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FEMALE BEAUTY IN BRITISH LITERATURE: DIACHRONIC ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

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The present research is devoted to the analysis of the concept of female beauty from the linguistic perspectives on the basis of British literature. It examines the historical evolution of its verbalisation throughout spanning epochs, revealing profound insights into the evolution of cultural norms and societal constructs, gender roles, identity, and power dynamics within British culture, verbalised in its literature throughout the Renaissance period, Victorian era, Modernism and Postmodernism, which determines the relevance of this work. The object of the study is the concept of female beauty, in particular within British culture. The subject of the study is the language means of the verbalisation of the concept of female beauty from the perspective of the historical development of its verbalisation in British literature. The thesis aims to explore the concept of female beauty within diachronic changes in British culture, and conduct a linguistic analysis of its verbalisation in literature throughout chosen literary periods.

On the lexical level, the research revolves around various language means such as parts of speech (nouns, adjectives, adverbs etc.), and on the stylistic level the analysis focuses on figures of speech and tropes (metaphors, similes etc), literary devices (allegory, symbolism etc.) and others. Accordingly, the diachronic analysis is conducted on the basis of the language means, used within such literary periods, as Renaissance, Victorian era, Modernism and Postmodernism. The analysis of the verbalisation of female beauty across four distinct literary periods has yielded several significant results. During the Renaissance period, the representation of female beauty was predominantly focused on physical appearance, aligning with the era's idealisation of femininity, verbalised in absolute adjectives, superlatives, comparisons. In contrast, the spectrum of inner virtues was relatively narrow, primarily associated with traditional social roles such as daughter, wife, and mother. In the Victorian era, the depiction of female beauty continued to emphasise proper physical appearance, manners and behaviour, which was verbalised via such beauty standards as elegance, delicacy, softness, exquisiteness, etc. Contrastingly, female characters started

embodying strength, resilience, and character depth. The Modernist and Postmodernism periods, with their ideas about female beauty overlapping, introduced fresh ideas regarding female beauty, depicting it as multifaceted and complex, exploring themes of female sexuality, inner struggles, personal autonomy, educational prospects etc.

Keywords: concept, beauty, British literature, diachrony.

АНОТАЦІЯ

Микитич С. Л. Жіноча краса в британській літературі: діахронічний аналіз. – Бакалаврська робота.

Дане дослідження присвячене аналізу концепту жіночої краси в межах британської культури, вербалізація якого базується на британській літературі різних періодів. В межах дослідження цього концепту виявляються не лише естетичні уподобання, але й глибокі культурні та соціальні норми, структури влади та інші феномени всередині певної культури, а діахронічний аналіз таких явищ дозволяє відстежувати зміни протягом різних епох, що і визначає актуальність даного дослідження. Об'єктом дослідження є концепт жіночої краси, особливо в межах британської культури. Предметом дослідження є мовні засоби вербалізації концепту жіночої краси з перспективи історичного розвитку британської літератури протягом обраних літературних періодів. Метою роботи є дослідження концепту жіночої краси в контексті діахронічних змін в британській літературі та проведення лінгвістичного аналізу її вербалізації в британській літературі протягом обраних літературних періодів. На лексичному рівні дослідження базується на аналізі різних мовних засобів, таких як частини мови (іменники, прикметники, прислівники тощо), а на стилістичному рівні аналізується використання тропів та фігур (метафор, порівнянь тощо), інших літературних засобів (алегорій, символів тощо). Відповідно, діахронічний аналіз проводиться на основі мовних засобів, використовуваних у творах таких літературних періодів, як ренесанс, вікторіанська епоха, модернізм та постмодернізм. Протягом епохи Відродження зображення жіночої краси було переважно спрямоване на фізичний вигляд, ідеалізуючи жіночність як головний стандарт краси епохи, що вербалізується абсолютними прикметниками, найвищими ступенями порівняння прикметників та прислівників, порівняннями тощо. Спектр внутрішніх якостей, на відміну від зовнішніх, був відносно вузьким, головним чином асоційованим з традиційними соціальними ролями жінки, такими як донька, дружина, мати тощо. У вікторіанську епоху зображення жіночої краси продовжило фокусуватись на належному зовнішньому вигляді,

манерах і поведінці, що було вербалізовано через такі стандарти краси, як елегантність, делікатність, витонченість тощо. На відміну від періоду Відродження, жіночі персонажі почали втілювати силу, стійкість і глибину характеру. Періоди модернізму та постмодернізму внесли нові ідеї стосовно жіночої краси, зображаючи її як багатогранну і складну, досліджуючи теми жіночої сексуальності, ідентичності, внутрішньої боротьби, автономії, можливостей і т.д.

Ключові слова: концепт, краса, британська література, діахронія.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, the portrayal of female beauty in literature has been the subject of admiration and exploration. It has captivated and intrigued scholars and readers alike. In the rich variety of British literature, the depiction of female beauty not only reflects prevailing societal ideas, values and cultural norms but also provides insight into the changing perceptions of femininity over time. This research seeks to examine the historical evolution of the concept of female beauty in British literature from the linguistic perspective, spanning from the Renaissance to Postmodernism.

The relevance of the work. One of the fundamental concepts of linguistics is the “concept” itself, which has always been at the centre of attention of many scientists. Being a relevant direction in modern linguistics, the phenomenon of “concept” has been interpreted and explained in a lot of different ways, displayed further on in this research paper. Because of concepts, as fundamental phenomena of language, opening up cultural, historical, social contexts of the words to us, they are of great value and a wide variety of them has already been explored and analysed. One of such concepts is the concept of beauty, particularly the female one. It is noteworthy that throughout human history, scholars and thinkers from various scientific schools and periods have deliberated on the notion of beauty. The extensive interest in this concept is attributable to the fact that beauty, being one of the foremost guiding principles for a meaningful existence, has an immense influence on human behaviour and shapes individuals’ perceptions of the world and others. Moreover, the study of female beauty in language opens avenues for exploring broader issues such as gender roles, identity formation, and power dynamics. The verbalisation of beauty reflects not only aesthetic preferences but also deeper social constructs and power structures, offering a lens through which to examine issues of inequality and representation.

The object of the study is the concept of female beauty, in particular within British culture.

The subject of the study is the language means of the verbalisation of the concept of female beauty from the perspective of the historical development of its verbalisation in British literature.

The purpose of the study is to analyse the historical changes in the representation of female beauty and its forms, both tangible and intangible, based on the verbalisation of female beauty in British literature. Such a linguistic analysis allows us to investigate how language reflects and shapes cultural perceptions of female beauty and the image of women in general.

The purpose set dictates the following research **objectives**:

- to study and analyse scientific literature on the phenomenon of concept and build the study's primary theoretical framework from there;
- to research the concepts of beauty, both inner and outer, focusing on female beauty;
- to explore the changes in different aspects of British culture that influenced the concept of female beauty from a diachronic perspective;
- to conduct a linguistic analysis of language means employed by authors to verbalise the concept of female beauty;
- to compare the verbalisation of female beauty in British literature of different literary periods, spanning from the Renaissance to Postmodernism.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research are the works of such leading scientists as N. Chomsky, G. W. Leibniz, A.L. Kyselova, A. Marwick, F. Sibley, P. Adamson, G. M. A. Grube, W. Tatarkiewicz and others.

As for **research material**, this work relies on language means that verbalise the concept of female beauty taken from British literary works, specifically William Shakespeare's plays such as "Romeo and Juliet", "The Tempest" "Love's Labour's Lost" and some of his sonnets, namely 127, 128, 130, 131, 132, Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre", Emily Brontë's "Wuthering Heights", George Eliot's "Middlemarch", Virginia Woolf's "Mrs Dalloway", Katherine Mansfield's short stories "Bliss" and "Her First Ball", Ian McEwan's "Atonement", with the analysed page number of approximately 3342.

In the process of solving the tasks set in this work, both theoretical and empirical **methods** of linguistic research were used. As for theoretical ones, we relied on the theoretical analysis of scientific literature, the inductive method of summarising

information and the deductive method of formulating conclusions; as for empirical ones, we depended on the method of collecting and accumulating material, referring to the systematic gathering of linguistic data, and continuous sampling, which involves analysing collected data and illustrative materials throughout specific literary periods. Within the analysis such methods as the descriptive method, the method of contextual analysis and the method of comparative analysis are employed, which is realised in detailed observation and documentation of linguistic phenomena, namely language means of the verbalisation of the concept of female beauty, then examining them in their context of use and, finally comparing different linguistic elements through chosen literary periods.

The **scientific novelty** of this work lies in its comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach toward the linguistic research of female beauty, including a thorough examination of historical and social contexts of the literary periods of the chosen novels. Thus, such a deep analysis of female beauty in British literature, focusing on the diachronic aspect and involving previously mentioned scientific methods, can offer fresh perspectives and new understandings of the language evolution, semantic shifts and, what result it had on the portrayal of female beauty within a certain culture.

The **theoretical significance** of the work lies in the broadening of theoretical ideas about the concept of female beauty, and the generalisation of scientific findings on it.

The **practical significance** of this research is determined by the fact that the key findings and conclusions obtained during the analysis can be incorporated into educational materials, lectures and specialised courses covering areas such as English language stylistics, language theory, psycholinguistics, speech culture etc. Besides, this work's importance stems from its potential applicability in other educational settings, particularly for crafting term papers and theses. All the findings are valuable not only for students and scholars within philology, foreign language, literature or any other faculties but also for anyone seeking to broaden their understanding of linguistics.

As for the **structure of the work**, it comprises an introduction, two chapters, six subsections, conclusions to each chapter, general conclusion, the list of used sources, summary. The total number of pages is 67.

1. THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF THE CONCEPT OF FEMALE BEAUTY IN LINGUISTICS.

1.1. Concept as an object of linguistic research.

The study of language is frequently seen as an inquiry into the nature of mind and thought, based on the premise that: “Languages are the best mirror of the human mind and precise analysis of the significations of words would tell us more than anything else, about the operations of the understanding” (Leibniz 1996: 334).

In an era less preoccupied with self-awareness and less inclined towards rigid divisions and structures, the intricacies of language – the ways it mirrors human cognition or shapes the flow and essence of thought – captivated scholars and intellectually curious individuals with diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, linguistics, philosophy, and psychology pursued separate paths in looking for the answers to the timeless questions about the relationship between language and the mind resurfaced. In reality, the unresolved problems of language and mind have always been a bridge between these purposefully disparate disciplines. Further indications suggest that the artificial boundaries between disciplines are not that rigid at all, hinting at a potential convergence in scholarly pursuits (Chomsky 2006: 1).

N. Chomsky says that the continuous ideas in the human brain that define the meaning of the sentence are formed from concepts, which means that our knowledge and thoughts are eternal and endless. The scientist adds that the process of creating ideas and imagination is individual and highly dependent on language, which is the result of cultural, historical and social environment. As a result, while studying a new language, a change in the perception of the environment occurs. Human behaviour and the brain play a significant role in the formation of human language ability, just the same as language influences the development of the brain, disposition and overall personality (Chomsky 1986: 180).

Language serves as the primary tool for constructing and preserving human knowledge about the world. Through their actions, individuals recreate the objective

world and consolidate the results of knowledge in words. The collection of these insights, conveyed through language, forms what is commonly referred to as the language picture of the world. Language picture of the world belongs to the fundamental phenomena of modern linguistics. The peculiarities of the language picture of the world are traced at the level of the language conceptosphere, also referred to as the conceptual domain or system (Plotnikova 2020: 92).

According to O. Selivanova, conceptosphere is a system of concepts themselves in a person's mind that reproduces the idea of the world and reality in the form of structured and ordered knowledge as a result of a person's internal reflective experience (Selivanova 2006: 716).

Mastering the language is considered to be a crucial factor in the formation of opinion and submerging oneself in a different culture. Previously mentioned conceptospheres are based on the nation's concepts, and immensely rely on the potentials of the language.

The cognitive processes of learning the language lead us to consider the term **concept**. The understanding of this term is quite variable in modern linguistics. Since this term appears in linguistic semantics due to the interaction of linguistics with philosophy, psychology, and cultural anthropology, it is considered and described from different perspectives and vectors, within which numerous definitions are distinguished together with whole complexes of specific nuances. Encompassing several domains at once, some of which being cognitive science, linguistics, semantics, linguoculturology etc., this term is ambiguous. Thus, there is no clear and precise definition of *concept* (Plotnikova 2020: 93).

Regarding the multifaceted approaches to understanding the essence of this term, the lack of a single interpretation of *concept* is explained by its complex, multidimensional structure, which includes both the conceptual basis and the socio-psycho cultural part, which is not so much thought by the native speaker, but experienced by them. It includes associations, emotions, evaluations, national images and connotations inherent in this culture. Concepts represent the world in a person's

head, forming a conceptual system, and then the signs of human language encode the content of this system in words (Hazuda 2018: 69).

A person, gaining experience, transforms it into certain concepts, which logically connect with each other, forming a conceptsphere or the system of the concepts. These formations are constructed, adapted and refined by humans and outer factors continuously. Concepts, being part of the system, are influenced by other concepts and are modified as well. Both the number of concepts and the scope of their content change over time (Stavchuk 2018).

Concept can be seen from a slightly different perspective. To be more specific, we can consider the term *concept* as delineated as a mental construct that, during the process of cognition, stands in for a multitude of similar objects. It is highlighted that nearly every word functions as a symbol for a concept, embodying a meaning that lays the groundwork for categorisation. Consequently, in a broader context, the concept encompasses all that we comprehend about an object across the entirety of our acquired knowledge. Thus, it represents a highly abstract semantic category (Hazuda 2018: 69).

As per N. V. Stavchuk, an individual's conceptualisation emerges from their engagement in activities, experiential understanding of the world, social interactions, and encompasses the following elements: sensory perceptions, cognitive processes involving existing concepts in one's mind, personal agency, language knowledge, and conscious comprehension of linguistic units. Accordingly, the scientist singles out such components in the structure of the concept (Stavchuk 2018):

- figurative component, which is two-fold and consists of perceptual component (visual, tactile, taste, sound and smell images) and cognitive (metaphorical) component (a cognitive sensory-visual image that fills an abstract concept with specific figurative content);
- informational content, which includes a minimum of cognitive features that determine the main, most important distinguishing features of the conceptualised object or phenomenon. The information content of many concepts is close to the key dictionary definition of the conceptualised object or phenomenon;

- interpretation field, which includes cognitive features that in one way or another interpret the main informational content of the concept.

V. Ivashchenko outlines the concept as a so-called “clot” (Ivashchenko 2008: 41) of the most diverse meanings that exist in the system of meanings of a single language and arise in the process of a person’s cognitive activity. Accordingly, one can see *concept* as a unit of cognition that accumulates in itself the entire spectrum of mental reflections of reality: from sensorimotor reflections, which are elementary forms of cognition, to reflection at the highest levels of human consciousness, such as language and thought. To be more specific, the semantics of mentality are determined by mental, intellectual, historical, social, ethnocultural, ideological, economic, natural-climatic factors and self-identification. The semantics of mentality are a semantic background on which, the previously mentioned, “clot” stands out – a concept as a unit of knowledge, which is organised in a certain way of thinking by a selective multiplicity of concretely determined elementary meanings in the projection onto a separate fragment of the world (Ivashchenko 2008: 41).

Thus, the concept has a dual nature. It is both a unit of cognition and a unit of knowledge. On the one hand, the concept may be outlined as a “clot” of culture in human consciousness, with the help of which culture enters the mental world of a human. On the other hand, the concept is something with the help of which a human acquires the culture and obtains an understanding of the way some specific languages function (Ivashchenko 2008: 42).

Two definitions of the concept that resonate the most with this research include the understanding of the concept as a “clot” or mental construct, and the concept as a result of human activity. The first one underscores the abstract nature of concepts, emphasising their role in categorisation and the organisation of knowledge, whereas the second one reveals the dynamic nature of concepts, which are continuously shaped and refined through human activities, such as sensory perceptions, cognitive processes, personal agency, language knowledge, interactions with the environment and other concepts. These two definitions of concepts are interconnected in the way that they display the bridge between human mind, language and cultural, social and other aspects

of our life. Thus, this perspective aligns with the idea that concepts serve as the building blocks of thought, providing a framework for understanding the world around us, but at the same time providing us with the knowledge, based on the background and experiences the nation, one was born in, has undergone, influencing the language and the perception of the world a lot. As a result, concepts are not only cognitive constructs that aid in understanding the world, but also cultural entities that carry the collective wisdom and experiences of a community. As the research is based on British literature, we will look into specifically the way the concept of female beauty functions and is represented and verbalised in this culture and its literature, making the two definitions outlined the key ones.

The conclusion can be drawn that *concept* is a unit of a mental and thinking formation that has a two-sided nature and can be interpreted as, on the one hand, the meaning of a linguistic sign (culturological and linguistic directions) and, on the other hand, as the content side of the sign, enclosed in the mentality (cognitive direction). A broad array of interpretations regarding the notion of *concept* is contingent upon the notion that these ideas are not mutually exclusive but rather interconnected. Generally, a *concept* is viewed as the outcome of cognitive processes involving both individual and societal activities, encapsulating intricate information about a depicted object or phenomenon, as well as the interpretation of specific information by social consciousness and the collective attitude towards a particular phenomenon or subject. Consequently, a common thread among all perspectives on this matter is the emphasis on the holistic examination of consciousness, language, and culture, which remains pertinent in contemporary linguistics.

To sum up, a concept can be understood as an ethnocultural cluster of words and a fundamental mental construct that reflects the cognitive awareness of a particular community. A concept is a small unit of an ideal consciousness and experience that one acquires through language.

1.2. The concepts of inner and outer beauty.

Throughout history, the definition of beauty has been a subject of perpetual debate. It is multifaceted and unmeasurable, so it has had various descriptions from the past till now and its perception has changed continuously over the years. As the Latin philosopher, Ovidius famously stated: “Times are changing, and we are changing with them” (Latin is Simple n.d.), highlighting the dynamic nature of human understanding, including the appreciation of beauty as well. Therefore, there are many perspectives from which the concept of beauty can be approached.

In the realm of research, it’s crucial to understand the definition of the word *beauty* and its derivatives *beautiful* and *beauteous*. While dictionaries offer comparable explanations for these terms, they occasionally highlight different aspects, necessitating a thorough understanding of their varied connotations. According to Cambridge Dictionary, *beauty* is “the quality of being pleasing and attractive, especially to look at” (Cambridge University Press n.d.), which initially puts the emphasis on the physical attributes which are aesthetically satisfying to observe. The primary definition of the term beauty in Britannica Dictionary is similar to the one in Cambridge Dictionary, saying that it is “the quality of being physically attractive” (Encyclopedia Britannica n.d.). On the contrast, according to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, *beauty* is “the quality or group of qualities in a person or thing that gives pleasure to the senses or the mind” (Merriam-Webster n.d.), which is similar to the definition in Collins Dictionary, which says that it is “the combination of all the qualities of a person or thing that delight the senses and please the mind” (Collins n.d.). The secondary definition of the term *beauty* in Britannica Dictionary overlaps with those two mentioned above, referring to beauty as “the qualities” (Encyclopedia Britannica n.d.), focusing on the variety of characteristics that equally gives pleasure to both senses and mind, which hints at not exclusively outer but inner beauty as well. As for the derivatives of the term *beauty*, namely *beautiful* and *beauteous*, in Cambridge Dictionary, *beauteous* is narrowly defined as “very attractive to look at” (Cambridge University Press, n.d.), whereas *beautiful* is broader in its definition: “having an attractive quality that gives pleasure to those who experience it or think about

it”(Cambridge University Press, n.d.). Collins Dictionary provides an additional explanation to the term *beautiful*, saying that a “person or thing that is *beautiful* has perfection of form, colour, etc., or noble and spiritual qualities” (Collins, n.d.). The definitions taken from Merriam-Webster and Collins Dictionaries resonate with this research the most, due to the fact that it focuses not exclusively on the outer beauty, but the combination of external and internal qualities that contribute to the perception of female representatives as attractive and appealing.

As for beauty itself, it is a category within aesthetics that transcends practicality and utility, focusing instead on the harmonious combination of features within an object. It embodies a sense of perfection that evokes aesthetic pleasure in those who witness it. Since it is generally assumed that the evaluation of aesthetics, just the same as beauty, is frequently dependent on sensory aspects (smell, taste, outer features etc.), one may presume that aesthetics is quite simple to ground in the senses. Sibley posits that when applying aesthetic concepts to non-aesthetic ones, such as colours or shapes, mere description is inadequate. Aesthetic attributes require not only perceptual characteristics but also subjective judgement, or taste, for their full comprehension (Sibley 1959: 436). Therefore, our enjoyment of aesthetic traits is different from that of non-aesthetic ones. That sense of pleasure is only evoked when certain conditions are met, such as sensitivity to the unique context of a piece of art, person or any other object; as a result, the perceiver’s evaluation activity goes beyond simple visual processing (Sibley 1959: 909).

Although appearances are frequently used to define beauty, many philosophers reject the idea that beauty is solely dependent on perceptual characteristics. Plato, believing that beauty extends to both souls and bodies, is one of such philosophers. He emphasises the concept of harmony in both contexts. Harmony is characterised by parts fulfilling their appropriate roles rather than by sensory configurations (Grube 1927: 274). Socrates refers to beauty from a different perspective, distincting the beauty of proportions which are beautiful in themselves and those features which are beautiful for something or someone else (Tatarkiewicz 1972: 171).

Analysing the concept of beauty, one can trace the diachronic change of its perception over time. At its essence, diachrony involves changes or development of something over time, especially language. Accordingly, a diachronic approach to language study involves the analysis of changes, modifications or development in a linguistic system of some language over a period of time (Stawarska 2020: 68). During the Mediaeval era, philosophers believed that the essence of beauty resided in perfection, necessitating an understanding of the ideal characteristics within each category (Tatarkiewicz 1972: 173). During the eighteenth century, amidst the era of Industrialisation, the concept of beauty became closely linked with utility. Consequently, there was a significant emphasis on such features as shapes, proportions, symmetry of human bodies, which were considered “truly prosperous and natural in every subject” (Guyer 2002: 440). On the other hand, “the same features [that] make deformity create incommodiousness and disease” (Guyer 2002: 440). As a result, people of those times underlined the shapes and proportions “which make beauty afford advantage by adapting to activity and use” (Guyer 2002: 440). In contemporary times, under the influence of technology, social media, influencers, and the development of plastic surgery, there is a noticeable shift towards perceiving beauty primarily in physical attributes, emphasising more sensual and subjective features. Nevertheless, despite this trend, many contradict the idea that beauty is simply a perceivable feature of the world. Even those who associate beauty with perception, acknowledge the idea of it being influenced by emotions or reliant on individual responses. Hence, beauty surpasses mere perception, although it may not be entirely abstract, which can be seen as a consensus on beauty (Railton 1998: 70).

There are a lot of elements that contribute to the understanding of the concept of beauty, especially the female one, that this research will look into. Accordingly, these elements can be divided into two categories: those of outer and inner beauty. Building upon the preceding paragraphs which highlighted that beauty extends beyond physicality, relying on something more abstract or non-sensory, the following paragraphs delve even deeper into this specific inquiry.

Analysing the concept of beauty from a broader perspective, one might extrapolate quite a few points to prove that determining something or someone as *beautiful* shifts its focus from merely physical features.

Firstly, beauty can take different forms, just the same as individuals have different tastes and perceptions of beauty. Some features that might seem beautiful to one person might not be as aesthetic to others. Features that contribute to the beauty of some object/human being may not necessarily apply to another. It is not for nothing that they say that beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. Indeed, beauty is not only determined by the physical attributes of an object, such as the body, but also depends on the subjective perceptions and emotional responses of the observer (Hilhorst 2002: 12).

Secondly, the term *beauty* encompasses the meanings that are more broadly defined as “aesthetic value” or “artistic success” (Fingerhut & Prinz 2018: 2). Therefore, even if one accepts that *beauty* in its narrower definition contains a sensory component, there is still the more general concept of “aesthetic goodness”, which can be outlined within the concept of beauty, that goes beyond sensory attributes. When assessing a piece of art, several factors influence one’s perception of it. These include uniqueness, functional excellence, status as an exemplar in its field, historical significance within the art world, recognition, notable authorship, challenging execution, and thematic relevance. Collectively, these aspects fall under the category of “artistic goodness”. In this case, it appears that the sensory component is even less appropriate for capturing the meaning of the evaluative idea, and any unification that is not within the abstract is unlikely to be realised (Fingerhut & Prinz 2018: 2).

Referring to the personality description, inner beauty has an unmeasurable spectrum of characteristics and traits that one can talk about. Inner beauty resides within an individual, manifesting in the qualities that garner love and respect, qualities that one cannot see from the first glance. Unlike outward appearances, inner beauty often requires time to be recognised and valued fully. Normally such features as a high level of morality and good values are considered to be beautiful, just the same as the person possessing them, even though they have nothing to do with physicality. Some other human aspects that one takes into account when drawing the conclusion about

one's beauty include one's personality traits, charisma, relational capacities, friendship abilities etc. While our outer appearances may be subject to limited control, due to the biological and environmental influences such as ageing, for example, our inner beauty is a facet that we can cultivate and continuously develop throughout our lives. Attributes such as compassion, kindness, loyalty, integrity, wisdom etc., which contribute to our inner beauty, are qualities we can consistently strive to enhance. These factors suggest that the beauty notions under discussion are, at the very least, partially abstract (Hanan Moser n.d.).

Even though beauty, in a broader sense, is more abstract, it is still relevant to consider physical features in this regard. In the first place, although we cannot appreciate somebody's inner beauty to the fullest just from the first impression, we can still feel the person's energy. Inner beauty can also be manifested externally: individuals with positive energy often exude it through their smiles, body language, and interactions with others.

As for external beauty and its elements, primarily, it is perceived as an innate quality – one is endowed with it, or one is not. While physical beauty can occasionally be acquired through procedures like aesthetic surgery, this is not deemed a fundamental element of it.

According to Marwick, standards of physical beauty are unquestionably present and even hold universal relevance. A beauty ideal is relatively subjective, varying across cultures and subcultures, and influenced by time and changing fashion trends. Nevertheless, formal norms provide a framework that accommodates a diverse array of ideals. Over time, Marwick contends that people in the Western world have consistently held similar ideals regarding physical beauty. These norms revolve around aspects such as bodily form, proportion, as well as symmetry and suitability (Marwick 1988: 13).

The correspondences between the universal or anthropological and the individual are fundamental in perceiving physical beauty and what we consider to be beautiful. It is unlikely to be remembered or evoke a sense of beauty and admiration if the human body perfectly fits into anthropological norms while also lacking

individuality. The unique features are supposed to harmonise, enhance, and adorn the universal. Hence, the aesthetic concept of beauty lies in a harmonious blend of universally recognised (anthropological) norms such as symmetry, proportionality, shape, size, etc. and uniqueness of appearance, for example body modifications, hairstyles, specific facial and body features (scars, birthmarks) etc.

Apart from previously mentioned general elements, physical beauty comprises some very specific details and distinguishing features (the density and colour of the hair, the shape of the head, the tone of skin, the scars, freckles, wrinkles, nails, the length and density of eyelashes, the posture etc.). Furthermore, a person's manner of behaviour, or their movement, can exhibit physical attractiveness as well. One pays attention to the manners, pace of speech, tone of voice, gait etc. Thus, the standards of beauty do not limit themselves to some specific look, each of these diverse appearances with their peculiarities possesses its own inherent beauty (Haiken 1997: 223).

A beautiful straight posture, fitness, straightened shoulders, and a bright gaze are signs of a well-developed body, energy and activity. These features, considered to be appealing, upon careful consideration, fall under the category of health, which makes this category and the category of beauty related. Our perception is particularly attuned to symmetry, and the slightest curvature of the spine (scoliosis) in others can cause a feeling of disharmony. This keen sensitivity to subtle indications of poor health showcased in bodily irregularities illustrates the direct link between physical beauty and overall well-being.

On the contrary, the manifestations of temporary health disorders, such as fever or flu, are perceived as inconsequential in terms of beauty. This accounts for our extreme attentiveness towards even minute physique disorders or traits that are closely linked to genetics. The asymmetry of the body, such as a small degree of scoliosis, which is well distinguished by us, but might have no meaning for their "owner" in aesthetic terms, is perceived by us as a defect, something that falls out of the concept of beauty. Hence, physical beauty speaks more to the inherited healthy and well-arranged organism than it does to the present instant state of health.

In conclusion, the understanding of the concept of beauty, with all its elements, namely physical attractiveness, behaviour, morality etc., varies along with the shifting tastes and preferences of people, influenced by factors such as the historical era, geographical location, social environment etc.

1.3. The concept of female beauty in British culture.

In spite of the previously mentioned proverb saying that beauty is in the eyes of the beholder, throughout history people were looking for a certain definition of the concept of beauty from the perspectives of philosophy, social studies, biology, etc. Peter Adamson has suggested that “the fascination with and the study of beauty has consumed our emotions and intellect” (Adamson 2003: 295). Adamson’s discussion on the concept of beauty implies that the perception of beauty and the standards for what constitutes a beautiful person are indeed socially constructed ideas: “The beauty standards set by the society are internalised by its members who then strive to “beauty up” while the beholder’s eye is enculturated to gauge beauty with the set parameters that are learnt” (Adamson 2003: 295).

The beauty standards, which contribute to the perception of the concept of female beauty, are not static, they are fluid and changing all the time. Diverse cultures have ingrained standards of beauty in various ways. These expectations, particularly for women but increasingly for everyone, revolve around embodying specific levels of beauty, often rooted in the idealised concept of femininity (Abid 2021: 403).

The verbalisation of beauty standards in British literature serves as a mirror reflecting the societal norms and expectations imposed on women within British culture. Through the language employed in literary works, we gain insight into the ideals of beauty prevalent in specific historical periods and their significance within the context of British society. As this research digs deeper into the verbalisation of female beauty in British literature further on, it is essential to consider British beauty standards, as crucial elements of the concept of female beauty, that have been changing over time.

Throughout history, women's bodies have been subject to pathologisation, as evidenced by Plato's concept of the "wandering womb" (Kalas 2023), which was employed to explain various physical and emotional illnesses experienced by females. Digging deeper into the meaning of this term, in ancient medicine, there was a belief that a "wandering womb" could lead to suffocation and even death. Menstruation and pregnancy were perceived as factors that rendered women physically and mentally weaker than men. By the late nineteenth century, it was widely accepted as scientifically proven that women's biology inherently made them less rational than men, thus deeming them unfit to engage in various aspects of public life. Decisions about women's health, appearances and behaviour have historically been made by men. Thus, these expectations and stereotypes developed around women influenced the way the concept of female beauty has been perceived (Royal College of Nursing 2019).

As for some prevailing beauty standards of some specific historical periods of Great Britain that contributed to the formation of the concept of female beauty within its culture, this research begins with the Mediaeval period. During those times, beauty standards were influenced by religious beliefs and socio-economic factors. According to Mediaeval beauty ideals, women with fair skin were often considered attractive, as it was associated with wealth and nobility, as opposed to tan skin which was linked to hard physical outdoor labour. Plumpness, as a symbol of prosperity and access to abundant food, was desirable as well. What is more, a woman's outward appearance was also believed to reflect her moral character. Physical beauty was often associated with high moral virtue, while ugliness was seen as suggestive of questionable morality (Marwick 1988: 68).

Even beautiful women were thought to be possibly dangerous since their attractiveness tempted men to engage in sexual transgression. In this regard, Liz Herbert McAvoy says: "Salvation was always jeopardised by the unruly flesh...the flesh eventually took on a synonymy with the female and her dangerously seductive body. Moreover, it was a body which could not only corrupt men from without but also the woman herself from within" (McAvoy, 2004: 138). Something has, of course,

changed since those times, but we still can see numerous occasions of objectification of females and their beauty, just the same as in the Mediaeval period.

Moving further to the Renaissance period, the perception of female beauty and its concept, inspired by the art of Ancient Greece and Rome, shifted towards a more idealised, symmetrical appearance. Artists of that period generally adopted Aristotle's definition of beauty which lies in "order and symmetry" (Karim-Cooper 2019: 9). Hence, in the seventeenth century, beauty is defined in Aristotelian terms, in which the concept of beauty revolves around "the proportion of parts, conceiving it to consist in a comely commensurability of the whole unto the parts, and the parts between themselves" (Karim-Cooper 2019: 9). So, in Western perceptions of physical beauty, the emphasis on symmetry serves as a unifying factor. Generally, the classical standard of beauty necessitates proportion, symmetry, and the harmonious integration of colour. Fair skin remained desirable just the same as in the Mediaeval period, but there was an increasing emphasis on a graceful, slender figure, reflecting the ideal proportions depicted in the Renaissance art, including literature. Because of women's strive for perfection, female beauty is often linked to something divine and heavenly (Karim-Cooper 2019: 9).

One of the biggest peculiarities of this period is the subject of beautification, which became a significant topic of discussion within the dramatic, social, and literary realms of early modern England. There existed a collective understanding of female beauty within the early modern mindset, reinforcing the notion of white racial superiority. This idea is rooted in a classical definition that remains foundational to our cultural understanding of beauty today: symmetry and the harmonious balance of colours on the face. This led women to one of the aspects of beautification, which is an inclination towards the use of cosmetics. Women of the Renaissance period often used cosmetics to achieve a pale complexion and to enhance their features (Karim-Cooper 2019: 8). The paradox lies in the fact that while physical attractiveness was intended to signify virtue, purity, and simplicity, there was always an underlying suggestion of hidden sinfulness. This was the point where cosmetics faced criticism, as it was viewed as a tangible barrier, concealing what lies beneath. That is why the excessive use of

makeup was associated with promiscuity and, as a result, within the concept of female beauty the use of cosmetics is often linked to **falsehood**. (Karim-Cooper 2019: 8).

As for the Victorian period, female beauty ideals are getting more and more closely related to health and less to cosmetics. Gordon Stables, a former Royal Navy surgeon known for his medical advice column in a popular British girls' magazine, suggests that girls who are not in good health cannot achieve either beauty or happiness. According to him, being cited in Michelle Smith's research: "Brightness of eyes, clearness of complexion, and happiness of expression, belong only to the possessor of health. A girl who is but indifferently well, is self-conscious, ill-at-ease in society, not clear in eyes, and very often sallow as to skin. She is not happy, she may powder and paint herself, she may 'make up' as to eyes and eyebrows, and hair but still I say she is not happy; she cannot smile the smile that wells up from the heart, and goes curling round the eyes, lighting up the face like a summer's sunrise. No, she cannot smile, she can only make faces with her mouth..." (Smith 2022: 85). Hence, in the Victorian period, the concept of female beauty was closely intertwined with the concept of health. It was believed that a healthy girl or woman would inherently possess a cheerful disposition and an attractive appearance, emphasising the correlation between health, beauty, and happiness.

Guidelines regarding beauty for women were frequently connected with expectations regarding proper behaviour, virtuous character, and morality. Referring to morality, religion as a big part of people's lives had its say in the perception of female beauty. Accordingly, physical beauty was aimed to be displayed as merely fleeting, instead emphasising the enduring value of other forms of beauty such as those related to character, intellect, and piety. So the healthy girl, who enjoys life and helps others, is curious about the world around her, well-read, diligent, hard-working and kind-hearted, is the image of inner and outer beauty (Smith 2022: 88).

As an ongoing trend in the Renaissance period, the use of cosmetics started losing its popularity in the Victorian period. Cosmetics were viewed as potentially deceptive, as they could mask true inner emotions that would typically be expressed through blushing or paling. Women were expected to follow fashion trends, in

particular the specific norms of dressing and grooming, while adhering to the idealised images of natural beauty. They linked the unnatural with the unhealthy, as in the case of brilliantly coloured lips with cosmetics. As a result, women were discouraged from the use of artificial cosmetic aids, with the main focus on the inner qualities and disciplined behaviour, exalting the connection between inner health and outwardly pleasing features (Smith 2022: 34).

With the passage of time and change of the way people perceived beauty, the 20th century introduced lots of change in the women's appearances and behaviours, which were overtaken by the 21st century as well. Women started exploring their sexuality, beauty standards got less rigid. However, fashion industry and print media (The Tatler and London Life – British magazines) played a crucial role as the main resource for women to find out about the latest trends, most effective diets and suggestions how to improve their beauty, dictating what is preferable and what is unacceptable (Malik 2022).

A very big part of the whole concept of female beauty of the 20th and 21st centuries was built up around appearance. Jennifer Mills, in her research, examining the way mass media shapes the perceptions of beauty, underscored how various forms of media, including print, social media “affect perceptions of beauty and appearance concerns”. She noted that exposure to such media can prompt women to “internalise a very slender body type as ideal or beautiful” (Mills 2017: 145). The popularisation of an idealised body image in the media has contributed to generations of women experiencing insecurities about their bodies. Focusing on the perfection of a slim female figure, the media starts promoting weight loss products, diets, exercises for women possessing fuller figures or other tools that, according to the media, can make them more desirable and attractive. Starting from corsets to surgical removal of ribs, women have been doing their best to keep up with the trends of being as thin as possible with the slimmest waists. This issue unlocks the spectrum of problems, mental, physical, psychological, that women faced in the previous century and are still struggling with right now, which has immensely influenced women's behaviour, their life priorities, ambitions and even everyday life (Mills 2017: 146).

Just a few years ago, it appeared that there was a notable increase in acceptance of body diversity, which led to body positivity and acceptance of natural beauty. Fashion, beauty industry and other spheres of our life have started normalising women of various sizes, skin tones, ages, and abilities. This shift signalled a positive shift towards inclusivity within these industries, embracing a wider spectrum of female beauty, both inner and outer, beyond the narrow confines that previously dominated representations. What is more, women started prioritising their personal development and mental health more, which is seemingly manifested in their outer beauty (Allen 2024).

The conclusion can be drawn that in British society the beauty standards have been changing over the years, drastically influencing the way women have perceived themselves and their beauty from any possible perspective: physical, psychological, mental etc. The concept of beauty, therefore, has been shaped under the influence of different aspects, starting from religion in the Mediaeval period, ending with the impact of social roles, media etc. Further research focuses on such periods as Renaissance, Victorian era, Modernism and Postmodernism, which lets us trace the development of the concept of beauty in British society, shaped by its members as a result of historical, cultural and other previously mentioned factors.

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 1

At its nature, a concept is a discrete mental formation, serving as the fundamental unit of a person's mental code. It possesses a relatively ordered internal structure, reflecting the cognitive activity of both the individual, society or even the whole nation. Concepts encompass all the encyclopaedic, comprehensive knowledge about the thing or phenomena they stand for, as well as how the information is interpreted by public consciousness and the collective attitude towards it. Concepts thereby shape a person's feelings, influencing daily activities, and form behaviour and attitudes towards others and the world around them in general.

As a result, the conceptual system is crucial in defining the reality of daily existence, since it offers people a framework for navigating the complexity of their

surroundings. Despite variations in definitions, there are overarching similarities among those that have been examined. Concepts are defined as distinct, semantically rich units that reflect the subtle cultural differences within a community and operate as the fundamental building blocks of memory and mind. Indeed, through a thorough examination of the theoretical foundations of linguistic analysis, we have discovered the complex relationship that exists between language, cognitive processes, and cultural conceptions.

According to linguistics research, the concept of beauty, particularly the female one, is complex and multifaceted, encompassing different aspects and changing over years. The elements of the concept of female beauty that are under the research in this paper are those of outer and inner beauty. Indeed, the first thing that comes up when thinking about female beauty is appearance and some physical features. Among some key characteristics that one pays attention to from a physical perspective include form, shape and size, proportionality and harmony, branching into more specific: facial expressions, figure features, body language etc. Nevertheless, the concept of beauty extends far beyond superficial appearances, encompassing a rich variety of internal qualities and virtues such as kindness, compassion, intelligence, resilience etc. These internal qualities, skillfully conveyed through language, serve as a testament to societal values and perceptions of female beauty.

Moreover, the exploration of the concept of beauty from the diachronic perspective reveals a dynamic interplay between all the factors that could have influenced it, including social expectations, religion, media etc. Fashion and beauty standards, as a result of those factors, impacted women both physically, mentally and psychologically. Their behaviours, priorities, values, the way they have perceived themselves changed accordingly.

In British society, the concept of female beauty has continually evolved, reflecting broader cultural, historical, and social dynamics. It has often been deeply intertwined with notions of femininity, as a prevailing beauty standard of different historical periods. The Renaissance period emphasised symmetry and idealised proportions, inspired by classical Greek and Roman art, with cosmetics used to enhance

features despite criticism for hiding true inner beauty. The Victorian era marked a shift towards associating beauty with health, where a girl's attractiveness was linked to her physical well-being and moral character. The 20th and 21st centuries have witnessed rapid changes in beauty ideals, influenced significantly by the fashion industry and media, exploration of sexuality, insecurities and inner world.

As we continue to explore the concept of beauty within the realm of linguistics, we gain a deeper appreciation for the intricate interplay between language, culture, and human experience. These chapters serve as the platform for further research which lies in analysing the verbalisation of the concept of female beauty, highlighting its depth and complexity through articulating inner values in addition to physical appeal. This analysis will be conveyed on the basis of British literature of different historical periods, namely Renaissance, Victorian era, Modernism and Postmodernism.

2. HISTORICAL TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF FEMALE BEAUTY IN BRITISH LITERATURE.

Beauty, as a complex set of characteristics and an integral component of the conceptual system of personality, is extensively manifested in language. Apart from very personal perspectives, any concept is seen and expressed from some particular angle by the means of this or that language, relying on a large amount of information of a national, cultural and historical nature. As this work focuses on the analysis of British literature, it reflects a fragment of the linguistic picture of the world of specifically English speakers, which will be analysed. It bears the imprint of the cultural system in which it was formed. Therefore, the study of this concept allows one to master a kind of cultural information about the concept of beauty, particularly female one, reflected in the language.

Language, as a powerful tool for verbalising and expressing outer and inner qualities, enables us to appreciate and celebrate the multifaceted nature of female beauty. Talking about the verbalisation of the concept of female beauty, it was changing over time with cultural influence, historical perspectives, social and gender dynamics etc. The verbalisation of female beauty in English encompasses a diverse range of language means and literary devices. However, we will focus on those that are central in our further research, some of which include:

- adjectives, adverbs, nouns etc. They play a crucial role in describing both inner and outer attributes of women. With adjectives and adverbs dominating over other parts of speech, as means of verbalising female beauty, they are often used to emphasise qualities such as symmetry, proportion, gracefulness, elegance etc., depending on beauty standards of different periods.

- metaphors, similes, personification etc. They are frequently employed to evoke vivid imagery and comparisons related to female beauty.

- symbolism, allegory etc. Symbolic language is used to imbue female beauty with deeper meaning and significance. Women are often portrayed as symbols of purity, innocence, fertility, and sensuality. Allegorical representations, such as the

archetype of the *femme fatale* or the *virgin maiden*, further underscore the complex interplay between beauty and cultural ideals.

Overall, by means of language, the concept of beauty is portrayed in multifaceted ways, reflecting cultural norms and historical perspectives. Different linguistic expressions offer insights into societal values and ideals across different time periods of British culture. By exploring these nuances, we deepen our understanding of beauty and uncover layers of cultural information encoded in language.

2.1. Shakespearean representations of the concept of female beauty.

Being a writer of the Renaissance period, William Shakespeare was fully aware of the social and cultural norms regarding women, including beauty standards. Apart from all those ideals that were previously analysed in this research, it is important to mention that during the Renaissance period, the main aspects that women were predominantly defined by, were their social roles as wives, daughters, mothers, widows etc., with the main emphasis specifically on their physical beauty: “For it appears to be the order of nature that what is lacking in one sex is supplied in the other, and since man is endowed with wit, judgement, and a mind almost divine, a woman is given bodily beauty that she may be superior to man in this respect” (Camden 1975: 20). Hence, society of that period placed disproportionately a significant value on women’s beauty, considering it as their primary virtue. As a result, the Renaissance writers were extremely expressive in the verbalisation of the concept of female beauty, specifically of the outer one.

This part of the research revolves around Shakespeare’s literary works such as “Romeo and Juliet”, “The Tempest” “Love’s Labour’s Lost” and some of his sonnets, namely 127, 128, 130, 131, 132, etc.

British literature of the Renaissance period is very rich in verbalisation of the concept of female beauty, even with regard to general and broad descriptions. The words of appraisal of women’s beauty of those times have always been very expressive, always highlighting its perfection, flawlessness and charm.

So perfect and so peerless, are created / Of every creature's best (Shakespeare 2006: 77).

Indeed the top of admiration, worth / What's dearest to the world! (Shakespeare 2006: 76).

O, she is rich in beauty, only poor / That, when she dies, with beauty dies her store (Shakespeare 2008: 23).

Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight, / For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night (Shakespeare 2008: 48).

For well thou know'st to my dear dotting heart / Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel (Folger Shakespeare Library n.d.).

Signior Martino and his wife and daughters, County Anselme and his beauteous sisters (Shakespeare 2008: 28).

These descriptions often comprise the absolute adjectives (*perfect, peerless*) superlative adjectives (*the fairest, the most precious*) or word combinations (*the top of admiration, rich in beauty*), cultivating the sense of excellence and supreme worth of the female figure and her beauty.

Shakespeare often compares his female characters with some natural and supernatural phenomena. For example, Juliet from “Romeo and Juliet” is compared to the sun: *But soft, what light through yonder window breaks? / It is the East, and Juliet is the sun* (Shakespeare 2008: 60); or described as a *flower as she was* (Shakespeare 2008: 173), or *a snowy dove trooping with crows* (Shakespeare 2008: 48). Evoking to Juliet, Romeo says: *Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon* (Shakespeare 2008: 60).

Juliet's beauty [is] too rich for use, for Earth too dear (Shakespeare 2008: 48) that even death has no power over it: *Death, that hath sucked the honey of thy breath, / Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty: / Thou art not conquered. Beauty's ensign yet / Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks* (Shakespeare 2008: 194). At the same time, Miranda from “The Tempest” is seen by Ferdinand as *the goddess: Most sure, the goddess / On whom these airs attend* (Shakespeare 2006: 37). Lexemes used to verbalise the concept of beauty in these cases are closely linked with natural or supernatural phenomena (*sun, flower, goddess etc.*), which suggests that the female

beauty was perceived as inherently flawless, just as perfect as nature and so powerful that it could conquer even death and darkness.

The comparison of the female beauty with different forms of art contributes to the richness of verbalisation of its concept. In Sonnet 131, a woman is compared with a *jewel*, describing it as *the fairest* and *the most precious piece*, crafted for fascination and inspiration:

For well thou know'st to my dear dotting heart / Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel (Folger Shakespeare Library n.d.).

Another example is a woman, being compared with *music* in Sonnet 128:

How oft when thou, my music, music play'st (Folger Shakespeare Library n.d.).

In the same sonnet, the speaker describes the wood that the musical instrument is made of as *blessed* because of his lover's *sweet fingers* touching it:

Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds / With thy sweet fingers when thou gently sway'st (Folger Shakespeare Library n.d.).

He feels jealousy that the musical instrument has the privilege of touching her hand instead of him:

Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap, / To kiss the tender inward of thy hand, / Whilst my poor lips which should that harvest reap, / At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand (Folger Shakespeare Library n.d.).

Jacks that nimble leap is the personification of the keys of the instrument, which are as excited to feel her skin as the speaker would be. Within the verbalisation of this woman's image, her hands are described as *tender*, whereas she herself plays *gently*, which adds to the image of fragility.

William Shakespeare, through the lens of his male characters' perceptions, employs a wide spectrum of language means, namely tropes and figures of speech, to fully display the female physical features, in particular facial expressions such as smile, eyes, hair, body language etc.

Facial features, such as the colour of the lips or natural blush, are often described with imagery drawn from nature. For example, by means of metaphor Juliet's characterised to have *the roses in [her] lips and cheeks* (Shakespeare 2008: 159),

whose *brightness* [...] *would shame those stars* (Shakespeare 2008: 60). In these metaphors, the attention is drawn again to the *roses*, which is a reference to Juliet's naturally beautiful blush and *brightness*, which contributes to the image of radiating, youthful glow.

Prospero, reflecting on some hardships that he faced, attributes his resilience to Miranda, whose smile infused the sense of hope and belief into him. In this regard, he calls Miranda *a cherubin* (Shakespeare 2006: 19), and says that *[Miranda] wast that did preserve [him]. / [She]didst smile, / Infusèd with a fortitude from heaven* (Shakespeare 2006: 19). Here, the verbalisation of the concept of female beauty is closely linked with the associations about divine forces, such as the comparison of Miranda with *a cherubin*, evoking the feeling of wonder and grace. This citation employs personification, attributing human qualities to the smile, being described as *infused with fortitude*, a quality typically associated with humans, suggesting a deep inner strength or courage derived from a divine source.

Eyes, as windows to the soul, play a significant role in the description of one's appearance. Male characters in Shakespeare's works put a great emphasis on the depth and brightness of a woman's gaze, comparing them either with the stars or the sun:

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven, / Having some business, do entreat her eyes / To twinkle in their spheres till they return (Shakespeare 2008: 60).

As daylight doth a lamp; her eye in heaven / Would through the airy region stream so bright / That birds would sing and think it were not night (Shakespeare 2008: 61).

Here, the superlative form of the adjective (*the fairest*), describing *the stars* that ask woman's eyes to *twinkle in their spheres till they return*, is used to highlight the uniqueness of women's eyes that shine as bright as the stars. In this citation, stars are personified as being able to perform human actions, such as *to entreat* or speak, in general. The verbalisation of the beauty of woman's eyes cultivates the image of light, associated with the white colour, could symbolise a sincere and pure soul.

In Sonnet 132, the lyrical hero compares his lover's eyes with the *sun* that rises and brightens up the landscape or the *grey cheeks*:

And truly not the morning sun of heaven / Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east, / Nor that full star that ushers in the even, / Doth half that glory to the sober west (Folger Shakespeare Library n.d.)

The beauty of the woman's eyes is verbalised through the comparison of them with the *sun, a full star* that pales in comparison with his lover's eyes. Bringing up the idea of nature, Shakespeare makes the woman's eyes brighter and even more illuminating.

It is known that cosmetics were gaining popularity in the Renaissance period, with women striving for perfection. Shakespeare makes a reference to cosmetics in one of his sonnets. In Sonnet 127 Shakespeare challenges prevailing beauty trends of that time, warning against the attractiveness of cosmetics that might lead women to embrace an artificial and deceptive notion of beauty, verbalising it as *false borrowed face*:

For since each hand hath put on nature's power, / Fairing the foul with art's false borrowed face, / Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower, / But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace (Folger Shakespeare Library n.d.).

In his play "Love's Labour's Lost", William Shakespeare expands on the issue of cosmetics as a beauty trend of those times naming it as *the colours*, that will get washed off. The use of cosmetics is mainly associated with falsehood, verbalised as: *false aspect, false borrowed face, painting*:

Your mistresses dare never come in rain, / For fear their colors should be wash'd away (Shakespeare 2008: 191).

O, if in black my lady's brows bedecked, / It mourns that painting and usurping hair / Should ravish doters with a false aspect, / [...] / Her favour turns the fashion of the days, / For native black is counted painting now, / And therefore red that would avoid dispraise / Paints itself black to imitate her brow (Shakespeare 2008: 118). In this citation we encounter the black colour mentioned, that is because one of the character's complexions is black.

William Carroll, interestingly, comments on this beauty trend: 'a flushed or naturally red complexion – is now considered painted, or artificial, and, ironically,

those who have such complexions must now “paint” themselves black in order to avoid the charge of “painting” (Carroll 2015: 186). Women were eager to take measures, including artificial means such as cosmetics, necessary to comply with the beauty standard.

Even though the concept of female beauty in the previously provided examples is displayed with a focus on the mere perfection of women’s bodies, Shakespeare brings forward a fresh depiction of a woman in one of his sonnets, namely Sonnet 130. Shakespeare draws attention to imposed expectations towards women, and stereotypes about their appearances, and actually acknowledges their humanity. The speaker in this poem highlights that his perception of female beauty transcends conforming to abstract and unrealistic fantasies, criticising the unattainable standards set by society for women’s appearance. On the one hand, in *Romeo and Juliet* Shakespeare describes Juliet’s physical image as being *like the sun, a flower, a sparkling jewel* etc., beautifully exaggerating it. On the other hand, the writer grounds the portrayal of the woman in Sonnet 130 to her being a normal human being, rather than *a goddess or a piece of art*. He starts his poem straight away with the words: *My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun* (Folger Shakespeare Library n.d.), and goes on saying: *Coral is far more red than her lips’ red; / If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun; / If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head. / I have seen roses damasked, red and white, / But no such roses see I in her cheeks; [...]* (Folger Shakespeare Library n.d.). He points out clichéd images such as *eyes like the sun, skin as white as snow* or *roses in the cheeks*, humorously mocking them. Instead, Shakespeare engages in a series of comparisons between his mistress’s appearance and various other objects or qualities, highlighting flaws of her body, scent, voice etc., combining this portrayal with understatement: */ And in some perfumes is there more delight / Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks / [...]* */ I grant I never saw a goddess go; / My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground* (Folger Shakespeare Library n.d.). However, towards the conclusion, he shifts his tone and expresses genuine love for her, regardless of her appearance, not fitting within the expected beauty standards. This sonnet shifts the focus from the perfect image of a

woman, provoking thoughts that there might be something more rather than just physicality that is attractive in women.

Shifting the focus from exclusively outer beauty to internal one and how it can be manifested through the means of the external one, we find it necessary to talk about body language that encompasses gestures, posture, the manner of speech etc., and how it contributes to the concept of their beauty. Observing and interpreting those signs, Shakespeare's male characters attributed to them some meaning and significance while interacting with women, especially in the Renaissance period, when there were strict behaviour regulations in public, in particular for women. The way a woman speaks, carries herself serves as a subtle yet powerful means of conveying female beauty. Romeo praises Juliet's speech, calling her *a bright angel* and comparing her to *the messenger of heaven*:

O, speak again, bright angel, for thou art / As glorious to this night, being o'er my head, / As is a wingèd messenger of heaven / Unto the white-upturnèd wond'ring eyes / Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him (Shakespeare 2008: 61).

In this context, one can witness the woman being attributed with divine qualities, which adds to the interplay between her inner and outer beauty, where Juliet's sensitivity, purity of heart is embodied in the way she speaks.

Here comes the lady. O, so light a foot / Will ne'er wear out the everlasting flint (Shakespeare 2008: 100).

See how she leans her cheek upon her hand. / O, that I were a glove upon that hand, / That I might touch that cheek (Shakespeare 2008: 61).

Juliet is described to have a *light foot* which means that she carries herself very gently. The descriptions of Juliet's gestures and movements create the image of her being very tender, radiating and elegance.

Apart from that, William Shakespeare writes about the vibrant aura that women radiate through their beauty. For example, Romeo says that *[Juliet] doth teach the torches to burn bright* (Shakespeare 2008: 48). As mesmerising as Juliet's beauty, *[it] makes / This vault a feasting presence full of light* (Shakespeare 2008: 193). At the same time, only Miranda's presence inspires Ferdinand: *The mistress which I serve*

quicken what's dead / And makes my labors pleasures (Shakespeare 2006: 74). The verbalisation of the analysed concept here highlights women's captivating allure that compliments both outer and inner beauty.

William Shakespeare writes about the power female attractiveness has over men. Male characters find themselves charmed by the sight of a beautiful woman, as seen in Juliet's beauty making Romeo bewitched by the charm of looks (Shakespeare 2008: 55), upon which he says that Juliet's beauty hath made [him] effeminate / And in [his] temper softened valor's steel (Shakespeare 2008: 110). Infatuated with Miranda's beauty, Ferdinand says that *'tis fresh morning with me / When you are by at night. I do beseech you, / Chiefly that I might set it in my prayers* (Shakespeare 2006: 76). Or in Sonnet 132, where the lyrical hero is so obsessed with his lover and her eyes, even though she looks down on him: *Thine eyes I love, and they, as pitying me / Knowing thy heart torment me with disdain, / Have put on black and loving mourners be, / Looking with pretty ruth upon my pain* (Folger Shakespeare Library n.d.). These lines verbalise the concept of female beauty from a slightly different perspective, not offering some vivid descriptors, but rather expressing the feeling that female attractive image cultivates. Female beauty has become the object of admiration that inspired men for noble deeds, made them lighter in their disposition, or had them experiencing and even suffering from the strong feelings.

As for specifically inner beauty, during the Renaissance era, women's societal roles were mainly narrowed to being daughters, wives, mothers etc. Accordingly, female inner beauty was defined by these roles. As a result, the spectrum of examples for the analysis is not as diverse as for outer beauty. Women were expected to embody virtues such as chastity, modesty, faithfulness etc., which were closely associated with the role of wife:

Romeo, there dead, was husband to that Juliet, / And she, there dead, that Romeo's faithful wife (Shakespeare 2008: 204).

And steal immortal blessing from her lips, / Who even in pure and vestal modesty / Still blush (Shakespeare 2008: 126).

I met the youthful lord at Lawrence' cell / And gave him what becomed love I might, / Not stepping o'er the bounds of modesty (Shakespeare 2008: 163).

What is more, their worth was often measured by qualities that reinforced notions of submissiveness and compliance. For example, according to the standards of the Renaissance period, a woman was considered beautiful and worth marrying only if she was untouched by another man:

O, if a virgin, / And your affection not gone forth, I'll make you / The Queen of Naples (Shakespeare 2006: 39).

A variety of female inner beauty features revolve around the allegory of a *virgin maiden*, as the main women's value and are limited by their social roles. Female inner beauty was often verbalised with the use of such lexemes as *true and faithful, wise and virtuous, noble and bounteous*:

She is too fair, too wise; wisely too fair, / To merit bliss by making me despair (Shakespeare 2008: 23).

Ceres, most bounteous lady, thy rich leas / Of wheat, rye, barley, vetches, oats, and peas (Shakespeare 2006: 100).

Her mother is the lady of the house, / And a good lady, and a wise and virtuous (Shakespeare 2008: 52).

For I will raise her statue in pure gold, / [...] / There shall no figure at such rate be set / As that of true and faithful Juliet (Shakespeare 2008: 23).

Women are described as having *a piteous heart (Shakespeare 2006: 9)* and *virtue of compassion (Shakespeare 2006: 10)*.

In conclusion, even though women of the Renaissance period were confined to narrow roles and valued mainly for qualities associated with their restricted societal roles, which predominantly influenced the way their beauty is verbalised in British literature, William Shakespeare's portrayal still transcended these limitations, showcasing women's inner radiance and power alongside their physical beauty. Shakespeare's male characters, charmed by women, praised their physical features, speech, gestures etc., often likening them to divine beings, comparing them with natural phenomena or art pieces. Therefore, regarding stylistic devices, the conclusion

has been reached that Shakespeare's portrayals of women in the Renaissance period are much richer in the use of tropes, figures of speech, and other literary devices in comparison with two further literary periods. The interplay between inner and outer beauty was evident, with virtues like purity and compassion reflected in a woman's appearance and behaviour.

2.2. Verbalisation of the concept of female beauty in the Victorian Era.

The verbalisation of the concept of female beauty in the Victorian Era presents a fascinating subject for analysis. Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre", Emily Brontë's "Wuthering Heights" and George Eliot's "Middlemarch" offer an insightful overview of the societal norms, gender roles, cultural, historical aspects etc. that influenced the perception of women, specifically of their beauty, imposed expectations towards it and built up stereotypes around the image of a woman.

Just the same as in the Renaissance period, under the influence of societal roles and gender inequality, in the Victorian era, women were supposed to adhere to strict rules of behaviour and certain standards of appearance with physical beauty still overwhelmingly being the main feature that women's worth was judged on. At the same time, the ideal of female beauty is still to embody feminine virtues, such as purity, modesty, and grace. The Victorian era is the era of the formation of stereotypes that created a special type of Victorian mentality. Stereotypes related to women and femininity, for example "Angel of the House", played an important role in the Victorian mentality (Kyselova 2007: 5).

Despite the similarities between these two periods in their requirements to women, some changes still occur, both in the perception of female beauty and the verbalisation of the concept of it. As for the novels chosen for the analysis, some of the characters align with the stereotypical perception of women, whereas others challenge conventional ideas about the beauty standards of that period. Whilst the portrayal of women in the Renaissance period focuses on their flawless physical beauty, appreciating a narrower spectrum of inner virtues, the representation of the concept of female beauty in the Victorian Era goes beyond mere physical appearance.

Despite the shifting focus, physical beauty still plays a very significant role in depicting women. According to the beauty standards of those times, smallness and tall, slender female figures were in trend:

And there are the Honourable Free eBooks at Planet eBook.com 241 Blanche and Mary Ingram, most beautiful women (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 241).

The three most distinguished — partly, perhaps, because the tallest figures of the band [...] They were all three of the loftiest stature of women (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 260).

Blanche and Mary were of equal stature, — straight and tall as poplars. [...] Mary was too slim for her height, but Blanche was moulded like a Dian (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 261).

There appeared, within three feet of him, a form clad in pure white — a youthful, graceful form (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 552).

She [young Cathy] was slender, and apparently scarcely past girlhood: an admirable form, and the most exquisite little face that I have ever had the pleasure of beholding: small features, very fair (Brontë, E. 2014: 10).

In these examples, we encounter superlative adjectives such as *the tallest, the loftiest, most beautiful* and *most distinguished*, highlighting the highest level of perfection; and such lexemes as *beautiful, exquisite, admirable, graceful, elegant, distinguished* that contribute not only to their supreme physical attractiveness, but to their uniqueness. Women's tall figures are compared with *poplars*, a direct association with nature, cultivating the perception of girls as naturally beautiful. In "Jane Eyre", the comparison of Blanche with Dian, a Roman Goddess of the hunt and moon, takes us back to the Renaissance period when female beauty was seen as divine and heavenly. Employing this comparison, Jane describes Blanche as extremely beautiful, tall, and graceful (Encyclopedia Britannica n.d.). Lady Ingram also refers to her daughter as *queenly Blanche* (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 293), which again highlights the girl's supreme beauty and sharp adherence to the standards associated with it.

Some other features of female appearances, stemming from the preceding one, that were considered to be beautiful are smoothness, softness and lightness:

Mary had a milder and more open countenance than Blanche; softer features too, and a skin some shades fairer (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 262).

Her brow smooth, Her lids closed, her lips wearing the expression of a smile; no angel in heaven could be more beautiful than she appeared (Brontë, E. 2014: 96).

His attention became, by degrees, quite centred in the study of her thick silky curls (Brontë, E. 2014: 168).

I never feel hurt at the brightness of Isabella's yellow hair, and the whiteness of her skin; at her dainty elegance (Brontë, E. 2014: 58).

Her hand and wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare of style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian painters; [...] her plain garments gave her the impressiveness of a fine quotation from the Bible, – or from one of our elder poets, – in a paragraph of to-day's newspaper (Eliot 1994).

The verbalisation of previously mentioned characteristics is conducted through such lexemes as *mild*, *smooth*, *open*, *soft*, *fair*, *bright*, *white* and even employing the comparison with an *angel* or *Blessed Virgin* which leads to seeing women as gentle and elegant and their beauty as pure. Such features as the *lips wearing the expression of smile*, *whiteness of [her] skin* and having *hair*, described by *the softness of silk*, contribute to the perception of a woman as a heavenly creature. The woman's plain dressing underscored her godly looks, giving her *the impressiveness of a fine quotation from the Bible*, *or from one of our elder poets*, referring to divine forces and art.

Within the texts of the novels prolonged descriptions are devoted to the beauty of the women's facial features, for example Rosamond in "Jane Eyre" is characterised to have *a face of perfect beauty* (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 552), just the same as other female characters from analysed novels:

No charm was wanting, no defect was perceptible; the young girl had regular and delicate lineaments; eyes shaped and coloured as we see them in lovely pictures, [...]; the long and shadowy eyelash which encircles a fine eye with so soft a fascination; the pencilled brow which gives such clearness; [...] the cheek oval, fresh, and smooth; the lips, fresh too, ruddy, healthy, sweetly formed; the even and gleaming

teeth without flaw [...] – all advantages, in short, which, combined, realise the ideal of beauty, were fully hers (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 553).

And eyes – had they been agreeable in expression, they would have been irresistible (Brontë, E. 2014: 10).

Her delicate neck and cheek and purely cut lips never had more of that untarnished beauty which touches as in spring-time and infancy and all sweet freshness (Eliot 1994).

Nature [that] had surely formed her in a partial mood (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 553).

In the Victorian era, the concept of beauty revolved around health and natural beauty. Rosamond's description illustrates this crucial aspect of the concept of female beauty that is verbalised through such lexemes as *fresh, ruddy, healthy*. Rosamond is said to be *without flaw*, having *clearness* and *no defect*.

Generally speaking, from the very conventional perspective on women of those times, the verbalisation of female outer beauty in the Victorian era reflects the conventional standards, emphasising that a woman was expected to be *polished, refined, docile* (Eliot 1994). She was supposed to embody elegance and delicacy in all aspects of life, with these traits being idealised and manifested in her physical appearance. What is more, women have been judged primarily by their physical features since their childhood:

If [Jane] were a nice, pretty child, one might compassionate her forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 35).

You look like a lady, and it is as much as I ever expected of you: you were no beauty as a child (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 139).

The emphasis is on the fact that the girl's looks aren't as appealing as society expected them to be, to the extent that she is not worthy of compassion or empathy. This underscores the idea that during the Victorian era, the way women were treated and perceived by society depended on their physical beauty, making women want to align with those standards and please the society, particularly male representatives. As a response to former citations, Jane Eyre comments:

I confess I was not quite indifferent to its import: at eighteen most people wish to please, and the conviction that they have not an exterior likely to second that desire brings anything but gratification (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 139).

Apart from all those physical beauty requirements, the woman was supposed to be properly educated in order to be considered worthy to marry:

Rosamond is socialised throughout her childhood and adolescence in such a way that she is continuously rewarded for conforming to societal conceptions of ideal femininity. In regard to her education, She was admitted to be the flower of Mrs Lemon's school, [...] where the teachings included all that was demanded in the accomplished female (Eliot 1994).

The woman is considered to be *accomplished*, as formulated in the novel, when she acquires *societal conceptions of ideal femininity* and conforms to them. Although her character and appearances can be described as attractive, she is the product of a Victorian finishing school, worldly and superficial.

All these beauty standards and social expectations align with what most men of those times were looking in women:

Lydgate felt sure that if ever he married, his wife would have that feminine radiance, that distinctive womanhood which must be classed with flowers and music, that sort of beauty which by its very nature was virtuous (Eliot 1994).

Rosamond [...] was always that combination of correct sentiments, music, dancing, drawing, elegant note-writing, private album for extracted verse, and perfect blond loveliness, which made the irresistible woman for the doomed man of that date (Eliot 1994).

Every nerve and muscle in Rosamond was adjusted to the consciousness that she was being looked at (Eliot 1994).

Here the concept of female beauty is closely linked with *femininity, womanhood* and *virtue*, as essential components of it. Here, the concept of “Angel of the House” is an expression of basic stereotypical ideas about a woman (Kyselova 2007: 5). While this manner of looking and behaving was considered beautiful, the characters eventually find it restricting. These expectations towards women limited their

independence, freedom of choice, and self-expression. Even the George Eliot herself describes such a perception of women as *sexist* and *simplistic*:

His sexist and simplistic understanding of women is perfectly compatible with the performance Rosamond puts on for him (Eliot 1994).

As the realisation comes, a new way of verbalising the concept of female beauty is introduced, with the focus on women's inner beauty. Therefore, the female beauty, both inner and outer, in the novels, is verbalised on the basis of the antithesis between convention and novelty.

The outer features of women with richer inner beauty are described as rather *unusual* with the purpose to highlight the breakage of stereotype and convention, or *plain* with the main focus drawn to inner virtues:

Miss Brooke's large eyes seemed, like her religion, too unusual and striking (Eliot 1994).

I sometimes regretted that I was not handsomer; I sometimes wished to have rosy cheeks, a straight nose, and small cherry mouth; I desired to be tall, stately, and finely developed in figure (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 150).

As for the contrast between two categories of women of those times, embodying either convention or novelty, Jane Eyre interestingly verbalises the difference in her and Blanche's looks, while comparing their portraits. She talks about painting Blanche's and self-portrait, emphasising all their perfections and imperfections, which come partially from Jane's insecurities and the conventions of female beauty of those times, embodied in Blanche's image. Thus, seeing herself as physically unattractive, Jane makes the whole process of creating the self-portrait seem unappealing. She plans to draw *draw in chalk [...] faithfully, without softening one defect; omit no harsh line, smooth away no displeasing irregularity; write under it, 'Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain'* (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 244). On the other hand, as for Blanche's portrait, Jane decides to *take [her] palette, mix [her] freshes, finest, clearest tints; choose [her] most delicate camel-hair pencils; delineate carefully the loveliest face you can imagine; paint it in [her] softest shades and sweetest lines, [...] remember the raven ringlets, the oriental eye* (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 244). Female outer beauty here

is verbalised as the process of creating art. Even though Jane is talking about palette, tints, pencils, the adjectives used to describe Blanche's portrait, such as *freshest, finest, delicate, loveliest, softest, sweetest*, refer to Blanche herself. Apart from that, the contrast between these two portraits again brings up the problem of the imposing nature of beauty standards and the impact they have on women, cultivating insecurities, and jealousy.

As for inner beauty, the imposed standard of women being passive, having very limited social roles, are touched upon in the novels. For example, in Jane Eyre's character, we clearly see the beginning of the transition from "the domestic angel" (Ioannou 2018: 329), always perfectly looking to an actual human being with a well-rounded personality. Nevertheless, society wanted to see a *calm* and *quiet* woman, which Jane addresses directly: *Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel* (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 167). Jane's personality and character, reflective of her inner beauty, stand in stark contrast to those of Blanche, Mary, and Rosamond. The inner beauty of those women is questionable. For example, St. John, the man that Rosamond seems to love, says that while he loves her *with all the intensity, indeed, of a first passion, the object of which is exquisitely beautiful, graceful, fascinating* (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 569), he subconsciously realises that *she would not make [him] a good wife; that she is not the partner suited to [him]* (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 569). St. John proceeds to say that despite the fact that he is *acutely sensible to her charms, something else is as deeply impressed with her defects: they are such that she could sympathise in nothing [he] aspired to – cooperate in nothing [he] undertook* (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 569). His words suggest that Rosamond, being a very shallow person, has nothing to offer apart from her charming appearance which is described as *exquisitely beautiful, graceful, fascinating*. In this regard, according to Lee Anna Maynard, "Jane relegates Rosamond's perfect beauty to a realm where the beautiful and the boring are synonyms" (Maynard 2009: 57). For St. John, Rosamond is a way of satisfaction of his physical and aesthetic pursuits, rather than that, she has got nothing else to offer, no sympathy, no interest in anything he engages in.

Just the same as Rosamond, Mary, Blanche's sister, is depicted as *deficient in life: her face lacked expression, her eye lustre; she had nothing to say, and having once taken her seat, remained fixed like a statue in its niche* (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 262). Here, describing the non-verbal features, the comparison with *statue* isn't used in a favourable light, but rather to illustrate Mary's lack of expression. Despite Mary's pleasant appearance, this portrayal suggests that true attractiveness is not merely skin-deep but is rather rooted in the depth of character. Through their character, Brontë highlights the deceiving nature of physical beauty, stressing the significance of inner virtues rather than external looks.

In contrast to Rosamond and Mary, Jane mentions Grace Poole, Bertha's keeper at Thornfield, saying that she doesn't think *she can ever have been pretty; [...], she may possess originality and strength of character to compensate for the want of personal advantages* (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 262). Compared to the Renaissance period, in the Victorian era, as depicted in Charlotte Brontë's work, the verbalisation of the concept of female beauty moves on to the next level, expanding the limitations of what was perceived to be beautiful. Thus, *a fault of look* (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 240) can be made up for by virtues such as originality and strength of character, as in Grace's case. The concept of beauty transcends mere physical appearance – one's inner beauty can lighten up even the plainest countenance:

While arranging my hair, I looked at my face in the glass, and felt it was no longer plain: there was hope in its aspect and life in its colour; and my eyes seemed as if they had beheld the fount of fruition, and borrowed beams from the lustrous ripple (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 392).

Looking at herself in the mirror, Jane now perceives a change in her countenance, attributing it to a newfound sense of hope and vitality. The imagery of her eyes *borrowing beams from the lustrous ripple* evokes a sense of radiance and inner light, indicating a deep emotional connection and fulfilment.

Most importantly, she appears to have accepted her looks and realised her inner beauty and worth. In response to Mr. Rochester's question: *Who in the world cares for you?* (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 483), Jane replies that she is enough for herself: *I care for*

myself. The more solitary [...] the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 483). Jane is no longer *a fantastic idiot* (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 443), but rather a *savage, beautiful creature* (Brontë, Ch. 2014: 484) as in Mr. Rochester's eyes.

Just like "Jane Eyre" other novels suggest that women's beauty isn't only skin deep. The inner beauty is more broadly verbalised in the Victorian era, comparing to Renaissance:

She was open, ardent, and not in the least self-admiring (Eliot 1994).

Yet those who approached Dorothea, though prejudiced against her by this alarming hearsay, found that she had a charm unaccountably reconcilable with it (Eliot 1994).

It was certainly not her plainness that attracted them (and let all plain young ladies be warned against the dangerous encouragement given them by Society to confide in their want of beauty) (Eliot 1994).

Devotedness [...] was so necessary a part of her mental life (Eliot 1994).

With eyes of heavenly blue, deep enough to hold the most exquisite meanings an ingenious beholder could put into them, and deep enough to hide the meanings of the owner if these should happen to be less exquisite (Eliot 1994).

These citations collectively verbalise a Victorian perspective where a woman's true beauty is linked to her character and inner qualities rather than merely her external appearance. Such attributes as *open, ardent, not in the least self-admiring*, possessing *charm, devotedness* and *mental life* suggest a beauty rooted in authenticity and passion with attractiveness coming from qualities beyond her physical appearance. *It was certainly not her plainness that attracted them* highlights that women's appeal was not based merely on their looks, cautioning against society's misleading emphasis on physical beauty, with the depth of character hidden underneath.

Some male representatives acknowledge themselves the complexity of female nature, which contributes to the verbalisation of female beauty:

You must wait for movement and tone. There is a difference in their very breathing: they change from moment to moment. [...] How would you paint her voice, pray? But her voice is much diviner than anything you have seen of her (Eliot 1994).

Referring back to art, and comparing women to it, one of the male characters in “Middlemarch” struggles to capture something as changeable or complicated as a *woman*. The reason for this is the fact that the concept of female beauty lies not only in her appearances, but her voice, behaviour, inner traits and peculiarities of character. There are hidden depths that can’t be captured in a painting or a statue that depicts only the surface.

The verbalisation of female beauty in Charlotte Brontë’s “Jane Eyre” Emily Brontë’s “Wuthering Heights” and George Eliot’s “Middlemarch” offers a fascinating study of Victorian societal norms and expectations towards women. During the Victorian era, similar to the Renaissance period, women were required to adhere to rigid beauty standards, which were often centred around values of purity, modesty, and grace. Outer beauty was defined by tall and slender figures, healthy and fresh look, without any imperfections, well-behaved and educated according to societal expectations. As for the inner beauty, a calm and malleable woman that would be a good wife and mother was considered to be ideal from a societal perspective. However, in contrast to the Renaissance period, the Victorian era literature, as analysed in chosen literary works, challenging these superficial ideals, launches new perspectives on female beauty. Their female characters embody inner virtues such as strength of character, resilience, mental life, inner charm. The contrast between female characters that align with imposed beauty standards and those, whose beauty transcends mere physicality highlights the novel’s critique of superficial and limiting outer beauty standards, emphasising the importance of inner beauty. Their self-expression and self-acceptance underscores the novel’s exploration of the concept of beauty and its multifaceted nature.

2.3. The concept of female beauty in Modern and Postmodern British literature.

Throughout history, women have been subjected to sexualisation, objectification, and mistreatment. With women's roles only seen as mothers, wives and, generally speaking, family people, their education or job perspectives have been undermined. As it has been analysed previously, in the former periods of Renaissance and the Victorian era, women were predominantly judged by their appearances. The female body has frequently been seen as a means of comforting the needs of male representatives, gratifying their physical, aesthetically sensory desires. Nevertheless, there have been some groundbreaking ideas introduced with the shifting focus towards women's inner beauty, starting from Shakespeare's Sonnet 130 or Jane Eyre's personality with strong character and resilience in Charlotte Bronte's "Jane Eyre".

Modernism has become the period of a drastic change, with Postmodernism supporting and further developing those ideas. Within the literary movement of Modernism and Postmodernism, the representation of women underwent significant transformation, reflecting changing societal attitudes towards gender roles, identity, and sexuality. The development of Modernism, as the prevailing art movement of that time, roughly spanning from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century, overlapped with the first wave of women's rights and feminist movement. Subsequently, Postmodernism emerged in the mid-20th century, and further deepened the exploration of female identity, inner struggles, beauty that transcends physical features, integrating and expanding upon the ideas introduced by Modernism. Consequently, it significantly influenced women's role in the society, and, as a result, the perception of their external and internal features, which, not surprisingly, got manifested in literary works through the verbalisation of female beauty and its standards. Because of Modernist and Postmodernist ideas overlapping and complementing each other, creating the full vision of the perception of the concept of female beauty, these two literary periods are analysed within one question.

Even though in the context of Modernism and Postmodernism new perspectives on the representation of women have been introduced, the centrality of female physical

beauty persisted as an enduring theme in British literature. In Ian McEwan's "Atonement", the character Briony, while engaged in her creative pursuits, reflects on the relief she feels in not having *to be [...] describing [...] her heroine's face – beauty, she had discovered, occupied a narrow band. Ugliness, on the other hand, had infinite variation* (McEwan 2010: 18). By saying this, Briony draws the attention towards the fact that the standards and ideals of female beauty are still very restricted, forcing women into certain limits. Anything that doesn't fit within those limits was considered to be unattractive.

Women, from a very young age, got concerned about the proper way of expressing their femininity by means of their physical beauty. They were trapped in their bodies, whose main purpose of existence is attracting the appraising male gaze, becoming a wife and then a mother as if keeping is shut as verbalised in the following citation:

Why be given a body if you have to keep it shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle? (Mansfield 1924: 116).

Referring back to the character of Briony in "Atonement", who is to enter the period of puberty is experiencing this overwhelming transformation of her body, which is about to become of interest for male representatives:

She pushed her knees out straight before her and let the folds of her white muslin dress and the familiar, endearing, pucker of skin about her knees fill her view. She should have changed her dress this morning. She thought how she should take more care of her appearance, like Lola (McEwan 2010: 53).

In Modernism and Postmodernism, women of different ages were concerned with their appearances and the proper way of carrying themselves in society, just the same as in the Victorian era. Despite their desires, women were supposed to align with the rules of proper behaviour for women of different ages, as shown in the following citation:

Although Bertha Young was thirty she still had moments like this when she wanted to run instead of walk, to take dancing steps on and off the pavement, to bowl a hoop (Mansfield 1924: 116).

Disregarding their emotions, women strived for perfection in their appearances to satisfy men in awe of being left with no other life prospects:

Even in her anger, she had wanted to show him just how beautiful she was and bind him to her (McEwan 2010: 109).

Talking more specifically about the way female outer beauty is verbalised, in the periods of Modernism and Postmodernism, just the same as in the Victorian era, figure, complexion and delicate body features play an important role in defining a woman as beautiful:

The way her pelvic bones stretched the material clear of her skin, the deep curve of her waist, her startling whiteness (McEwan 2010: 107).

The frail white nymph, from whom water cascaded far more successfully than it did from the beefy Triton (McEwan 2010: 47).

His only thought was that she was even more beautiful than his fantasies of her. The silk dress she wore seemed to worship every curve and dip of her lithe body (McEwan 2010: 173).

How could he forget that green dress, how it clung to the curve of her hips and hampered her running and showed the beauty of her shoulders (McEwan 2010: 340).

Her neck as she bent forward, her exquisite toes as they shone transparent in the firelight (Mansfield 1924: 120).

The nuances of female figures, provided in these citations, evoke a heightened sense of aesthetic appreciation for the female form, echoing the artistic sensibilities of earlier periods. The image of white nymph, as a reference to divine, supernatural forces, is similar to the comparisons of women with goddesses in the Renaissance and Victorian periods, highlighting their supreme beauty. Some of the characteristics that are of great importance while claiming the woman to be beautiful is her fair complexion: *white nymph, startling whiteness*; well-distinguished figure features: *the deep curve of her waist, the dress [worshipped] every curve and dip of her lithe body*; and delicate body characteristics: *the beauty of her shoulders, exquisite toes*. Furthermore, here, the writers mention how specific clothing choices enhanced the portrayal of female physical beauty.

Readers encounter very precise descriptions of facial features of female characters with the implication of attributes and descriptions, sometimes less conventional in comparison with the previous literary periods.

But she did look [in the mirror], and it gave her back a woman, radiant, with smiling, trembling lips, with big, dark eyes and an air of listening, waiting for something (Mansfield 1924: 117).

Now it looked boldly sensual, with an accentuated bow of the full purplish lips. The eyes were dark and enlarged (McEwan 2010: 427).

That long, narrow face, the small mouth [...] she was a little horsey in appearance (McEwan 2010: 107).

That long face always looked odd, and vulnerable, horsey everyone said, even in the best of lights (McEwan 2010: 427).

Now he saw it was a strange beauty – something carved and still about the face, especially around the inclined planes of her cheekbones, with a wild flare to the nostrils, and a full, glistening rosebud mouth. Her eyes were dark and contemplative. It was a statuesque look (McEwan 2010: 107).

It was an extraordinary beauty of the kind she most admired, dark, large-eyed, with that quality which, since she hadn't got it herself, she always envied (Woolf 2002).

As she always did fall in love with beautiful women who had something strange about them (Mansfield 1924: 121).

While initially, describing a woman's face as *horsey* doesn't evoke a sense of aesthetics, a deeper examination of the combination of all the features such as *long, narrow face, the small mouth, the inclined planes of her cheekbones, with a wild flare to the nostrils, and a full, glistening rosebud mouth* contribute to the characters' beauty, described as *strange, extraordinary* or *most admired*. Strangeness is what makes female beauty unique and, as a result, captivating. Such a way of verbalising a woman's appearance, even though it doesn't necessarily fit within the conventional beauty standards, showcases the appreciation of individuality, and the perception of it as beautiful as well. *Long face* is complemented by *a small mouth* and gracefully angled cheekbones, with the flaring of her nostrils, adding a touch of dynamism to her

countenance. The woman's *full purplish lips*, resembling delicate *rosebuds*, add a soft element to her overall appearance. Her look is described as *statuesque*, which creates the image of her being graceful, and dignified.

Celebrating a woman's unique features cultivates a sense of appreciation and admiration for the multifaceted nature, richness of female beauty and diverse ways of its expression and verbalisation:

When she reached for her skirt, a carelessly raised foot revealed a patch of soil on each pad of her sweetly diminishing toes. Another mole the size of a farthing on her thigh and something purplish on her calf – a strawberry mark, a scar. Not blemishes. Adornments (McEwan 2010: 107).

This citation, just the same as previous ones, draws readers' attention to some peculiarities of a woman's appearance such as *a strawberry mark, a scar*, that might have been viewed as imperfections in earlier times. In contrast, new perspectives on women's outer beauty are introduced, with these details seen not as flaws but rather as *adornments*. By verbalising the distinctive features of women as elements of their beauty, rather than aligning to rigid standards of perfection, Modernism and Postmodernism challenge traditional notions of beauty.

Modernism and Postmodernism, with their innovative ideas, shed light on the sexual relationship and its representation in the literature, which influenced the verbalisation of the concept of female beauty as well.

As society conventions about beauty standards became less rigid and more accepting, literature began to showcase this by depicting a wider range of appearances and behaviours, adding to their sensuality and complexity. Because women were still forbidden from freely expressing their desires, sexuality, as a manifestation of both outer and interior beauty, was verbalised through the peculiarities of their behaviours and dispositions, as non-verbal features:

Her movements were savage, and she would not meet his eye. He did not exist, he was banished, and this was also the punishment (McEwan 2010: 47).

How she had taken off her clothes in front of him – so indifferently, as though he were an infant. Of course. He saw it clearly now. The idea was to humiliate him (McEwan 2010: 109).

She was not mere sweetness, and he could not afford to condescend to her, for she was a force, she could drive him out of his depth and push him under (McEwan 2010: 109).

As for Lola, she spoke her lines correctly but casually, and sometimes smiled inappropriately at some private thought, determined to demonstrate that her nearly adult mind was elsewhere (McEwan 2010: 109).

Now he saw that the girl was almost a young woman, poised and imperious, quite the little Pre-Raphaelite princess with her bangles and tresses, her painted nails and velvet choker (McEwan 2010: 85).

The way she has of sitting with her head a little on one side, and smiling, has something behind it (Mansfield 1924: 121).

Here we see the power women have over men: their beauty could *drive [them] out of depth and push [them] under*. The idea of female supremacy over men by means of their beauty is similar to the Renaissance period, as previously analysed. However, the ways of manifesting this power are different: the Renaissance woman of a good tone would never let herself get undressed in front of the man she wasn't married to, whereas here the woman is described to be doing this *indifferently*, as a means of punishment towards a male representative. Regardless of the very provocative action of taking clothes off, women still weren't free in expressing their sexuality. Thus, they manifested them through their body language, gestures or movements, which are verbalised in the novel text as *savage movements*, *private thought* or *smiling inappropriately*. Apart from the theme of sexuality, body language manifests women's inner world, making it look mysterious and deep: *the way she has of sitting [...] has something behind it*.

As women acquire the sense of freedom and their strength, their inner beauty and charm are verbalised through their vibrant and unconventional actions, such as *running*

along the passage naked or taking off the clothes or saying and doing anything they want:

Sally's power was amazing, her gift, her personality. [...] Then she forgot her sponge, and ran along the passage naked. That grim old housemaid, Ellen Atkins, went about grumbling – "Suppose any of the gentlemen had seen?" Indeed she did shock people (Woolf 2002). Here female beauty is associated with power and gift, which is realised in their personality.

How she had taken off her clothes in front of him – so indifferently, as though he were an infant (McEwan 2010: 109).

It was an extraordinary beauty of the kind she most admired, dark, large-eyed, with that quality which, since she hadn't got it herself, she always envied – a sort of abandonment, as if she could say anything, do anything; a quality much commoner in foreigners than in Englishwomen (Woolf 2002).

She quite forgot to be shy (Mansfield 1922: 193).

In these citations, women's inner beauty is highlighted through their free spirit and boldness, qualities that women were supposed to repress within their characters in the previous periods.

The difference in verbalisation of the concept of female beauty is well illustrated through the contrast between generations, more specifically between Emily and her daughters Cecilia and Briony in Ian McEwan's "Atonement". On the edge between different periods and generations, the issue of sexuality could be either treated lightly or with shame. In "Atonement", the younger generation, represented by the characters of Cecilia and Briony, appears to adopt the first mentality, whilst the seniors, such as Emily, their mother, treat the matter with embarrassment and shame.

The contrasts between the two periods is verbalised within the issue of education and the influence it had on the perception of women and their beauty. Emily, as a representative of the older generation, sees education as something that could influence Cecilia and her potential marriage badly:

One day Leon might bring home a friend for Cecilia to marry, if three years at Girton had not made her an impossible prospect with her pretensions to solitude, and smoking in the bedroom (McEwan 2010: 91).

While the mother's worldview is confined to traditional ideals of success associated with marriage, her daughters have a more open-minded perspective on life. The contrast between the mother's life perspectives and priorities and those of her daughters lies in Cecilia and Briony encompassing broader aspirations such as education, passion about writing, resilience and other ways of expressing their personalities, rather than exclusively through the physical features. This reflects a significant divergence between the Renaissance period, Victorian era, Modernism and Postmodernism.

Female characters challenge conventional societal norms regarding the behaviour expected of young women. For example, Cecilia introduces the notion that a girl can embody both purity and sex appeal, desirability without being perceived as threatening or dangerous. Her inner resilience as an element of her inner beauty is verbalised in her choice of dress, while preparing for the evening party. The society offers her two options, either *a black crepe de Chine dress* that makes her *an austere woman* or the dress of a pale pink colour turns her into a child:

Her first resort was a black crêpe de Chine dress which, according to the dressing-table mirror, bestowed by means of clever cutting a certain severity of form. Its air of invulnerability was heightened by the darkness of her eyes (McEwan 2010: 128).

The public gaze of the stairway mirror as she hurried towards revealed a woman on her way to a funeral, an austere, joyless woman moreover, whose black carapace had affinities with some form of matchbox-dwelling insect. A stag beetle! (McEwan 2010: 128).

The pink was in fact innocently pale, the wasteline was too high, the dress flared like an eight-year-old's party frock. All it needed was rabbit buttons (McEwan 2010: 130).

These two dresses represent the two options that any woman effectively had before in order to align with societal norms. She was supposed to be either a model of purity and innocence or a wife and mother. Only within these roles, the woman could be seen as beautiful. Rejecting both dresses, Cecilia introduces a new spiritual and emotional state, not explored by women before:

Relaxed was how she wanted to feel, and, at the same time, self-contained. Above all, she wanted to look as though she had not given the matter a moment's thought, and that would take time (McEwan 2010: 129).

In order to express her inner state, Cecilia chooses the *figure-hugging dark green bias-cut backless evening gown with a halter neck* (McEwan 2010: 129). Wearing this dress, she describes her feeling as *sleekly impregnable, slippery and secure* (McEwan 2010: 131).

Looking at her reflection in the mirror, Cecilia sees a *mermaid who rose to meet her in her own full-length mirror* (McEwan 2010: 131). Here, a woman's inner beauty is verbalised through the symbol of a supernatural creature – the *mermaid*, a figure existing outside conventional social roles. As a result, in the verbalisation of the concept of female beauty, the link between the female beauty and the supernatural is traced in every analysed period. Another reference to the mermaid is Cecilia's name, associated with the saint patroness of music, which hints at a connection to the seductive siren, adding depth to the character's complexity. The author connects the image of the siren, usually regarded as potentially dangerous owing to her captivating voice, with the saint, who is closely associated with music. This argues that female beauty has a dual essence, embodying both purity and sexuality equally.

In conclusion, while the verbalisation of the concept of female beauty has evolved over time, certain themes remain. Comparing Modernism and Postmodernism with Renaissance, the literary texts of the former one present a vaster variety of literary devices used to verbalise the female beauty, whereas those of the first one use more straightforward language, but still aren't deprived of some literary devices that contribute to the multifaceted nature of female beauty. In the Renaissance and Victorian eras, women were frequently assessed primarily on their appearances, with

their bodies objectified for male gratification. However, Modernism and Postmodernism brought about substantial shifts in women's representation, defying traditional standards and providing more complex images. In works such as Virginia Woolf "Mrs Dalloway", Katherine Mansfield's short stories "Bliss" and "Her First Ball", Ian McEwan's "Atonement", protagonists reject conventional societal expectations, embracing personal liberty and questioning traditional beauty standards. A more nuanced perception of female beauty is illustrated in Modernism and Postmodernism literature, exploring both inner and outer beauty and presenting women as multifaceted individuals beyond superficial appearances.

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 2

The verbalisation of the concept of female beauty undergoes significant development throughout four literary periods analysed in this research, namely the Renaissance, the Victorian era, Modernism and Postmodernism. The way women's beauty has been represented in the works of these periods is affected by prevailing beauty standards shaped by social, cultural, and historical factors. By examining works from each period, including Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, Charlotte Brontë's, Emily Brontë's, Ian McEwan's novels, and Katherine Mansfield's short stories we can trace how imposed conventions and societal views regarding female beauty and its verbalisation transform over time.

During the Renaissance period, women were primarily defined by their social roles and physical beauty, considered their main virtue. William Shakespeare's works vividly express the Renaissance ideal of female beauty, often using absolute adjectives (*perfect, peerless etc.*), superlatives (*the fairest, the most precious, the top of admiration etc.*) and comparisons to natural and supernatural phenomena. Female characters are likened to *the sun, flowers, jewels, and goddesses*, emphasising their flawlessness and divine qualities. Such a way of verbalising female beauty aligns with the Renaissance emphasis on idealised femininity and the celebration of female beauty as divine and transcendent. However, Shakespeare provides a groundbreaking idea of more realistic female portrayals, as seen in Sonnet 130, where he humorously rejects

exaggerated comparisons and appreciates his mistress's true form. Here the verbalisation of female beauty shifts its focus from physical perfection to perceiving a woman as a human being, with some flaws that are natural and just as beautiful. Nevertheless, because of the fact that the main focus of this period was specifically on the physical beauty, the verbalisation of the inner beauty is quite narrow, associated with her restricted social roles of the daughter, wife and mother. Shakespeare explores the interplay of external beauty and inner virtues like modesty, chastity, faithfulness, and compassion.

Moving into the Victorian era, the verbalisation of female beauty in the Victorian Era, as depicted in works like "Jane Eyre", "Wuthering Heights", and "Middlemarch", reflects societal norms and expectations. Just as in the Renaissance, women were primarily judged on physical beauty and adherence to strict standards of behaviour. For instance, characters like Blanche in "Jane Eyre" are described using superlative adjectives (*the tallest, the loftiest, most beautiful, most distinguished*) to emphasise physical perfection, while societal expectations dictate that women like Rosamond must conform to ideals of grace and elegance (*exquisite, admirable, graceful, elegant*). However, Victorian literature also challenges these ideals, portraying characters such as Jane Eyre herself with inner virtues such as strength, resilience, personality with inner struggles, which is verbalised as *mental life*. Jane's acceptance of herself despite societal pressure to conform to beauty standards is evident when she declares: "I care for myself", highlighting a shift towards valuing inner beauty over external appearance. This contrast highlights the limitations of superficial beauty standards and emphasises the importance of inner beauty and self-expression.

Last but not least, Modernism and Postmodernism provide some groundbreaking ideas towards female beauty, particularly noticeable when comparing two generations, namely Emily, the mother, and Cecilia, her daughter, that resembles our current times more, compared to the previous periods. In Ian McEwan's "Atonement", Virginia Woolf's "Mrs Dalloway" the verbalisation of the concept of female beauty reflects the process of uncovering female sexuality, getting some freedom, education prospects, choices. Beauty is portrayed as multifaceted and complex, with characters like Cecilia

challenging traditional expectations and embracing personal autonomy, which is verbalised in the comparison of her with the *mermaid*, the creature existing outside conventional social roles. Descriptions of female beauty are more nuanced, highlighting both inner and outer qualities (*extraordinary, strange*). Reflections on the narrow standards of beauty and the limitations they impose on women underscores the Modernist and Postmodernist emphasis on individuality and self-expression.

In conclusion, the verbalisation of female beauty evolves across the Renaissance, Victorian, Modernist and Postmodernist periods, reflecting shifting beauty standards and societal attitudes towards female beauty. While the Renaissance idealises female beauty as divine and transcendent, the Victorian era emphasises inner virtues over physical appearance. In Modernism and Postmodernism, beauty is portrayed as multifaceted, challenging traditional norms and celebrating personal autonomy. Through the analysis of key literary works from each period, we can trace the changing verbalisation of female beauty and its significance in shaping cultural ideals and perceptions.

CONCLUSION

Concepts constitute crucial phenomena of language that reveal the cultural, historical, and social contexts of words to us. They are valuable, and a vast range of them have already been examined and analysed. One of such concepts is the concept of beauty, particularly the female one. Its verbalisation reflects not only aesthetic preferences but also deeper social constructs and power structures within some specific culture, with the diachronic aspect of it, allowing to trace the changes throughout different epochs.

Throughout the study of the concept of female beauty from the linguistic perspectives on the basis of British literature, this thesis examines the historical evolution of its verbalisation throughout spanning epochs, revealing profound insights into the evolution of cultural norms and societal constructs from the Renaissance period to Postmodernism.

Within the research, it was necessary to explore the concept itself as an object of linguistic research, its essence, structure and how it functions in human consciousness, language, and the whole culture. The concept definitions provided in this thesis are based on numerous linguistic works that have been written on this subject and speculations outlined from them.

To be more specific, in its essence, a concept embodies a discrete mental construct, serving as the foundational element that exhibits a structured internal organisation, mirroring the cognitive processes of individuals, societies, or even entire nations. Concepts encapsulate a comprehensive understanding of the subject or phenomena they represent, along with the collective interpretation by public consciousness and the shared attitude towards it, which is represented in the language. The conceptual framework plays a pivotal role in shaping the perception of everyday life, providing individuals with a navigational tool amidst the intricacies of their environment. Rooted within language, they serve as the fundamental building blocks of memory and cognition, illuminating the intricate interplay between language, cognitive processes, and cultural perceptions through a comprehensive exploration of linguistic analysis. There have been two definitions, most relevant for the research,

differentiated, which include the perception of the concept as a “clot” or mental construct, and the concept as a result of human activity. On the one hand, the abstract nature of concepts is emphasised, which plays a significant role in categorisation and the organisation of knowledge about a specific culture. On the other hand, concepts are dynamic, continuously shaped and refined through human activities.

The first chapter further deals with the concept of beauty, particularly female one, both inner and outer, including its components and factors that have influenced its development, particularly within British culture. In the context of British culture, the study of the concept of female beauty from the diachronic perspective enables us to trace its continual evolution, mirroring broader cultural, historical, and social dynamics, the impact of which is verbalised in British literature by means of the English language.

In this research, the development of the verbalisation of the concept of female beauty is traced within four literary periods, namely the Renaissance, the Victorian era, Modernism and Postmodernism. This paper analyses the language means, employed to verbalise the concept of female beauty, drawing across each period, including Shakespeare’s plays and sonnets, Charlotte Brontë’s, Emily Brontë’s, Ian McEwan’s novels, and Katherine Mansfield’s short stories. The analysis of the verbalisation of female beauty across four distinct literary periods has yielded several significant results.

During the Renaissance period, the representation of female beauty was predominantly focused on physical appearance, aligning with the era’s idealisation of femininity. Shakespeare’s works, such as his plays and sonnets, often used absolute adjectives (*perfect, peerless, etc.*), superlatives (*the fairest, the most precious, etc.*) and comparisons to natural and divine supernatural phenomena to describe women, likening them to *the sun, flowers, pieces of art (jewels, music)*, goddesses and other forces. Despite the prevalent emphasis on idealised physical beauty, Shakespeare introduced a more realistic portrayal of women in works like Sonnet 130, where he humorously dismisses exaggerated comparisons and appreciates his mistress’s true form, offering a fresh perspective on female beauty. Nevertheless, the spectrum of

inner virtues as a manifestation of female beauty was relatively narrow, primarily associated with virginity, employing the allegory of a virgin maiden and traditional social roles such as daughter, wife, and mother (*true, faithful, wise, virtuous, etc.*)

Moving into the Victorian era, the depiction of female beauty, just the same as in the Renaissance, continued to emphasise physical appearance but, contrastingly, began to incorporate inner virtues more prominently. In novels like “Jane Eyre”, “Wuthering Heights”, and “Middlemarch”, female characters were often judged by their adherence to strict standards of physical beauty and behaviour. Appearances, described as *exquisite, admirable, graceful, elegant, delicate, soft*, as means of verbalisation of the prevailing beauty standards of that period, in combination with proper manners and specific education for women, were societally encouraged. Victorian writers started challenging these ideals, representing them as *simplistic* and *sexist*. By portraying characters like Jane Eyre, who embodied strength, resilience, and character depth, verbalised as mental life, this era marked a shift towards valuing inner virtues over mere physical appearance, with a growing emphasis on individual character and moral richness.

The Modernist and Postmodernist periods introduced groundbreaking ideas regarding female beauty, reflecting more contemporary views. Works such as Ian McEwan’s “Atonement”, Virginia Woolf’s “Mrs Dalloway” and Katherine Mansfield’s short stories depicted beauty as multifaceted and complex, exploring themes of female sexuality, inner struggles, personal autonomy, educational prospects. Modernism and Postmodernism marked the departure from traditional beauty standards, seeing *strange* and *extraordinary* features as attractive and captivating. True women’s allure is in her *power, gift, personality*, as verbalised in “Mrs Dalloway” “Atonement”. Characters like Cecilia in Ian McEwan’s “Atonement” challenged conventional expectations and embraced personal autonomy, underscoring the Modernist and Postmodernist emphasis on individuality and self-expression.

In conclusion, this analysis demonstrates how literature not only reflects but also shapes societal attitudes towards female beauty, providing a deeper understanding of cultural ideals and perceptions through different historical periods. As for the

perspectives of this topic, it can be further studied, referring to other sources and materials, namely films, social websites, blogs, etc., expanding the spectrum of the aspects that contribute to the concept of female beauty or exploring its verbalisation during different historical period.

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SUMMARY

На сучасному етапі розвитку лінгвістичних досліджень особлива увага акцентується на розгляді мови в контексті її взаємодії з людським мисленням та свідомістю, що сприяло виникненню такого терміну у когнітивній лінгвістиці як концепт. В ході дослідження цієї взаємодії вже був ретельно вивчений та проаналізований величезний спектр концептів, оскільки вони є ключовими в розумінні культурних, історичних та соціальних контекстів слів певної мови, а отже і нації. Одним із таких концептів є концепт краси, зокрема жіночої. В його вербалізації виявляються не лише естетичні уподобання, але й глибокі культурні та соціальні норми, структури влади та інші феномени всередині певної культури, а діахронічний аналіз таких явищ дозволяє відстежувати зміни протягом різних епох, що і визначає актуальність даного дослідження.

Об'єктом дослідження є концепт жіночої краси, особливо в межах британської культури. Предметом дослідження є мовні засоби вербалізації концепту жіночої краси з перспективи історичного розвитку британської літератури протягом обраних літературних періодів.

Метою роботи є дослідження концепту жіночої краси в контексті діахронічних змін в британській літературі та проведення лінгвістичного аналізу її вербалізації в британській літературі протягом обраних літературних періодів.

У межах дослідження було необхідно дослідити сам концепт як об'єкт лінгвістичних досліджень, його сутність, структуру та функціонування в людській свідомості, мові та всій культурі. Дефініції концепту, наведені в цій роботі, базуються на численних лінгвістичних працях, написаних на цю тему та аналізах, які з них випливають.

За своєю сутністю концепт втілює окрему ментальну конструкцію, яка служить фундаментальним елементом і показує структуровану внутрішню організацію, відображаючи когнітивні процеси індивідів, соціумів або навіть цілих націй. Концепти охоплюють комплексне розуміння предмета або явища, які вони представляють, разом із колективним тлумаченням громадської свідомості та спільного ставлення до нього, що відображається у мові.

Концептосфера, тобто упорядкована сукупністю концептів у людській свідомості в межах певної культури, відіграє важливу роль у формуванні сприйняття різних аспектів свого повсякденного життя. Закорінені в мові, вони служать фундаментальними блоками пам'яті та когніції, висвітлюючи складну взаємодію між мовою, когнітивними процесами та культурними сприйняттями через комплексне дослідження лінгвістичного аналізу. В дослідженні було виокремлено два визначення поняття “концепт”, найбільш відповідні для дослідження, в яких концепт розглядається як ментальна конструкція, так званий “згусток”, або як результат людської діяльності. З одного боку, концепти є характерними своєю абстрактною природою, що допомагає категоризувати й організувати знання про певну культуру. З іншого боку, концепти є динамічними, вони постійно змінюються, вдосконалюються та примножуються під впливом людської діяльності та взаємодії людей з оточенням.

Перший розділ містить детальний огляд лінгвістичних досліджень концепту, концепту краси, зокрема жіночої, включаючи його складові та фактори, що вплинули на його розвиток, особливо в британській культурі. У контексті британської культури вивчення концепту жіночої краси з діахронічної перспективи дозволяє нам відстежувати його еволюцію, відображаючи широкі культурні, історичні та соціальні динаміки, вплив яких вербалізується в британській літературі за допомогою засобів англійської мови, чому присвячений другий розділ цього дослідження. Аналіз розвитку вербалізації концепту жіночої краси відстежується протягом чотирьох літературних періодів, а саме ренесансу, вікторіанської епохи, модернізму та постмодернізму. У цій роботі аналізуються засоби мови, які використовуються для вербалізації концепту жіночої краси протягом кожного обраного періоду, Ілюстративні матеріали базуються на п'єсах та сонетах Вільяма Шекспіра, романах Шарлотти Бронте, Емілі Бронте, Джордж Еліот, Вірджинії Вульф, Ієна Мак'юена та оповіданнях Кетрін Менсфілд.

Аналіз вербалізації жіночої краси протягом чотирьох різних літературних періодів приніс кілька значущих результатів. Протягом епохи Відродження

зображення жіночої краси було переважно спрямоване на фізичний вигляд, ідеалізуючи жіночність як головний стандарт краси епохи, що вербалізується абсолютними прикметниками, найвищими ступенями порівняння прикметників та прислівників (*the fairest, the most precious etc.*), порівняннями з природними явищами (*the sun, flower etc.*), витворами мистецтва (*jewel, music etc.*) чи божественними силами (*a cherubin, an angel etc.*) метафорами (*roses in [her] lips and cheeks*) тощо. Спектр внутрішніх якостей, на відміну від зовнішніх, був відносно вузьким, головним чином асоційованим з традиційними соціальними ролями жінки, такими як донька, дружина, мати тощо. У вікторіанську епоху зображення жіночої краси продовжило фокусуватись на належному зовнішньому вигляді, манерах і поведінці, що було вербалізовано словами, які створюють образ елегантності, делікатності, витонченості тощо (*beautiful, exquisite, admirable, graceful, elegant, distinguished*). На відміну від періоду Відродження, жіночі персонажі почали втілювати силу, стійкість і глибину характеру. Періоди модернізму та постмодернізму внесли нові ідеї стосовно жіночої краси, зображуючи її як багатогранну і складну, досліджуючи теми жіночої сексуальності, ідентичності, внутрішньої боротьби, автономії, можливостей. Це, відповідно, вербалізується і в описах жіночої краси, яка стає більш багатогранною, а привабливість жінки розкривається в її унікальних рисах (*extraordinary, strange beauty*).

Робота містить вступ, два розділи з висновками, загальні висновки, список літератури, список лексикографічних матеріалів, список ілюстративних матеріалів та анотацію.

Перспективу подальших наукових розвідок складає поглиблення дослідження концепту краси в межах британської культури й не тільки, та її вербалізації, звертаючись до інших джерел і матеріалів, таких як фільми, соціальні мережі, блоги тощо, розширюючи спектр аспектів, що формують концепт жіночої краси, або досліджуючи його вербалізацію в різні історичні періоди.