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Section A



FEMALE CHARACTERS' RELATIONSHIP TOWARD THEIR BEAUTY IN LITERARY WORKS

Valentina Nikolovska*

University St. Kliment Ohridski in Bitola, North Macedonia
E-mail: valentina.nikolovska@uklo.edu.mk

Violeta Januseva

University St. Kliment Ohridski in Bitola, North Macedonia
E-mail: violeta.janusheva@uklo.edu.mk

Marija Talevska

Bitola, North Macedonia
E-mail: m.talevska1@yahoo.com

Abstract

The research question in this paper is related to the way female characters are described in the literary works of foreign and domestic famous authors with the aim to showcase their relation with the beauty specifically personal, self perceived beauty, and their differences and similarities. Sampled are 11 female characters from different time periods, starting from ancient times to the present day. The analysis rests on the actantial model and on the qualitative content analysis in which the coding is the base. Five categories of female characters, i.e. women who treat their personal beauty in a different way are distinguished: women who perceive themselves as unmatched beauties or who are vain or narcissistic in the world, then there are the opposite types of narcissists, those beauties who remain indifferent to their own beauty, then women who fear their beauty, cold beauties and finally, those whose beauty is untouched by time.

Keywords: qualities, beauty, beauty characters, narcissism, indifference.

INTRODUCTION

Women are and were object of inexhaustible inspiration in many literary works. The female's world is a story for itself. The beautiful and gentle woman is a wonderful creation of the nature. She is predestined for reproduction and saving the humankind. She is a symbol of braveness, she is the pole of the family, and she is the warmth of the home. Many authors

describe her external specific features, and admire her unusual beauty. Others narrate her inner particular aspects. There are also creators who find the beauty of the woman in her soul.

Everyone is familiar with Elena and Antigone from the ancient literature. The first ennobles with her external beauty in front of which no man stands indifferently, and the second exalts with her character. She opposes the king and buries her brother motivated by the family and the gods. She is not afraid for her own life in any moment, and she sacrifices in the name of the family values. Who cannot value such a woman?

Many famous authors express ideas on the woman's beauty. For instance, Shakespeare praises the woman's beauty and grace: "She is speaking, yet telling nothing." "The years cannot whiter her eternal attractiveness, neither her charm." Shakespeare respects the woman completely: "I draw the following doctrine from the women's eyes: They are the base, the books, and the academia from where the real Prometheus fire springs."

Taking into account that with their beautifulness and elegance, women are constantly motivating authors, the present paper deals with the various points of views of some female characters in the literary work of famous authors from the ancient times until nowadays. The aim of the paper is to indicate their association with their beauty and demonstrate their distinctive nature and their resemblances. Thus, 11 female characters are sampled and analyzed through the lens of the actantial model and the qualitative content analysis.

BROADER RESEARCH CONTEXT

Worldwide there is a substantial body of research exploiting the female characters in fiction from various points of view.

Forshey (2008) scrutinizes the female characters of Ibsen's play regarding the topic of captivity which includes all forms of mental and emotional bondage to an outside entity. She also indicates that these characters have misconstrued identity leading to a lack of understanding or belief in themselves. Exploiting Beauvoir's observations, Dwomoh (2013) explores Hemingway's depiction of five women in a single novel and she states that the female characters are perceived as the others, which assume their subordinate roles. Kwatsha (2015) portrays women characters in the works of many African women authors and presents that the female characters are depicted as strong, resistant, and independent, and as characters who are not a passive receivers of the patriarchic norms. Bryndová (2016) analyzes the representations of women's narrative in Carter's fiction who focuses on criticism of stereotypes established in western cultures. She demonstrates that Carter's heroines are individual women who are searching for their identity. Bot (2020) investigates three female characters from the work of Alcott, Harper Lee and Sommers) and showcases aspects of their physical appearance, mannerism/behavior, and aspirations. She concludes that these gender bending characters have strong influence upon the readers. Amro (2021) argues the stereotypical readings of women's depictions in medieval literature as presented in Beowulf, Cynewulf's Juliana, and sir Gawain and the green knight, and provides a deeper understanding of these women's roles within the cultural and historical contexts of these literary works. Cai (2022) analyses the female consciousness and female image in British and American literature and unveils the female's rebellious spirits, their awakening and their social status. Chen, Liu, & Shi (2023) describe the influence of western feminism on Chinese feminist literature in the 1980s and claim that the western literature reinforces the women's submissiveness while the Chinese is marked by the women's democracy and liberation. Keying (2024) examines the female characters in

Hemingway's work and states that in his work, female character are depicted in rich and different ways and that they have independent social status. He further notices that Hemingway delves into women's inner world and portrays their tenacity and bravery. Using critical analysis, Shanmuga Velu (2024) explores the restrictive roles assigned to women in the Victorian period, stressing out their struggles and accomplishment. Sharma & Sharma (2024) survey the woman's resilience and empowerment in work of Walker and demonstrate the transformation of the main protagonist from subjugation to independence, reflecting themes of consciousness and liberation. They further display the struggle of the Black women in a racist and sexist society. Mangarin & Bungabong (2024) explore the women's trait in four Philippine masterpieces and find out that women are depicted as resilient and strong, that they have moral integrity and courage, they advocate for social changes, they are wise, intelligent, loyal, and loving. Roy (2024) shows the nuanced roles of the women in the Shakespeare's tragedies and emphasizes the way in which the female characters navigate power, agency, and rebellion within the patriarchal context. Khan (2024) reveals that women in Shakespeare's tragedies are often portrayed as victims of male ambition and jealousy, while women in his comedies are depicted as witty, intelligent, and independent.

METHODOLOGY

The present research seeks to find out the various ways in which the famous female characters are portrayed in the literary works of foreign and domestic authors, and the aim is demonstrate their association with their own self perceived beauty, their contrasts and resemblances. The characters are considered to possess extraordinary female beauty, i.e. they are characters – beauties, and their beauty is a gift from god or rare beauty. The authors are chosen due to the fact that they are masters of narration and they delve into the depth of the woman's emotion and the woman's psychological features.

Sampled are 11 female characters, i.e. the description of their beauty from different time period, from ancient times to nowadays. This sample is purposeful which is in accordance with the attitude of Lincoln & Guba (1985) who claim that each sample is collected with a certain goal. Further, the sample is based on data in textual form which is in accordance with Yin (2011) who states that data in textual form can be seen as a sample. Furthermore, this sample is, in fact, a type of corpus Do It Yourself, which according to Hardie (2016) allows tailoring the data to suit the researcher's need.

The analysis of the data rests on the actantial model introduced by Greimas (1978) and further developed by Ibersfeld (1982) which is used to analyze thematized action, particularly those depicted in literary texts. The analysis considers the qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2014) in which the coding is the base.

RESULTS, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

As a result of the coding process, five categories of female characters emerge.

In the first category, named as beauties with strongly pronounced self-admiration (narcissism), with special attention and psychological excerpts, the characters of the Beloved from the oldest and most beautiful song *Pesna nad pesnite* [Song of Songs] and the Queen from the most popular and widely read fairy tale of all time Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs are portrayed. Those facts that reveal the named characters' attitudes toward their own beauty in

terms of self-admiration are pointed out. For the first character, the Beloved, this is in a discrete form, while for the second, the Queen, it is in the most pronounced form, bordering on madness.

In the second category of beauties with an innate indifference to their own beauty, the characters of Remedios Moscote from Márquez's novel *Sto godini samotija* [One Hundred Years of Solitude], Elena from Chekhov's play *Vujko Vanja* [Uncle Vanya], and Tatiana Larina from Pushkin's first novel in verse *Evgenij Onegin* [Eugene Onegin] are analyzed.

The third category consists of beauties who have a fear of their own beauty. These are characters who change the course of events in their own lives and in the lives of all their entire surroundings, such as Cveta and Kalesh Angja from Macedonian literature, then Katinka from the short story *Patot na Alija Gjergelez* [The Path of Alia Gjerzelez] by the Nobel laureate Ivo Andrić. Even though these women do nothing regarding their beauty, meaning they do not emphasize it, their natural beauty is so powerful that they themselves fear it and its influence.

A less common example is the category of beauties with a cold beauty, which is the fourth category where the primacy belongs to Gerda from the novel *Budenbrokovi* [The Buddenbrooks] by Thomas Mann. This character is particularly intriguing for research and psychological analysis, because Gerda's cold inner energy destroys everything beautiful, including her own physical beauty, and ultimately she is indirectly responsible for the downfall of the Buddenbrooks family.

In contrast to this category, the paper also explores the category of characters – beauties who possess more qualities that make them more beautiful with age. These are strong, courageous women with powerful beauty who manage to maintain both physical beauty and spiritual strength in a wonderful balance as they age. From contemporary Macedonian literature, such a character is Dosta Rozhdenkata from the novel *Krpen zhivot* [Patched Life] by Stale Popov and from world literature, the character of Irene from John Galsworthy's novel *Sagata na Forsajtovi* [The Forsyte Saga].

STRONG EMPHASIZED VANITY (NARCISSISM)

Beauty, which has evolved from human necessity, has not changed much except that it has become more essential for the survival of humans and the entire human race from ancient times, from the period of the creation of the *Song of Songs* to modern aesthetic medicine. Self-admiration is an ancient theme. In the most beautiful and oldest poem, *Song of Songs*, a type of woman, the Beloved, is subtly introduced. She is flattered by the compliments of the Lover, and for each of his beautiful words, she responds with even more attention, wanting to hear once again how special she is. However, all of this seems to be within the bounds of a seemingly romantic infatuation, and the reader cannot immediately recognize the woman's need to be special. In these verses, self-admiration intertwines with the veil of love, which comes to the forefront.

Beloved: I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys!

Beloved: As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

Beloved: As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.

His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.

Beloved: I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please (Holy Bible 2006, 687).

If we analyze vertically one of the oldest and most popular stories of all time (actantial analysis), we come to the conclusion that the queen obsessively desires to be the most beautiful. Her desire exceeds the limits of reasonable behavior. This obsessive desire is the driving force or motivation that determines the subsequent action of the fairy tale. To achieve her goal, she plans to murder Snow White, who, according to the magic mirror, is more beautiful than she is. Everything encountered after the character of the wicked queen in the pages of prose and dramatic works is an innocent game. The wicked queen holds a primacy in the group of women with strongly pronounced self-admiration (narcissism).

INDIFFERENCE TOWARDS ONE'S OWN BEAUTY

The opposite of narcissism is indifference to one's beauty. Remedios Moscote, "a beautiful girl with a lily-white complexion and green eyes, graceful and well-mannered", (Marquez, 2000) is an episodic character in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (Marquez), who is gifted by God with unprecedented beauty. She shows total indifference, and this only drives men who desperately desire her even more mad. One of those men is Aureliano, about whom Marquez says: "There was peace for everyone, except for Aureliano. The image of Remedios, the chief's youngest daughter, who by her age could have been his daughter, remained like a painful wound in one place of his body. It was a physical feeling that even interfered with his walking, like a pebble in his shoe" (Marquez, 2000).

The group of female characters who treat their beauty with indifference include traditionally educated women such as Elena from *Uncle Vanya* (Chekhov) and Tatiana, a character from the first verse novel *Eugene Onegin* (Pushkin). If they were different types of women, they they might have found the courage to challenge the stereotypical environment and the belief that personal feelings are to be suppressed for the sake of the happiness of their surroundings, rather than for the happiness of their own children, whom they do not have. These characters seem to become indifferent not only to their own beauty but also to the intensity of their own feelings; they become everything except themselves. They become "lukewarm" toward both their beauty and their emotions, thereby losing their own sense of self. They are antipodes in physical appearance – Elena is a blonde beauty with large eyes, while Tatiana Larina is a beauty with long, amber-colored hair and brown eyes with the grace of a fawn. However, they are equivalent in their way of thinking; they exemplify traditionally raised Russian women who sacrifice themselves for the honor of their families.

WOMEN WHO FEAR THEIR OWN BEAUTY

In literature, it is not uncommon to encounter female characters, beauties, who are afraid of themselves or their own beauty. Initially, this seems paradoxical, but there are historical facts that support this statement. These are strikingly beautiful women living in oppressed or extremely undemocratic countries. Such is the case with our Veta (Chernodrinski) and Kalesh Andja (Stale Popov). The beauty of these two heroines alters the course of their lives and the lives of their families and broader surroundings. Both live in fear and anxiety, trying to conceal their beauty from the enemy, the Turk, but this is in vain. This is beauty that awakens Eros, who,

as a driving force, prompts Osman Bey (*Makedonska krvava svadba – Macedonian Blood Wedding*) and the Kadi (*Kalesh Angja*) to resort to abduction. In these identical cases, which are not unique in Macedonian literary creation and were even more numerous in our historical past, the authors depict beauty with particular fervor, offering detailed descriptions of black eyebrows like leeches, rosy cheeks, full lips, firm breasts, and slender waists. These are attributes that could not go unnoticed by the Turk, the enemy, despite the modesty of the girls who, at no point, appear as emitters of non-verbal signs with a conative function; on the contrary, they try to prevent their beauty from being highlighted.

Both Osman Bey and Kadi are subjects with their own predicates and objects. In other words, they have a clearly articulated action and specific goals. However, their goals will not be achieved because strong opponents come into sight as expressed through the language of actantial analysis, form conflict triangles. In *Macedonian Blood Wedding* that opponent is Spase, and in *Kalesh Angja*, it is Stojan Ristev. Spase and Cveta are in love, and their love is blessed by their families. The father is tolerant of his daughter's wishes. Here, the plot has patriotic implications. Osman Bey abducts a beautiful Christian woman (Cveta). After the abduction, comes the act of rescue, i.e., liberation. Osman the Bey is not just a personal enemy but also a national enemy.

With *Macedonian Blood Wedding* Chernodrinski masterfully crafts a narrative, managing to organize a Macedonian national theater on foreign soil through what appears to be a “naive love story” and successfully deceives the censors with a complete patriotic engagement.

Chernodrinski and Stale Popov, through the characters of the beauties Cveta and Kalesh Andja, have painted the characteristics of strong Macedonian women throughout the ages, who were proud of their beauty and identity, their faith, and who withstood pressure and did not succumb to the opulence of life. These are characters who do not have a mercantile value as commodities for sale, but rather a higher category of human existence where dignity and consistency are paramount. This is a category worth living for, and if necessary, worth dying for. Cveta dies for Spase (meaning Savior), but also for her family, and the family, not only for Chernodrinski and his followers but generally in our history and especially in tradition, functions as a synecdoche for the homeland – Macedonia.

Kalesh Angja and Cveta can be considered synonymous characters according to the terminology of Mladenoski (2014): “Synonyms are two (or more) characters whose semantic structures overlap to a certain degree, i.e., those with a greater number of shared features. The degree of synonymy will depend on the quantity and quality of the shared features (identical labels/attributes). This will be observed both at the level of qualities (properties) and at the level of predicates (actions). The analysis should determine the degree of interference (overlap) of the semantic composites of the two characters.”

When it comes to the term ‘features’, these are meaningful units that define the character, marking its qualities. They are structural narrative elements that, step by step, create an image of the character for the reader. The more semes a character structure contains, the clearer the image that the reader reconstructs for that character (Mladenoski, 2014).

Many beauties in the stories of Andrić hide their eyes from curious passers-by, tie up their hair, and quicken their pace. And this, to spite their adversaries, makes them even more beautiful, even more desirable. One such character is Katinka in the story *The Path of Alia Gjerzelez*. There was always talk about this beauty, songs were sung about her, yet she didn’t know what to do with herself and her beauty. Before Katinka’s extraordinary beauty, even the powerful and strong Alija Gjerzelez is left confused. Here is the moment of his reaction when he

sees her for the first time: "He looked at her for a moment, standing with his legs apart and squinting a little at his right eye, then he laughed softly and, spreading his arms and almost jumping, moved towards her" (Andrić, 1966). Before such a reaction, Katinka just closes the front door and locks it. After this encounter, Alija Gjerzelez completely changes his way of thinking and living. The only thing that occupies his mind is the thought of Katinka; he constantly inquires about her, fantasizes about her, and is obsessed with her. Every day he comes to the halva shop opposite Katinka's house, hoping to catch even a glimpse of her.

"Katinka was the daughter of Andrija Poljash, unhappy because of her beauty, about which songs were sung throughout Bosnia. People knocked on their house because of her. She was never allowed to go out. On holidays, they took her in the early dawn to mass in Latinluk, wrapped in a bundle like a Turkish woman, so she wouldn't be recognized... she often cried all day long, not knowing what to do with her life and her cursed beauty. She cursed herself, biting her lips and struggling in vain, in her great innocence, to discover what was so 'shameless and Turkish' about her that drove men mad and made soldiers and bailiffs circle around their house, and why she had to hide and be ashamed, while her family lived in fear. And every day, she became more beautiful" (Andrić, 1966). It can be said that she was not 'afraid of' her beauty, but she was deeply unhappy because of it and she couldn't even comprehend it. And all of this is primarily instigated by the overwhelming attention her physical appearance provoked in male individuals.

CHARACTERS OF WOMEN WITH COLD BEAUTY

In literature, there are characters of women with cold beauty. One such character is Gerda, a beautiful woman, but her beauty is cold, bringing misfortune to her family, her husband, and her children. This character was created by Thomas Mann in his novel *Buddenbrooks*. Here is how Consul Thomas Buddenbrook describes his future wife in a letter to his mother:

"Gerda, I met her again: tall, well-built, beautiful... I made my decision that very day: this one or no one else, now or never! (Mann, 2013). A few pages later, in the first volume, the author depicts Gerda like this:

"That twenty-seven-year-old girl was marked by elegant, exotic, mysterious beauty that attracted attention: lush dark red hair, brown eyes... her face was matte white and slightly haughty, but it hid when the consul's wife warmly clasped her head with her hands and kissed her on the forehead, white as snow and flawless..." This beauty behaves coldly toward her surroundings and toward her own beauty. Her constant nervousness and forced politeness toward those around her, combined with her strange living habits, bring misfortune to her and everything around her.

Thomas Mann completely confirms the downfall of the Buddenbrooks family with Gerda's departure to Amsterdam. It seems as he wants to emphasize the power of a woman in the rise or fall of a family. In this way, the author's cleverness points to the source of a woman's inner beauty, which is life energy, positive thought, without which external beauty cannot endure. It cannot be sustained and cannot be productive, neither for the family nor for the wider environment. External beauty cannot survive without internal spiritual beauty and strength, and the best example of this is Gerda. All the wealth and luxury are in vain when a woman doesn't know how to enjoy a beautiful sunny morning or a lovely day, when she doesn't know how to offer a kind word, a smile to those she loves, or words of comfort to those who need it. Instead,

the beautiful, cold Gerda chooses something else entirely. Instead of the sun, she chooses darkness:

“She hated outings like this one today, especially in the summer, and on a Sunday, no less. She, who kept her rooms in semi-darkness, with most of the curtains drawn, rarely went out. She feared the sun, the dust, the festive clothes of the bourgeois, the smell of coffee, beer, and cigarette smoke... and besides, she hated being disturbed by people...” (Mann, 2013). This character’s affinity for darkness rather than the sun brings darkness – it brings the death of her husband, her son...

CHARACTERS OF WOMEN WHO BECOME MORE BEAUTIFUL WITH AGE

In both local and world literature, it is not uncommon to encounter female characters who grow more beautiful as the years go by. One such character is Irene, from *The Forsythe Saga*, a woman with powerful beauty, who is driven by the motivational force of the so-called ‘addressor’ that generates her actions or predicates, granting her a status of being without alternative. She resonates with this heavenly motivational force and manages to reach the apex of happiness – the eternal longing of the beautiful woman, from *Song of Songs*, for all time. This heavenly motivational force is so intense that it enables the beautiful Irene to endure ten years of a love ordeal and to stand before the man worthy of her boundless love, the younger Jolyon. He embraces her and feels the trembling warmth of her lips, unvisited for ten years. If they were married in Roman times, she would surely have joyfully recited the solemn bride’s vow before the magistrate: *Ubi tu Gaius, ego Gaia* (I will be your faithful wife forever, a devoted mother to our children, a good companion, and a sincere friend). One year later, Irene gave birth to Jolyon’s son. They named him John. Little John admired his mother’s beauty:

“As he ate jam under the old oak, he noticed things about his mother that he had never noticed before. Her cheeks, for example, were milky white, and in her red-gold hair, there were silver strands... this new beauty of his mother had a special importance, so much so that he ate less than he thought he would” (Galsworthy, 2014). Irene was just beauty in the world of this little child, one day he looked into her beautiful dark brown eyes and said that she was very beautiful. The mother defended herself that she was no longer young and that she had the first wrinkles around her eyes and that she had entered her fourth decade. The son born with love replied to her that wrinkles are sun rays on her face. The father observed the mother and son from a certain distance and thanked God for blessing him with a good wife, who was more and more beautiful with age.

Irene was the embodiment of beauty in the eyes of this little child. One day, gazing into her beautiful dark brown eyes, he told her she was very beautiful. His mother, smiling, defended herself, saying that she was no longer young, that she had the first wrinkles around her eyes, and that she was entering her forties. The little boy, born out of love, lovingly responded that the wrinkles were not wrinkles but rays of sunshine. The father, watching from a distance, observed the mother and son, and thanked God for blessing him with a good wife, whose beauty the years had not managed to touch.

Irene was always dressed with special taste, wearing French-style clothing, and her dresses blended with the ideal contours of her extraordinary beauty. Like Andrić, Galsworthy creates a unique poetics of Aphrodite-like forms through clothing, achieving this through synecdoche.

In contemporary Macedonian literature, the character of Dosta Rozhdenkata (from the novel *Patched Life*) can, by many qualities, be placed in the category of female characters who become more beautiful with age. Dosta is a woman who has managed to maintain a miraculous balance between physical beauty and inner strength. She is a fighter, guided by the motivational heavenly force of the addressor, who does not give up at the first obstacles she encounters. After her husband's death, she manages to reach Ilko, with whom she achieves the pinnacle of happiness. Stale Popov describes Dosta's physical beauty like this:

"Dosta's face is white and ruddy, kalesha, as they say. But not black. Black eyes, black eyebrows, black hair, pale face, small white teeth, swollen reddish lips, straight nose, small ears, a graceful neck... All of it – even more beautiful than Our Lady! Ilko tells himself. And her figure? Tall as a rifle, chest thrust forward, slender waist, long legs, shapely arms, clean nails, washed and neat as if before a man, as the Mariovo people would say" (Popov, 2000).

The years do not manage to touch Dosta's beauty. Not only do they fail to diminish it, but one could say they enhance her femininity, about which all of Mariovo spoke: "After the birth of Neshka, her face cleared up and became even whiter than it was, her eyes sparkled like lightning, her hair was neatly arranged, and her loosened curls, like silk, covered her ears!... And she knew how to carry herself like the devil! She only looked straight ahead, never looking at anyone unless necessary and never talking without need."

Her determined character, her persistence, and her refusal to conform to the crowd that thought differently from her, is the main 'culprit' for her physical appearance – a woman people talk about, a woman before whom no one is indifferent. Some envy her, while others admire her: "Conversations about Dosta are frequent, comparing her with other brides and girls, with compliments being exchanged – some decent, others exaggerated, as is the Mariovo way. Some even reached Ilko's ears, but he was secure, knowing Dosta was well-placed, he loved her, and she loved him, so there was no need for worry."

The years passed for Ilko and Dosta; their love endured, their beauty endured. Stale Popov masterfully, yet subtly, shows this in the final page of the novel: "Well, Docko! Patched life, but here we are, even with patched, we managed better than with new. May your son-in-law and daughter live long, so you can boast of them!"

CONCLUSION

Throughout the literary pages, we encounter different profiles of beautiful women who react differently to their powerful external appearance – ranging from those obsessed with their beauty or narcissistic, through indifferent ones, to women who fear their own beauty, women with cold beauty, and those who become more beautiful with age or whose beauty remains untouched by time. Based on the analysis of these traits, we come to the conclusion about the negative consequences that obsession with one's own beauty can bring not only to literary characters but also to real-life situations.

Beauty is a sense of aesthetics that does not abandon a person over time. The search for this feeling continues today, with countless beauty salons, countless aesthetic procedures, all of which turn into a form of tyranny. In this sense, we can speak of tyranny over beauty but also the tyranny of the desire for beauty over the individual, their lifestyle, and psyche. Each era has its own ideal of beauty, and trends change within certain time frames. Looking through history, at one time fuller women were in fashion, then extremely thin women, followed by women with curves, and so on. Chasing what is trendy in beauty is an irrational act, and in doing so, the

objective nature of beauty is lost. Beauty lies in individuality, in diversity, or uniqueness. Attention should be paid to some other internal aspects of beauty, such as:

- Emotional beauty (shows how mature and stable a person is, and interacting with a stable and mature person, both professionally and personally, is an honor and pleasure for every individual);
- Mental beauty (the level of culture within a person, as well as their intellectual abilities, capacities, and creative skills);
- Character beauty (the integrity of a person, their ability to be consistent, self-reliant, and independent).

The comparison between Irene from *The Forsyte Saga* by John Galsworthy and Gerda from *Buddenbrooks* by Thomas Mann leads to the conclusion that Irene's beauty does not negatively impact her character. In fact, it subtly enhances her behavior towards others, who recognize and admire the wholeness of her beauty and soul. On the other hand, Gerda's beauty negatively affects her character and behavior. As we have seen, she becomes cold and reserved, and this behavior brings only destruction and downfall—both personal and familial.

In general, from all the analyzed life stories of women described as beautiful, we can conclude that a woman's beauty can lead to diametrically opposite outcomes in her life. It can be a blessing and a privilege or a curse and a problem for both the woman and her surroundings. On the other hand, a woman's beauty often does not align with the quality of her personality or mental capacity. Some women believe that the beauty God has given them is enough for them to have everything they desire, and they do not need to make an effort or possess other positive traits and human qualities. Without intellect, such individuals end up being ridiculous instead of dominant and, rather than inspiring admiration, they become objects of ridicule.

Neither beauty nor wealth, nor the combination of both, can replace or compensate for intellectual abilities, capacities, and skills.

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