge readers to embrace a more inclusive and nuanced understanding. "The Semplica Girls Diaries" reminds us of the beauty inherent in everyday experiences, while "Eight Bites" sheds light on the internal struggles women face in navigating societal expectations in pursuit of the perfect body. Together, they illustrate the power of language choices to delve into the complexities of female self-image and beauty, prompting to reconsider individual's own perceptions and celebrate the richness found within.

CONCLUSIONS

Our world is eager to progress in many areas, and language is no exception. Cognitive linguistics offers a fresh perspective on how humans perceive and understand the world. It delves into the mental categories that shape our experiences, revealing the intricate connection between language and thought. This approach highlights how different people, especially in artistic fields like literature, reflect reality in unique ways.

Concepts, rather than existing only in individual minds, emerge from a complex interplay between consciousness, culture, and language. This forms a big network of knowledge that shapes our worldview. One concept that endures through time and finds frequent expression in art is beauty, particularly feminine beauty. The very definition of what constitutes "beautiful" for a woman has constantly evolved, reflecting not just changing cultural ideals and artistic trends, but also historical contexts. Feminist movements, for instance, have challenged narrow definitions of beauty linked solely to physical appearance, promoting a broader appreciation for women's strength, intelligence, and individuality. Yet, there remains a universal human appreciation for harmony and balance. This interaction results in a multi-layered, complex experience. Beauty can touch human senses, emotions, and intellect, creating a unique and meaningful connection between us and the world around us.

This work was aimed to delve into the concept of female beauty as portrayed in literature, revealing a dynamic interrelation between societal values, cultural contexts, and the power of language. By examining how authors from various epochs use language to construct and reflect beauty ideals, we gained valuable insights into the ongoing evolution of femininity and identity.

Classic work like Louisa May Alcott's "Little Women" showcased the multifaceted beauty ideals of the 19th century. Physical attractiveness undoubtedly held significant weight, seamlessly interrelated with a woman's moral character and social graces. The March sisters embodied these complex expectations, offering a

glimpse into the allure and limitations placed upon women during this era. The language choices employed by Alcott emphasized inner beauty, resilience, and a strong moral compass alongside descriptions of physical features.

Conversely, contemporary narratives like George Saunders' "The Semplica Girl Diaries" and Carmen Maria Machado's "Eight Bites" challenged these traditional notions. Saunders' writing shifted the focus away from superficial physical beauty, instead highlighting the beauty found in everyday life, the enduring strength of family connections, and the resilience of the human spirit. Conversely, Machado delved into the complex internal struggles women face in relation to body image and the relentless pressures of societal expectations. These contrasting narratives serve as potent reminders that beauty ideals are not static but rather evolve alongside changing values, cultural anxieties, and the ongoing fight for gender equality.

The lexical and stylistic choices made by authors throughout history reveal the prevailing beauty ideals of their times, shaping not only our understanding of femininity but also our broader perception of societal norms.

From the emphasis on moral character alongside physical attractiveness in the 19th century to the contemporary focus on inner strength, these portrayals highlight the evolving concept of femininity. This exploration exceeds simple description; it allows us to understand how societal aspirations regarding gender are set within the narratives themselves. Furthermore, this analysis has introduced the power of language in shaping our perceptions of beauty. The words chosen by authors, the descriptive techniques employed, and the overall stylistic choices all contribute to constructing and disseminating ideas about beauty across generations. By examining these literary portrayals, we move beyond a surface-level understanding and appreciate the intricate ways language influences our concept of what is beautiful.

In conclusion, the portrayal of female beauty in literature acts as a mirror reflecting the ongoing shifts within our society. From the delicate, moralistic ideals of the Victorian era to the self-examining explorations found in contemporary fiction, literature continues to challenge and find new definitions for our understanding of femininity and identity. This analysis emphasizes the crucial need for a more

inclusive and nuanced appreciation of female beauty, celebrating its diverse expressions and recognizing the innate worth within women. By examining these evolving representations, we can move towards a broader understanding of beauty in all its forms, contributing to a world where both societal consciousness and personal preferences let women embrace and express their full beauty potential the way they want.

REFERENCES

1. Газуда, О. (2019). Поняття концепту в сучасній лінгвістиці. *Humanities Science Current Issues*, 1(22), 38–43. <https://doi.org/10.24919/2308-4863.1/22.166850>
2. Гайдук, Н. А. (2015). Еволюція лінгвістичних поглядів на поняття концепту як одиниці концептуальної картини світу. *Філологічні студії: Науковий вісник Криворізького державного педагогічного університету*, 13, 43–51. <https://doi.org/10.31812/filstd.v13i0.247>
3. Джеріх, О. С. (2018). «Концепт» у сучасній когнітивній лінгвістиці та лінгвокультурології: Поняття та структура. *Типологія мовних значень у діяхронічному та зіставному аспектах*, (35-36), 61–69. <https://doi.org/10.31558/2075-2970.2018.35-36.7>
4. Зайченко О. В. (2012) Поняття «концепт», його загальна характеристика. *Наукові записки Національного університету «Острозька академія»*. Серія: Філологічна. (24), 78-81
5. Потапенко С. І. (2013). *Вступ до когнітивної лінгвістики*. Ніжин: Видавництво НДУ імені Миколи Гоголя, 140.
6. Скрипник Л. (1973). *Фразеологія англійської мови: [навчальний посібник]*. Київ: Наукова думка, 297.
7. *American literature - 19th century, realism, romanticism*. (1999, 9 серпня). Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/art/American-literature/The-19th-century>
8. Birch, H. (2021). *Chatting with Carmen Maria Machado*. Chatting with Carmen Maria Machado – Books We Read. <https://sites.rutgers.edu/books-we-read/chatting-with-carmen-maria-machado/>
9. *Beauty Standards: See How Body Types Change Through History*. Science of People. <https://www.scienceofpeople.com/beauty-standards/>

10. *Beauty (stanford encyclopedia of philosophy)*. (б. д.). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/beauty/>
11. Brighidin, S. (2012). "The Hierarchy of Rococo Women Seen through Fashion Paintings," *Journal of Undergraduate Research at Minnesota State University, Mankato*: Vol. 12, Article 1. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56816/2378-6949.1009>
12. Burke, J. (2024). *How to be a Renaissance woman: the untold history of beauty & female creativity*. First Pegasus Books cloth edition. New York, Pegasus Books., 317
13. Coulson, S. & Matlock, T. (2005). *Cognitive Science*. Entry in *Handbook of Pragmatics*. (Ed.) Jan Blommaert. Wilrijk, Belgium: International Pragmatics Research Center.,
14. Croft, W., & Cruse, D. A. (2004). *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511803864>
15. Dalton, S. (2015). How beauty disrupts space, time and thought: Purposiveness without a purpose in Kant's critique of judgment. *E-Logos*, 22(1), 5–14. <https://doi.org/10.18267/j.e-logos.409>
16. Destrée, P., & Murray, P. (2015). *A companion to ancient aesthetics*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119009795>
17. Finn, M. (2020). "Her body & other parties – sixth story – eight bites" by Carmen Maria Machado. Mike Finn's Fiction. <https://mikefinnsfiction.com/2019/03/13/her-body-other-parties-sixth-story-eight-bites-by-carmen-maria-machado/>
18. Greenblatt, S. (2018). *Norton anthology of english literature*. Norton & Company, Incorporated, W. W.
19. *History of american literature (1800-1900) – american literature*. (б. д.). e-Adhyayan | Books for PG Courses. <https://ebooks.inflibnet.ac.in/engp05/chapter/history-of-american-literature-1800-1900/>

20. *How Louisa May Alcott's real-life family inspired 'Little women'*. Biography. <https://www.biography.com/movies-tv/meet-the-real-life-family-behind-little-women>
21. Jones, W. (2019, December 27). *Eating disorders: "Eight bites" by Carmen Maria Machado*. Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/intersubjective/201912/eating-disorders-eight-bites-carmen-maria-machado>
22. Kemp, G. (2007). Beauty and language. *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 47(3), 258–267. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/aym006>
23. Lakoff, G. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.
24. Lehene, I.-A. (2021). A reconsideration on the theory of beauty: Previous views and a new approach following maslow's theory (part II). *Periodica Polytechnica Architecture*, 52(1), 112–119. <https://doi.org/10.3311/ppar.12581>
25. Machado, C. M. (2024). *Biography*. Carmen Maria Machado. <https://carmenmariamachado.com/biography>
26. *More than pretty: The middle ages (1066-1485 CE) - girl museum*. (б. д.). Girl Museum. <https://www.girlmuseum.org/more-than-pretty-the-middle-ages-1066-1485-ce/>
27. Piletić, D., & Vuković Stamatović, M. (2021). Antonomasia in BCMS and a woman's place in the Balkan society. *Zeitschrift für Slawistik*, 66(2), 183–207. <https://doi.org/10.1515/slav-2021-0009>
28. Ramos, S. (2015). *"What's beautiful is difficult": Beauty and eros in plato's hippias major* [Thesis, Boston College]. <http://hdl.handle.net/2345/bc-ir:105052>
29. Regensdorf, L. (2014). *"There are no ugly women, only lazy ones": A new beauty exhibition explores the life and legacy of Helena Rubinstein*. Vogue. <https://www.vogue.com/slideshow/helena-rubinstein-beauty-cosmetics-jewish-museum-exhibition>

30. Rothfeld, B. (2023). *Review | A delightful look back at how the Renaissance changed beauty standards.* Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/books/2023/12/14/how-be-renaissance-woman-jill-burke-review/>
31. Saunders, G. (2013). The Semplica-Girl Diaries. In *The Tenth of December* (pp. 109–126). essay, Bloomsbury.
32. Saunders, G. (2024). *George Saunders books.* George Saunders Books. <https://georgesaundersbooks.com/>
33. Scarry, E. (1999). *On beauty and being just.* Princeton University Press.
34. Slabouz, V. V., & Nikitina, N. P. (2020). Basic methodological principles of cognitive studies in domestic linguistics. *Scientific Notes of Taurida National V.I. Vernadsky University, Series Philology. Social Communications*, 3(1), 52–58. <https://doi.org/10.32838/2663-6069/2020.1-3/09>
35. Smith, M. (2022). *Consuming Female Beauty: British Literature and Periodicals, 1840-1914.* Edinburgh University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctv2x1nqrm>
36. Sontag, S. (2005). An argument about beauty. *Daedalus*, 134(4), 208–213. <https://doi.org/10.1162/001152605774431491>
37. Stashko, H. (2017). An American woman through the prism of the epithet: Semasiological aspect in creating images. *Lege Artis*, 2(2), 356–391. <https://doi.org/10.1515/lart-2017-0019>
38. Tatarkiewicz, W. (1972). The great theory of beauty and its decline. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 31(2), 165–180. https://doi.org/10.1111/1540_6245.jaac31.2.0165
39. The Guardian. (2013, January 6). *Tenth of December by George Saunders – review.* <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/jan/06/tenth-december-george-saunders-review>

40. The Guardian. (2018, January 18). *Her body & other parties by Carmen Maria Machado review – powerful debut collection*. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jan/18/her-body-other-parties-carmen-maria-machado-review>
41. The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (1999). *Louisa May Alcott / biography, childhood, family, books, little women, & facts*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Louisa-May-Alcott>
42. The Quadrangle. (2023, May 1). *A short story that takes on big issues: “The semplica girls diaries.”* <https://mcquad.org/2017/12/06/a-short-story-that-takes-on-big-issues-the-semplica-girls-diaries>
43. *The victorian period*. Eastern Connecticut State University. <https://www.easternct.edu/speichera/understanding-literary-history-all/the-victorian-period.html>
44. Wierzbicka, A. (2013). Linguistics: Cognitive and cultural approaches. *Y Imprisoned in english* (c. 224–232). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199321490.003.0017>
45. Wolf, N. (1990). *The beauty myth*. Random House, 375
46. Zemach, E. M. (1991). Real beauty. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 16, 249–265. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4975.1991.tb00242.x>

ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIALS

47. Alcott, L. M. (2017). *Little women*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
48. Machado, M. C. *Eight bites*. Gulf Coast: A Journal of Literature and Fine Arts. <https://gulfcoastmag.org/journal/29.2-summer/fall-2017/eight-bites/>

49. Saunders, G. (2013). The Semplica-Girl Diaries. In *The Tenth of December* (pp. 109–126). essay, Bloomsbury.

SUMMARY

Тема жіночої краси завжди була предметом захоплення та суперечок протягом всієї історії людства, охоплюючи широкий спектр культурних, філософських та естетичних вимірів. Охоплюючи широкий спектр культурних, філософських та естетичних вимірів, вона стає особливо актуальною темою в сучасному світі, де суспільні стандарти краси постійно змінюються. Ця робота досліджує, як лінгвістичні прийоми формують і передають концепт жіночої краси в художній літературі.

Мета дослідження полягає у вивченні лінгвістичних особливостей передачі концепту жіночої краси в художній літературі. Це включає аналіз класичних та сучасних інтерпретацій краси, вивчення її зображення в історичних контекстах та проведення аналізу літературних творів різних епох. У рамках цього дослідження були проаналізовані твори Луїзи Мей Олкотт "Маленькі жінки", "Щоденники дівчат Семплики" Джорджа Сондерса та "Вісім кусників" Кармен Марії Мачадо.

Результати дослідження показали, що у творах різних епох відображаються різні ідеали краси. У класичних творах, таких як "Маленькі жінки", краса тісно пов'язана з бездоганним зовнішнім виглядом, суворими моральними установами та соціальними нормами, які формують уявлення про ідеальну дівчину того часу. Героїні, прикладом яких є сестри Марч, втілюють ці складні очікування, пропонуючи уявлення про привабливість і обмеження, які накладалися на жінок в 19-ому столітті. Лексичні та стилістичні прийоми, використані Олкотт, підкреслюють внутрішню красу, стійкість і моральну силу поряд з описами фізичних рис.

На противагу цьому, сучасні твори, такі як "Щоденники дівчат Семплика" Джорджа Сондерса та "Вісім кусників" Кармен Марії Мачадо, кидають виклик традиційним уявленням про красу. Сондерс зміщує акцент з поверхневої фізичної краси на красу, знайдену в повсякденному житті, міцності сімейних зв'язків та стійкості людського духу. Мачадо, навпаки, занурюється у складні

внутрішні переживання жінок, пов'язані з сприйняттям свого тіла та постійним тиском людей навколо. Ці контрастні наративи слугують потужним нагадуванням про те, що ідеали краси не є статичними, а еволюціонують разом із зміщенням акцентів в культурних цінностях і суспільних очікуваннях.

Лексичні та стилістичні рішення авторів в різні історичні періоди демонструють актуальні ідеали краси того часу, впливаючи на наше розуміння жіночності та суспільних норм. Це дослідження також підкреслює важливість мови у формуванні наших уявлень про красу, підкреслюючи, як слова і стилістичні прийоми сприяють створенню та поширенню ідей про красу.

Отже, зображення жіночої краси в літературі виступає певним дзеркалом, що відображає безперервні зміни у нашому суспільстві. Від консервативних ідеалів вікторіанської епохи до прогресивних феміністичних уявлень в сучасній прозі, література продовжує кидати безперервні виклики та переосмислювати наше розуміння особистої ідентичності та жіночності. Це дослідження підкреслює необхідність більш інклюзивного та глибокого розуміння жіночої краси, визнаючи її різноманітні прояви та внутрішню цінність жінок.

Аналіз лінгвістичних методів, використаних для формування концепту жіночої краси, дозволяє краще зрозуміти, як культурні ідеали та історичні контексти впливають на літературні зображення жіночих образів. Це дослідження робить внесок у розвиток лінгвістики, досліджуючи складні взаємозв'язки між мовою та соціальними трендами, такими як ідеали краси, показуючи, як лексичні вибори та стилістичні прийоми сприяють формуванню цих уявлень.

Крім того, робота має практичну цінність, збагачуючи вивчення того, як мова формує жіночу красу в літературі, та надаючи цінну інформацію для майбутніх досліджень щодо еволюції цих зображень у різних культурних контекстах. Дослідження демонструє, що літературні зображення краси можуть не лише відображати, але й активно впливати на суспільні уявлення про жіночність та ідентичність, сприяючи більш широкому розумінню краси в усіх її формах.