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**REPRESENTING COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE IN THE ENGLISH NOVEL
1780-1860**

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

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V Praze dne

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Introduction

Within the context of the 18th and 19th century English society, the subjects of courtship, love and marriage form a very complex issue interconnected with the whole range of ideas and ideologies present in the then society. Since a family was perceived as a key unit of the whole nation, the questions concerning marriage and matrimony generally evoked a great amount of interest. They were frequently discussed in relation to the subjects of female education, property rights, job opportunities and women's social status in general. This tendency may be traced in various conduct books, pamphlets and also in the fiction written at that time. In many areas of life, in all social circles and with various perspectives upon the problem, the themes of courtship and love run like a red thread through the 18th and 19th century literature with unusual urgency.

To narrow the scope of the topic, this thesis is to focus on the development of this matter from 1780 till 1860 in four English novels written by women of this period. The literary works scrutinised in the thesis include: *Evelina* (1778) by Fanny Burney, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) by Jane Austen, *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Brontë, and *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) by George Eliot. By researching these novels in detail and exploring them with regard to both then and contemporary secondary literature, this thesis should achieve to describe how the authoresses play with the traditional discourse. It also aims to scrutinise in what way social changes are reflected in the depiction of love relationships, whether there is a shift in perception of courtship and marriage, what becomes different about the position of women in the process of courting, and what motifs, values and characteristics become prominent in describing the topics of wooing and matrimony.

The period of this research was not chosen accidentally. The end of the 18th century witnessed the birth of feminism and systematic interest in female issues. The post French Revolution society went through a series of social changes resulting in new citizenship rights given to middle-class men, and as Barbara Caine explains: "Feminism arose out of the tensions created by the fact that the political and economic freedoms demanded and gained by men during this period were actively denied to women."¹ The eighteen-twenties gave rise to many public female organizations forming around philanthropist and abolitionist groups. Twenty years later, with the spreading influence of evangelical movement, the idea of a woman as a protector of her domestic realm against moral depravity shifted the position of

¹ Barbara Caine, *English Feminism 1780-1980* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1997) 11

women in society and was even called ‘woman’s mission’.² This tendency in perception of the female question tried to link the importance of fulfilling women’s domestic duties with their broader impact on the state of the whole society. This concept shaped also the literary depiction of women and was most famously represented in Coventry Patmore’s collection of poems bearing the title *The Angel in the House* (1854). Witnessing all these transformations of the gender code, this period offers a very interesting collection of ideas and opinions concerning the chosen subject and many other feminist topics.

Similarly, the choice of authors and books explored in this thesis results from the effort to provide a unique and precise perspective of this issue. The female novelists mentioned above approached the topics of love and matrimony from various angles and their representations differ in many aspects. However, at the same time, their novels demonstrate a new fascinating shift in the matter as their critical and sometimes even satirical comments challenge the deeply rooted conventions concerning courtship and marriage. Hence, their fiction contributes significantly to the then courtship and marriage discourse, responds to it and sometimes even subverts it. Besides, the specifically female viewpoint enables a valuable insight into female psychology and emotions and their effects on the process of courting. As Shirley Foster notices: “Women, it was argued, wrote best about what they knew best; [...] the most obvious fictional material is the treatment of emotions, within a domestic context.”³ The literary works are selected in order to represent the development of certain prominent motifs such as the concepts of a mentor-lover, seduction, incestuous love, elopement, and love as a power-game, unrequited love, and many others. All those themes can be analysed in comparison since they are present in a certain degree within each of the chosen texts. To provide a background for this subject-area, the commentary of 18th and 19th century conduct books and pamphlets will be included and discussed together with the contemporary considerations about the matter.

The structure of the thesis is subdivided into five chapters, this introduction being the first of them. The following section called ‘Being on the Marriage Market’ explores various aspects influencing women’s status as being marriageable. This chapter consists of two subchapters scrutinising first the family background and its role in a ‘husband chase,’ then character of female protagonists, their education and appearance. All these themes contribute to the understanding of the position of women in courting and their simultaneously desired and resisted wish to be married.

² Caine 84

³ Shirley Foster, *Victorian women's fiction: marriage, freedom, and the individual* (Worcester: Billing&Sons Limited, 1985) 1-2

The third chapter focuses already on the topic of courtship itself. It deals with various kinds of courtship distinguishing between courtship as knowledge, courtship as physical attraction, courtship as personal affection and rejected courtship. Within these subsections, many themes and motifs will be addressed including the concepts of a mentor-lover, seduction and mutual affection. By analysing these issues, comparing the depiction of their patterns, and confronting their representation with the views of numerous conduct books and essays, this section will provide a detailed commentary on the position of women in different kinds of courtship, development of the courting process, and possible obstacles endangering the progress of wooing.

The following part continues in the research by scrutinising the topics of marriage and matrimony. It starts with an exploration of marriage as a happy ending, summing up and discussing aspects forming the notion of marriage as a fulfilment of courtship, a calm harbour protecting women from distress. On the other hand it provides the picture of a marriage, which may be for different reasons considered dangerous and imprisoning. In this part, I will highlight the potential problems, which may be encountered by the couple in the future years of their common life. It questions the convincingness of the seemingly equal status between man and woman in the wedlock in regard to the marriage laws limiting women's possibilities after being married. The final subsection focuses on the group of women, who stand out of the marriage market. It scrutinises their position in society, their prospects of living and social opportunities.

In the concluding chapter of this thesis, the overall results of the analysis will be discussed together with the problems encountered during the research. The exploration of courtship and marriage in the selected novels will hopefully provide a new perspective on the issue and will answer the questions, which it set to study and inquire.

I. Being on the Marriage Market

In England of the 18th and 19th century, prospects of unmarried girls on the marriage market were not very favourable. Especially in London, there were lists and catalogues of potential brides and desperate parents took their daughters from one city to another in order to find a husband for them. In his study of the marriage situation in England around 1800, Lawrence Stone mentions that “as a result of the shortage of suitable males, owing to the low level of nuptiality among younger sons and to the rise in the cost of marriage portions, there developed in the eighteenth century a new and troublesome phenomenon, the spinster lady who never married.”⁴

Logically, with the rising demand for husbands, it was reasonable for girls to worry about their future situation. Thus, Mr Smith in *Evelina* can afford to boast that “there are a great many other ladies that have been proposed to me, – but I never thought twice of any of them, – that is, not in a *serious* way, – so you may very well be proud.”⁵ Similarly, *Pride and Prejudice* begins by commenting upon the marriage prospects of the Bennet girls with the arrival of a rich single nobleman to the neighbourhood: “A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!”⁶ In *Jane Eyre*, Rochester talks about his numerous love affairs and can easily afford to string the beautiful and rich Blanche along. Lastly, the sisters of Mr Guest in *The Mill on the Floss* are disappointed that their brother chooses Lucy as his wife-to-be when there are so many unmarried girls of a better social position.

Of course, the situation did not remain unnoticed by the public and much attention was dedicated to the fashion of the marriage hunt. In 1774, John Gregory criticises severely the girls whose only desire is to get married soon: “I know nothing that renders a woman more despicable than her thinking it essential to happiness to be married. It is a false sentiment, as thousands of women have experienced; but, if it were true, the belief that it is so, and the consequent impatience to be married, is the most effectual way to prevent it.”⁷ Though this advice is well meant, one could well argue that marriage certainly represented a certain form of happiness for the unmarried girls regarding their social prospects. First, marriage was the only socially accepted way to establish a family of one’s own. Second, some girls like the

⁴ Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Penguin Books, 1990) 243

⁵ Fanny Burney, *Evelina* (NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1998) 187

⁶ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (NY: W.W. Norton, 2001) 3

⁷ John Gregory, *A father's legacy to his daughters* (Boston: James B. Dow, 1834) 49

daughters of Mr Bennet would fall into serious economic troubles if they did not manage to find a husband to financially support them. Third, a spinster did not enjoy much social prestige and was mostly viewed as ridiculous, like, for example, Miss Bates in *Emma* (1815). Even in 1833, when J. S. Mill wrote his essay on marriage, the situation did not get any better. Mill complains:

Women are so brought up, as not to be able to subsist in the mere physical sense, without man to keep them: they are so brought up as not to be able to protect themselves against injury or insult, without some man on whom they have a special claim, to protect them [...] A single woman therefore is felt both by herself and others as a kind of excrescence on the surface of society, having no use, or function, or office there.⁸

It is then no wonder that women were considered as goods to be taken on a market, as a kind of property, which can be passed from a father to a husband-to-be. With this idea in mind, it is difficult for the heroines to establish their position on the marriage market. They are exposed to the looks and critical remarks of their male counterparts, they are aware of the competition and potential rivals, and they have to cope with all of this in order to obtain the desired reward. Regarding their marriage prospects, there are some elements which play a crucial role in their courtship efforts. Among these there can be included family and social status, character, education and appearance.

The importance of family is clear. Competent parents can help their daughter with her search for a husband as well as incompetent or absent parents can endanger her courtship. Similarly, the character of a heroine plays a significant role in wooing. She confronts certain ideals and conventions and must decide whether to conform or rebel. Sometimes, the defiance of norms brings a success, sometimes it ends up in a tragedy. As to appearance and manners, they are the first things to be noticed by potential suitors. All in all, these aspects form the basis of courtship and throw a light on the women's position in courting.

I.1. Family and social status

When by the end of the 18th century John Gregory advises young couples to learn more about the family of each other before courting, he eventually acknowledges the importance of familial relationships in the process of wooing. He encourages young people to find out whether the family of the beloved “is distinguished for parts and worth, or for folly,

⁸ John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor Mill, *Essays on Sex Equality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970) 72

knavery, or physical imperfections.”⁹ Implying thus, that a decent family is a good recommendation, it becomes clear that silly, non-caring, narrow-minded, tyrannical or even absent relatives may altogether spoil the match. Regarding the parental relationships, by the end of the 18th century, with the rise of individualism and a growing focus on the nuclear family, the attitude towards children became much milder and attentive. For this reason, there was a decline in forced marriages and the unmarried daughters could choose their husbands with much less restriction than before. Thus, already in 1773, Hester Chapone warns girls against making hopeless engagements and thus involving a parent “in the miserable dilemma of either giving a forced consent against his judgement, or of feeling his beloved child pine away her prime of life in fruitless anxiety – seeing her accuse him of tyranny.”¹⁰ By describing a parent who cares about the feelings of the daughter, Chapone depicts the common tendency for a greater freedom in husband choice, under the condition that the beloved is of a similar financial and social status, and the parents have the right of veto.

In *Evelina*, Rev. Villars is a loving guardian, who, however, poses a danger to Evelina’s marriage prospects since he is unwilling to introduce her to society. Therefore it is necessary for Evelina’s quest to leave her paternal guardian at home and thus to limit his power to letters, in which he may disapprove of her actions or warn her against her rising affection for Orville; yet, he cannot effect the course of events. Similarly, the power of Madame Duval, Evelina’s grandmother, is little as she cannot force the girl to marry young Branghton or protect her on the marriage market. The Bennet parents treat Elizabeth in a comparable manner. The influence of Elizabeth’s father is limited since he is permanently closed up in his study and gives his daughters a free hand to do what they want. Mrs. Bennet, like Madame Duval, tries to interfere in the marriage plans of her daughters; yet, she cannot force Elizabeth to marry Mr. Collins anymore than she is able to help Jane to make Bingley propose himself. The effect of parental authority is even more diminished in *Jane Eyre*, whose heroine is an orphan. In this novel, the only living paternal figure, Mr. Brocklehurst, is a morally distorted character, whose power is soon overcome. The surrogate maternal figures, Mrs. Temple and Mrs. Fairfax, do not affect Jane either; especially since the latter one is not able to warn Jane properly against the threat of bigamy in her marriage to Rochester. In effect, it is the sisterhood represented by Diana and Mary Rivers, which provides Jane with the right model of femininity. In *The Mill on the Floss*, the Bennet family pattern is repeated as the mother is incapable and the father is not present because he dies before Maggie reaches

⁹ Gregory 56

¹⁰ Hester Chapone, *Letters on the improvement of the mind* (London: J. Walter, 1790) 196

maturity. The power is hence transmitted to Tom, Maggie's brother, who assumes the paternal authority and renews the threat of the marriage veto.

Evelina

In a certain sense, *Evelina* may be perceived as a novel about a heroine struggling to find her father and consequently to prove her legitimacy to society. However, the question of her origin does not trouble Evelina till she is actually old enough to get married. At this point, the unclarity of her birth poses a serious threat to Evelina's marriage prospects. Being a biological daughter of a nobleman, but not acknowledged as such by society, Evelina has eventually two possibilities of marriage. She can marry either a man of a lower class such as Mr Smith or her cousin Branghton, or she can struggle to be proclaimed the heiress of Lord Belmont and thus become a suitable match for a nobleman. Of course, Evelina desires the second option as her morals and abilities are far above the class of Branghtons and Smiths. However, her uncertain origin makes her vulnerable to attacks of various seducers. Susan Fraiman asserts: "Her indefinite class status means that she is treated like a goddess one minute and taken for a prostitute the next."¹¹

Also the possibility that Evelina's mother Caroline eloped with Lord Belmont and did not marry him suggests that Evelina may be a daughter of a whore and thus can be treated as such. Caroline was well aware of this danger when she begged Villars to take care of her daughter unless Belmont repents and declares Evelina as his rightful daughter. The problem of illegitimate offspring was discussed quite often in the 18th and 19th century England. William Thompson devotes himself to the topic and criticises the public approach towards illegitimate daughters: "Instead of encouraging sympathy and identity of interest with these unfortunate children, a barbarous public opinion rather encourages alienation and desertion on the part of the parent."¹² Hence, with such a public opinion, there is no possibility of gaining her status by a lawsuit.

Thus, Evelina is virtually fatherless as her unhappy mother was; and because fatherless implies also in a large degree unprotected, it is necessary for her to have a guardian to avoid Caroline's destiny. Rev. Villars is a devoted friend and his affection for Evelina sometimes borders on the desire to own her. This tendency is well apparent in his dialogue with Evelina after the girl receives the fake message by Orville. In their discussion, Villars

¹¹ Susan Fraiman, "Getting Waylaid in *Evelina*" *Evelina*, ed. Stewart J. Cook (NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1998) 469

¹² William Thompson, *Appeal of one half the human race* (NY: Burt Franklin, 1970) 35

compares Evelina to a book which he used to read with delight, but is not able to do so now. The fact that Evelina has a secret she does not want to share with him upsets him greatly until the girl exclaims in desperation: “say then that you forgive me! That you pardon my reserve,—that you will again suffer me to tell you my most secret thoughts, and rely upon my promise never more to forfeit your confidence!—my father!—my ever-honoured—ever-loved—my best and only friend.”¹³ It is clear, that by saying this, Evelina declares herself to remain Villar’s property; he is the only person she may depend on.

However, it is not Villars, who helps Evelina to regain her social rights and find a husband. It is actually a group of women, who manage to convince Belmont to accept his daughter and thus secure her position on the marriage market. First, it is Evelina’s friend Mrs Mirvan, who introduces Evelina to society, where she meets Orville. Later on, she encounters him thanks to her grandmother, Mrs Duval. This woman is quite the opposite of what Evelina would wish her grandmother to be; she is a caricature of a maternal figure. Madame Duval is masculine in her desire of argument, attracts a lot of undesired attention, has no manners, and is French. Though being a subject of mockery and cruel jokes, she never recognizes her absurdity and ill-breeding. Evelina describes her grandmother dancing a minuet in this way: “She danced in a style so uncommon; her age, her showy dress, and an unusual quantity of rouge, drew upon her the eyes, and, I fear, the derision of the whole company.”¹⁴ Duval represents an affected and strange model of femininity. With her make-up and colours she wants to be exposed to the masculine gaze. Yet, since she devotes all her energies to this exposure, she puts her granddaughter into danger. Evelina, unlike Duval, attracts men, and as she is unprotected by her relatives, she becomes a possible prey of verbal or physical attack.

With Mrs Duval as her guardian, Evelina goes through a great number of embarrassing situations. Nonetheless, it is precisely these moments of shame and blushing which draw her closer to Orville. Thus, serving a plot and bringing Evelina to falling in love with Orville, Madame Duval disappears in the middle of the novel and the only information a reader gets is that she is happy about Evelina’s marriage. Anyway, in the second half of the novel, the character of Madame Duval is duplicated with Mrs Selwyn, Evelina’s friend, who takes her to Bristol. Similarly to Mrs Duval, Selwyn’s main purpose in the novel is to bring Evelina closer to Orville and Belmont and amuse the reader with her masculine behaviour. It is Mrs Selwyn, who helps Evelina to meet her father and who accompanies her in society and thus contributes significantly to her future happiness. But it is primarily Evelina’s mother’s

¹³ Burney 231

¹⁴ Burney 184

credit that her daughter does not copy her destiny. When Evelina faces her father, he has no other option than acknowledge her as his daughter. This is not because she would bear such a strong resemblance to him, but, surprisingly, because she inherits the beauty of her mother. Together with Caroline's posthumous letter, this is enough to convince Belmont about his fatherhood and thus it also proves that Evelina is socially equal to her suitor Orville. Hence, in the end, "the father has the lawful right to name the daughter, but the mother's imprint proves a more reliable record of marriage, kinship and legitimacy."¹⁵ This means that the trace of the mother's beauty in Evelina has the power to supply for the destroyed marriage certificate and thus it confirms Evelina's origin and secures her happiness. The legitimacy based on the resemblance to a mother is not an unusual plot device in the 18th century female novels and it can be traced for instance also in *Simple Story* (1791) by Elizabeth Inchbald. It highlights the importance of the mother-daughter relationship and establishes the mother as a valuable authority and the model of womanhood. On the other hand, the success of the recognition in the case of Evelina depends largely on Lord Belmont and his good will, without which the girl would be hardly acknowledged as his daughter.

Pride and Prejudice

The family of Elizabeth Bennet bears a strange resemblance to that of Evelina. Mrs Bennet, like Madame Duval, causes Elizabeth a lot of trouble with her prattling and ill manners, and her father, similarly to Rev. Villars, has a very affectionate relationship with his daughter, making her even adopt his humour and satirical view of the world. Perhaps this is caused by the fact that Mr Bennet is the only person in the family, with whom Elizabeth can identify. Mrs Bennet poses a serious threat to the marriage prospects of her daughters, though marrying them seems to be the only goal in her life. Unluckily, her narrow-minded opinions and lack of diplomacy make her daughters embarrassed in society. She is exactly what Sarah Ellis describes in these words: "an ignorant woman who has not the good sense, or a weak woman pleased with her own prattle, are scarcely less annoying than humiliating to those who, from acquaintance or family connection, have the misfortune to be identified with them."¹⁶ Being an inadequate mother, Mrs Bennet provides no good model of mature womanhood for her daughters. She does not care about their educational development, does

¹⁵ Susan C. Greenfield, *Mothering Daughters: Novels and the Politics of Family Romance* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003) 37

¹⁶ Sarah Ellis, *The Women of England* (NY: D. Appleton, 1839) 77

not give them enough affection and her romantic opinions and visions spoil the two youngest daughters so that their only interest are the 'redcoats'.

It is then logical that Elizabeth seeks a refuge from such a situation and she finds it in her father's satirical philosophy and humour. Bernard J. Paris remarks upon the issue: "Elizabeth defends herself against the pain of having such a mother, and such a family, by detaching herself and being amused by what would otherwise hurt or embarrass her. She holds herself inwardly aloof and refuses to identify with most of her family."¹⁷

The exception is perhaps the family of Gardiners, whom Elizabeth respects. It is her aunt Gardiner to whom Elizabeth confides and who accompanies her during the second half of the novel when Elizabeth travels and discovers her inner and outside world. Gardiners witness the transformation of Elizabeth and Darcy at Pemberly, they are able to converse with Darcy and elevate his opinion about Elizabeth's family. Yet, the family itself is never closely described and it serves mainly as the means of taking Elizabeth to Pemberly. Besides Gardiners, there is of course Elizabeth's sister Jane, who mirrors her love problems and is one of the few of Elizabeth's confidants. Being mild and naturally good-hearted, Jane is the opposite of her satirical sister. She tries to see good in all people and is careful with making a judgement about them. This is precisely the quality Elizabeth needs to learn in order to remake her prejudicial picture of Darcy. Regarding the other sisters, it is mainly Lydia, who is worth a mention. It is precisely at the time of Lydia's elopement when Elizabeth begins to understand that she could and actually does love Darcy. In this way, her sister's folly complicates matters significantly, but on the other hand it gives Darcy an opportunity for re-establishing his character and saving the situation, and it is also a good chance for Elizabeth to re-think her prejudices and judgements.

One of the most essential topics Elizabeth needs to reflect upon is her own family. She was angry with Darcy for expressing his scorn about her family, but now she realizes that he was more or less right. Her mother is silly, her sisters are the shame of the whole family and her beloved father proves to be incapable. For quite a long time, Elizabeth found joy in being the daughter singled out by her father because of her wit. She adored him for his detachment and disdain of society. Yet now she sees that his lack of care causes great pain to her relatives and endangers her relationship with Darcy. As Robert M. Polhemus comments upon this: "Elizabeth, though she still, like a good little disciple, adopts her father's mode of ironic discourse, is here and now learning that she must consider independently the subjects of

¹⁷ Bernard J. Paris, "Pride and Prejudice" *Elizabeth Bennet*, ed. Harold Bloom (Broomall: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004) 162

distinction in love, her own love life, and marriage – the subjects he raises since he so obviously minimizes what must matter most to her: a woman's fate.”¹⁸

Thus, by viewing her father objectively, Elizabeth manages to form a new attachment with her husband-to-be. At the end of the book, this establishment of a new family – a family based on love, mutual respect and self-awareness – forms the basis of Elizabeth and Darcy's life. They virtually take care of the family, taking Catherine under their protection and teaching her appropriate manners. Georgiana, on the other hand, learns from Elizabeth, that it is possible not to fear men. The new kind of family represented by the couple thus represents a new kind of the nuclear society from which many other people may benefit.

Jane Eyre

The situation of Jane Eyre is quite different from the two previous novels. Jane is an orphan without any known relatives except for the Reeds, who despise her and do not include her in their family circle. There is no Rev. Villars, who would take care of her and protect her in the world. While the heroines of the two preceding novels have a happy childhood and their troubles as well as their narratives come with adulthood and search for a husband, Jane Eyre retrospectively describes her life from infancy when her character began to form.

Her memories are not happy as she does not feel accepted by her relatives. In the first chapter, Jane has a violent fight with her cousin John, who bullies and humiliates her. It is no wonder that Jane hurts John in a fit of violent rage and is severely punished for that by being locked in the Red room. It is exactly in this room, in the gothic scenery of a death chamber that Jane reflects upon the duality of her selfhood. Jane already knows that she is not: “a sanguine, brilliant, careless, exacting, handsome, romping child”¹⁹, that she is dependent and friendless. She is an uncommonly perceptive and intelligent child, which frightens people around her. In the Red room scene, when she looks at the mirror and sees herself as a fairy or an imp, she recognizes the raging self, which is buried inside her. It is the moment when there is a piece of Bertha peeping from the looking glass and mocking Jane's rationality. It is surprising, how a little girl being locked in a room, wavering on the edge of madness and beating helplessly around her with her arms can resemble the dark grown up Rochester's first wife. The Red room represents the subconscious and sensual Jane keeps fighting against – her buried anger, frustration and suppressed sexuality. At her aunt's, Jane finds no model of womanhood she could identify with and which would help her to explain the combat between the spiritual and bodily she experiences. The dark sensual side of her nature frightens her and

¹⁸ Robert M. Polhemus. *Erotic Faith*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) 38-39

¹⁹ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. (NY: W.W. Norton, 1971) 12-13

she is not able to accept it as the legitimate part of her character. Therefore, the Red Room with its sensuous colour, domineering bed and closets full of secret drawers, scares Jane with its implicit sensuality.

After this episode, Jane is sent to the Lowood School where she encounters a different type of womanhood. The motherly figures of Helen Burns and Miss Temple stand for a purely spiritual femininity without the trace of the 'Red room' sensuality. In them, there is no secret combat of body and soul as in Jane; instead, they safely devote themselves to education and religion completely ignoring their sexuality. Because of that, Jane cannot wholly embrace their model of womanhood. She cannot adopt Helen's doctrine of selflessness and pure spirituality, and she knows that the calm and peaceful way of Miss Temple is also not meant for her. In metaphorical terms, both female characters belong to the sphere of heaven, whereas Jane is still troubled by the earth's gravity. In her nature, there is still the sensual angry side mocking her rationality.

Yet, it is especially the masculine authority, which endangers Jane's perception of femininity. Together with John Reed, Mr Brocklerhurst is a threat accompanied with violence and destruction. Brocklehurst is a distorted father-figure; he disapproves of Jane's passion and anger and tries to suppress them and confine her only to the proper sphere of the spiritual. Jane cannot fight Mr Brocklehurst as she fought her cousin before, but she is not willing to submit either. To yield would mean to deny herself, to get rid of any hopes or desires and that is what Jane is not going to do. Helen Moglen remarks upon the situation of the Lowood girls:

The girls at Lowood School cannot and will never be able to assume functions traditionally thought suitable for middle- and upper-class women. They are not marketable commodities, valuable possessions, symbols (like Brocklehurst's wife and daughters) of their owner's wealth and status, themselves adornments and decorations. They are not proper heroines of romance. Poverty deprives them of their sexuality, their individuality, and hence of their humanity.²⁰

This means that the Lowood girls as females are virtually invisible for the rest of society since they are simply considered sexless. With their hair cut short, they belong neither to the female nor the male sphere; they form a class of their own. Even as adult governesses, they maintain something of this lack of a proper identity. For example, for Blanche, Jane exists in a separate world and therefore is not perceived as a rival on the marriage market.

²⁰ Helen Moglen, *Charlotte Brontë: the Self Conceived* (London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984) 112

With this experience of suppressed and even rejected femininity, it is necessary for Jane to find the right model of womanhood she could wholly embrace. Yet, it is not until she meets her cousins Mary and Diana Rivers that she discovers what she seeks. Mary and Diana are the contrary of Jane's Reeds cousins. Whereas Georgiana and Elizabeth are self-centred, unaffectionate women, Mary and Diana embody all the good qualities one can imagine. They are beautiful, intelligent and compassionate. Moreover, they share Jane's experience of teaching as a governess and thus the three of them form a perfect little society. Especially Diana inspires Jane with her character: "Diana looked and spoke with a certain authority: she had a will, evidently. It was my nature to feel pleasure in yielding to an authority supported like hers."²¹ Thus, Diana proves to be the right mixture of spiritual and physical, which is a healing balm for Jane.

If the female relatives help Jane to achieve spiritual independence, her uncle provides her with social liberty. Being an important instrument in revealing Rochester's first marriage, he now provides his niece with money and social prestige. Though being a minor character, uncle Eyre is the *deus ex machina* which helps Jane to return to Rochester as his moral and social superior.

Hence, it is apparent that though Jane has not her own family, she goes through several educational stages, in which she encounters various family models. Whereas Reeds make her feel like an outcast, Lowood as a surrogate family is more acceptable since the severe father-figure of Mr. Brocklehurst is removed. The motherly and liberal character of Miss Temple provides Jane with opportunities for her intellectual growth; yet, as she decides to marry and leave, there is nothing to hold Jane in Lowood. The next stage is represented by Thornfield where Jane encounters another motherly figure, Mrs. Fairfax. This lady provides Jane with kind affection; yet, she fails in protecting Jane against the threat of bigamy, which Rochester tries to impose on her. Eventually, Jane moves to the last stage of her family quest when she discovers the Rivers family. The sisterhood with Diana and Mary gives Jane an intellectual stimulation as well as the sense of belonging. In effect, Jane's struggle to find a family, to which she could anchor and which would accept her may be compared to Evelina's quest to be recognized by her father. For both heroines it is valuable to establish a legitimate affectionate family background in order to be legitimized and prepared for having a family of their own.

²¹ Brontë 302

The Mill on the Floss

The families of the Tullivers and the Dodsons, between whose ideologies Maggie struggles to win respect and attention, exist within a limited sphere of St Oggs. Their views about the role of women, duties of daughters and proper female behaviour do not correspond at all with Maggie's own passionate nature. As B.A. Norbelie asserts: "In this conservative and commercial world men do not only see women as inferior creatures, they also think of them in economic terms: marriage for instance means business, particularly to those who own property."²² Consequently, all mothers including Mrs Tulliver put all their effort to make their daughters perfect, well-selling goods, which actually means to bring them up as frail, beautiful, non-thinking creatures. This makes sense as even Mr Tulliver admits that he picked Mrs Tulliver "from her sisters o' purpose, cause she was a bit weak, like; for I wasn't agoin' to be told the rights o' things by my own fireside."²³ This is, however, not the case of Maggie, who, as Mr Tulliver himself acknowledges, is even cleverer than Tom. Maggie is aware of her father's admiration and as she is not able to satisfy her mother with her messy hair and defiant nature, she struggles for love and recognition of her father and her brother.

Mr Tulliver is a passionate man and his uncontrolled fits of anger and despair often bring him into trouble. He considers himself to be smart and equal to Wakem, whom he sues and fails. The humiliation and sorrow do not lead him to self-recognition, but make him hate Wakem instead. Shortly before his death, Mr Tulliver forces Tom to swear eternal hostility to Wakem and recommends Maggie to his care. Not aware of the approaching disaster, he thus seals the doom of his children, as he virtually forbids Maggie contact with Philip, the only person capable of understanding her thoughts and feelings.

Of course, Mrs Tulliver, who is the only remaining parent Maggie and Tom have, is not able to prevent the catastrophe. How could she? After the loss of her and Tulliver's property, she is a broken woman with no life goal. She does not let Maggie do any hard work and finds pleasure in combing her hair, keeping her daughter's beauty, the only acknowledged quality of an unmarried girl, as a treasure. It is, however, Tom, to whom she directs her hopes. Tom is a man and as such, he can re-write the miserable history and gain the mill back. Mrs Tulliver honours Tom's authority, because he is a man and thus superior and more powerful. It is not until Maggie comes back to St Oggs, that Mrs Tulliver ventures to leave Tom and move away with her daughter and thus show a real affection for Maggie.

²² Barbro Almqvist Norbelie, *Oppressive Narrowness* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1992) 116

²³ George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*. (NY: W.W. Norton, 1994) 18

Of course, it always used to be Tom, the son and a real Dodson, who was the favourite of Mrs Tulliver. Tom soon became aware of his social position in the family and the community and took advantage of it. Though he likes Maggie, he lets her know more than often that she is just a girl, meaning inferior and silly. Unlike Maggie, Tom is always sure he is right and never doubts himself about anything. Consequently, he feels he has a right to decide Maggie's life, which is apparent when he says:

I wished my sister to be a lady, and I have always taken care of you, as my father desired, until you were well married. But your ideas and mine never accord, and you will not give way. Yet you might have sense enough to see that a brother, who goes out into the world and mixes with men necessarily knows better what is right for his sister than she can know herself.²⁴

Poor Maggie is not able to fight Tom back; she has always used to be dependent upon him and upon his opinion and if they ever quarrelled it must have been her who was wrong. Accepting pain and dependence as a way of life, Maggie sticks to her family trying to mend things and relationships and finding herself incapable of leaving this sort of life and having a family of her own. If she dreams about a charming prince who would rescue her from her situation, the prince would be Tom.

The last part of the family mosaic is, of course, the Dodson branch. Aunt Glegg, aunt Pullet and aunt Deane are the strictest protectors of the moral and proper Dodson life. Norbelie comments upon their morals: "The women in fact comply with the system that oppresses them and are instrumental in oppressing individuals of their own gender."²⁵ They know what the decent is, and not surprisingly, the decent is always Dodson-like. Of course, Maggie is not the favourite of her aunts as her passionate, emotional and wild nature does not correspond at all with their norms. Thus, she finds herself in a shadow of the cute pretty little Lucy, who is the ideal of a girl in St Oggs. Lucy is perfectly happy with being a woman - that is - being always said what to do and not encouraged to think much about her position. The attachment with Lucy gives Maggie opportunity to come up against temptation and thus face her own nature. Being suddenly thrown into the world of luxury and beauty and falling in love with Lucy's fiancé Stephen, Maggie realizes that her resistant life-hostile attitude has serious flaws and in the end, it does not help her to prevent the destruction and pain she feared of.

²⁴ Eliot 318

²⁵ Norbelie 120

I.2. Character, education and appearance

In order to succeed on the marriage market, the heroine has to cope with the ideas and norms of femininity. In other words, she must have a good character, amiable appearance and developed intellectual abilities if she wants to win the attention of suitors. Yet, it is difficult to define what the good character means or what the 18th and 19th century preferences concerning the appearance and education are. It is even problematic to decide which of the three elements plays the most crucial role in a courtship. The then opinions regarding this issue differ significantly and it may be even argued that the two opposite ideas of a perfect and accomplished woman coexist at the same time.

Hence, when in 1766 James Fordyce in his conduct manual lists the ornaments and qualities of female sex, he speaks about “modesty, meekness, prudence, piety, with all virtuous and charitable occupations, all beautiful and useful accomplishments suited to their rank and condition.”²⁶ However, the feministically oriented observers like Mary Wollstonecraft did not approve of this and highlighted the importance of intellectual faculties of women: “Consequently the perfection of our nature and capability of happiness must be estimated by the degree of reason, virtue, knowledge, that distinguish the individual, and direct the laws which bind society: and that from the exercise of reason, knowledge and virtue naturally flow, is equally undeniable, if mankind be viewed collectively.”²⁷ This line of thought continues also in the following generations, and in 1860’ John Stuart Mill talks about the conservative feminine model with apparent despise: “All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others.”²⁸

Still, it is true that the idea of a woman as an angel influenced the public sphere till quite late. The evangelical movement supported the depiction of a woman as a protector of morality and tradition, but yet, her realm was limited within the borders of her own household. Arthur F. Marotti describes this concept: “The angel woman’s innate morality prepares her to be the moral guide in the household, the one person best able to teach her

²⁶ James Fordyce, *Sermons to young women*. (NY: M Carey, 1809) 3

²⁷ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London: Dent & sons, 1929) 15

²⁸ John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women*. (London : Dent & sons, 1929) 232

children what they need to know to be useful, moral members of society.”²⁹ The angelic woman of this period did not aspire to achieve superior knowledge or social rights. Instead, she devoted her attention to the care of her family and supported her husband in his accomplishments. This tendency is traceable also in the prologue to *The Angel in the House*, in which Coventry Patmore admires relationship between man and woman: Thus ever answer'd Vaughan his wife, / Who, more then he, desired his fame; / But, in his heart, his thoughts were rife / How for her sake to earn a name”³⁰

It is therefore important to be aware of the two opposite notions of femininity, which existed simultaneously within the then society and may have influenced the character and depiction of the literary heroines, especially the importance of their individual faculties. For Evelina, her appearance is essential in the marriage quest. She finds herself under the constant gaze of suitors and her moral integrity is proved by her blushes and down-cast eyes. Yet, her beauty appreciated mainly by seducers would be rather her destruction than her advantage had she not had good intellectual faculties. When the beauty does not suffice to prove and protect Evelina's morality, the girl must learn how to defend herself verbally – to speak out. In contrast, Elizabeth uses her verbal skills freely from the beginning of the novel and she is even fond of irony. Though her appearance is generally not considered as purely beautiful, the vivacity of her character renders her attractive. What may spoil her marriage prospects is her own moral flaw – pride, and thus she has to overcome her own self-delusion in order to find a husband. Jane Eyre dismisses the importance of beauty by her small, plain appearance. On the other hand, she wins Rochester's affection by her capacity of reason. Eventually, Maggie Tulliver combines all three aspects as she is uncommonly beautiful, morally accomplished and intellectually capable woman. Yet, since Maggie as a woman is discouraged from pursuing any intellectual development, she is an easy prey of her passionate nature.

Evelina

Evelina's character and her beauty are the key aspects influencing her entrance into society and her marriage prospects. Indeed, as she has neither a prestigious social position nor money to recommend her, the sweetness of nature and appearance are the only tools she can work with. The first description of Evelina we get from Mrs Mirvan, who depicts the girl in all possible superlatives: “Had I not known from whom she received her education, I should, at

²⁹ Arthur F. Marotti, *Reading with difference: gender, race and cultural identity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993) 26

³⁰ Patmore, Coventry, *The Angel in the House* (Teddington: The Echo Library, 2006) 4

first sight of so perfect a face, have been in pain for her understanding, [...] she has a certain air of inexperience and innocence that is extremely interesting.”³¹ Thus, the heroine is both beautiful and educated, and at the same time unaware of her advantages. As a true angelic figure, she lives in the world of innocence, separated from the spoilt world outside the vicarage. Yet, her innocence and meekness pose a potential danger for Evelina as she is not prepared to face the hypocrisy and depravity of society. The problems come when Evelina is brought to London fashionable society and she finds herself unprepared for such an encounter. Her beauty attracts a great deal of attention, but Evelina is not able to cope with her admirers, as she has virtually no voice. Though her female modesty forbids her to show herself, she cannot but be exposed to the male gaze and judgment. The paradoxical situation threatens Evelina and her reputation since various seducers are ready to take advantage of her confusion and her innocence.

Being an angelic innocent figure, she is an example of what James Fordyce describes as a female ideal: “Suppose her, if you will, entirely silent, from a disposition to give place to others who may seem more desirous of talking; will not her very silence interest?”³² Thus, the only language Evelina is able to use in unusual or critical situations, is the language of a blush. The importance of blushing is discussed for example by John Gregory, who informs young ladies that “nature has made you to blush when you are guilty of no fault and has forced us to love you because you do so.”³³ But in Evelina’s world, things do not work as Mr Fordyce and Gregory suggest. When Evelina meets Lord Orville at the ball and he seems to be a handsome and sympathetic man, her loss of language causes Orville to think of her as about a poor village girl. Evelina herself, blushing and silent, describes the situation in these words: “He seemed very desirous of entering into conversation with me; but I was seized with such a panic, that I could hardly speak.”³⁴ While her moments of silence endanger her position on the marriage market as they discourage potential suitors, there is a group of men who are ready to take full advantage of Evelina’s dumbness. It is, of course, seducers, who consider Evelina as an easy prey. Lord Merton, for example, informs his companions that “a woman wants nothing to recommend her but her beauty and good-nature; in everything else she is either impertinent or unnatural. For my part, deuce take me if ever I wish to hear a word of sense from a woman as long as I live!”³⁵ Moreover, in the situation of the greatest danger,

³¹ Burney 16

³² Fordyce 143

³³ Gregory 25

³⁴ Burney 24

³⁵ Burney 299

Evelina's inability of speech threatens her reputation. When Sir Clement forces her to accept his coach after the opera, Evelina has no capacity to resist, and when the coach goes clearly not to Evelina's house, she cannot express her worries, because such words as seduction or rape do not exist in her vocabulary. Hence, when Sir Clement asks ironically Evelina, if she has any doubts of his honour while holding her in his coach, Evelina is able to stammer only: "No, Sir, no, – none at all, – only Mrs Mirvan, – I think she will be uneasy."³⁶

After such an experience, Evelina has to choose how to behave and how to treat the conventional norms. She knows well that "violations of the code of female delicacy, however minor, lead to anxiety that a woman will become a sort of outlaw who has lost her claim to the protection of society"³⁷, but, at the same time, she realizes that delicacy, at least the delicacy of silence, may be destructive. Throughout the book, Evelina tries to find her voice in order to express and protect her innocence. Thus, we can compare the previous scene with another extract, in which Evelina occurs in a similarly dangerous situation. This time, however, she is able to act and speak: "I pushed him away from me with all my strength, and demanded how he dared treat me with such insolence.[...] Yes, Sir Clement, *insolence*; from you, who know me, I had a claim for protection, – not to such treatment as this."³⁸

Nonetheless, at the end, it is not her tongue, but her appearance, which makes her father accept her. When Lord Belmont looks at her, it is his voice, which acknowledges Evelina's legitimacy with the exclamation "I see, I see thou art her child! She lives – she breathes – she is present to my view."³⁹ However, it is important to highlight that the father's acknowledgment of Evelina comes after the marriage proposal of Lord Orville, and hence, Evelina's active participation in her destiny is more essential than the passive recognition by her father. In other words, it is Evelina's voice, which protects her in her entrance to society and secures her reputation for Orville; her beauty, also important, secures her reward and the harmony of the two qualities make the reader anticipate a happy future of the heroine.

Pride and Prejudice

As the title suggests, the story of Elizabeth Bennet is influenced primarily by the two mistakes of her and Darcy's character – pride and prejudice. The fact that the main female

³⁶ Burney 83

³⁷ Phyllis Chesler, "Women as Psychiatric and Psychotherapeutic Patients". *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 33, No. 4, Special Double Issue: Violence and the Family and Sexism in Family Studies, Part 2 (Nov., 1971) 379

³⁸ Burney 164

³⁹ Burney 308

protagonist is accused of such bad qualities suggests a great shift in the heroine's depiction since Fanny Burney. However, there is one thing the prejudiced Elizabeth and the angelic Evelina have in common, and that is their isolation and consequent inexperience. Like Evelina, Elizabeth lives in the countryside spending most of her time with her family or her friend Charlotte. If she minds the narrowness of her surrounding and ill manners of her relatives, she, at the same time, uses them to amuse herself with the detachment learnt from her father. She is Mr Bennet's favourite child, the quickest one, and thus she soon feels to be superior to others. However, her position of a favourite and prodigy makes her also vulnerable as Bernard J. Paris observes: "She has a fear of being looked down upon and a need to show others that she cannot be laughed at, manipulated, or treated with condescension. In the defence of her pride, she becomes saucy, combative, and, sometimes, brutally frank."⁴⁰

Having her pride once hurt by Darcy, Elizabeth is ready to fight him back, not admitting herself that he may be right at least in some of his criticism. Her inexperience and pride make her prone to trust Wickham's accusations of Darcy and scorn her rival. Despite that, she is still sensitive about Darcy's opinion, maybe because a young man of such a fortune is not an enemy to be simply overlooked. Hence, shortly after the first ball, when they meet again, Elizabeth taunts Darcy when she notices he is listening to her conversation: "Did not you think, Mr Darcy, that I expressed myself uncommonly well just now, when I was teasing Colonel Foster to give us a ball at Maryton?"⁴¹ Yet, a few moments later, when she is asked to play a piano, it seems Elizabeth loses her confidence and "gravely looking at Mr Darcy"⁴², she ridicules her artistic abilities. Of course, Elizabeth is aware that appearance and female accomplishments are not her forte. Yet, she copes with this fact with a bit of self-irony knowing that she can neither surpass her sister Jane's beauty nor the superior education of Miss Bingley and Mrs Hurst. Miss Bingley once informs Elizabeth about all the necessities a young woman has to acquire to gain the praise of society: "A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing and the modern languages, to deserve the world; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half-deserved."⁴³ Of course, Miss Bingley depicts the perfect woman in the way she sees herself. Yet, her affectation is not what Darcy looks for. Instead, he admires Elizabeth's vivacity, humour and imagination. As he says to Miss Bingley once they talk about Elizabeth: "I have

⁴⁰ Paris 163

⁴¹ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (NY: W.W. Norton, 2001) 17

⁴² Austen 17

⁴³ Austen 27

been meditating on the very great pleasure which a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow.”⁴⁴

Hence, it is Darcy who first recognizes his love for Elizabeth. The girl herself must undergo a long journey to self-awareness. It is not until she receives Darcy’s letter that she realizes her prejudice; and finally, with the letter of her aunt Gardiner in which she is informed about Darcy’s effort to rescue Lydia, the pride of Elizabeth is broken as she expresses in these words: “Oh! How heartily did she grieve over every ungracious sensation she has ever encouraged, every saucy speech she had ever directed towards him. For herself she was humbled; but she was proud of him.”⁴⁵ At this moment, the threatening ‘other’, the strange masculine element, which endangered Elizabeth’s singularity as the clever satirizer, proves to be a saviour, who rescues Elizabeth’s family from shame. Elizabeth understands that the very fact that she is loved by a worthy, handsome, rich man makes her exceptional, and that her relationship with Darcy does not endanger her expansiveness, but makes it possible due to new social opportunities. In this way, Elizabeth finds a way to unite her individualism with sociability.

Jane Eyre

As a wild, uncontrollable and strange child, Jane has a difficulty in coping with social relationships. Her disposition makes her love and hate, her childhood trauma makes her defend herself against others. Starving for respect, kindness and self-realization, Jane wanders through the world as a stranger. She carries the imp from the mirror in herself as well as the capacity for affection; and as she herself is not sure about her own disposition, she tends to be an angry fairy at one time and an angelic woman a moment later.

Indeed, if Elizabeth with her pride meant a significant step to the ‘unsweetened’ female heroines, Jane goes even further with her almost dark and gothic nature. R. B. Heilman describes Brontë’s women as creatures who “vibrate with passions that the fictional conventions only partly constrict or gloss over – in the centre an almost violent devotedness that has in it at once a fire of independence, a spiritual energy, a vivid sexual responsiveness, and, along with this, self-righteousness, a sense of power, sometimes self-pity and envious competitiveness.”⁴⁶ It is true that Jane fights against conventions, criticises the hypocrisy of her aunt and Mr Brocklehurst, not to say the whole patriarchal system. Letting her anger and

⁴⁴ Austen 19

⁴⁵ Austen 212

⁴⁶ Robert R. Heilman, “Charlotte Brontë’s New Gothic” *Jane Eyre*, ed. by Richard J. Dunn (NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1971) 458

stubbornness to burst out, Jane is not prone to submit or yield to social norms, let alone the fact, that her poverty and orphanhood give her freedom of a social outcast. Sandra M. Gilbert describes Jane's rebellion:

For while the mythologizing of repressed rage may parallel the mythologizing of repressed sexuality, it is far more dangerous to the order of society. The occasional woman who has a weakness for blackbrowed Byronic heroes can be accommodated in novels and even in some drawing rooms; the woman who yearns to escape entirely from drawing rooms and patriarchal mansions obviously cannot.⁴⁷

Being a plain, small, unattractive woman, Jane is far from aspiring to succeed on the marriage market and expose her female accomplishments. If beauty is not her forte, her mind, education and will certainly are. Being isolated in Lowood with vague longings about something more outside her world, which would lead her to self-recognition and help her to achieve acknowledgement and respect, Jane complains: "Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do."⁴⁸ It is apparent that Jane starves not only for educational accomplishments but also for emotional development. She longs to discover new horizons and new people, who would stimulate her intelligence and offer her their friendships. She needs love and attention to cope with daily burdens of life; she seeks for somebody, who would help to make her understand who she is. As Charlotte Brontë herself wrote to her friend, Elizabeth Gaskell: "I find it is not in my nature to get on in this weary world without sympathy and attachment in some quarter."⁴⁹ Jane's first affectionate companionship is formed with Helen Burns. If there is anything Jane learns from her friend, it is compassion and self-command. And yet, Helen, as her premature death suggests, does not belong to earth; she is a spirit without flesh, without worldly needs or aspirations. Hence Jane is not able to accept her total self-denial and she only declares: "I suspected she might be right and I wrong; but I would not ponder that matter deeply."⁵⁰ Similarly, Miss Temple makes a good friend with Jane, but again, she is mainly a spiritual being as her marriage to a clergyman suggests. After her departure, Jane experiences stirrings of restlessness and prepares herself for a longed-for journey from Lowood.

⁴⁷Sandra M. Gilbert "Plain Jane's Progress." *Signs*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Summer, 1977), pp. 779-804, 781

⁴⁸ Brontë 96

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Gaskell, *The life of Charlotte Brontë* (NY: Cosimo, Inc., 2008) 185

⁵⁰ Brontë 48

At Thornfield Hall, Jane encounters completely different kinds of femininity. If Helen and Miss Temple gave her the example of the spiritual, Miss Blanche and Bertha virtually stand for the bodily, the sensuous without spirit. Elaine Showalter asserts: “Brontë’s most profound innovation, however, is the division of the Victorian female psyche into its extreme components of mind and body, which she externalizes as two characters, Helen Burns and Bertha Mason.”⁵¹ Indeed, both Blanche and young Bertha are tall, dark and beautiful women, conscious of their beauty and aware of their power over men. It is no wonder that Blanche despises Jane as she considers her not equal because of her position. Lawrence Stone describes the status of governesses: “Not a relation, not a guest, not a mistress, not a servant, the governess lived in a kind of status limbo. By reason of her position, she was also treated as almost sexless.”⁵² Simply said, for Blanche, Jane exists purely in the sphere of spiritual, and to be acute, this the sphere in which Jane feels safe. In Thornfield, she likes to hide in various dark corners; she prefers to wear undistinguished grey dresses and generally gives the impression of being almost invisible. She acknowledges her position as her destiny and seems not to have any ambition to dazzle; she is determined not to play the second Varens or Ingram – a body without spirit.

Yet, Jane’s inner self longs for respect and recognition; she wants to be useful and thus she has to leave her shell. Hence, she soon proves to be able to act and show her inner strength. Similarly to Evelina, who saves her half-brother from a suicide, Jane saves Rochester from burning to death, and later she helps him to care for Mason. Finally, she finds the capacity to face animal Bertha and abandon Rochester. After she leaves Thornfield, Jane enters the third phase of self-recognition and this time, at Moore House, she finds the desired harmony of body and soul. In other words, whereas Lowood was based on the intellectual development and Thornfield gave Jane a shock as it made her face the animal physicality; Moore House provides both intellectually stimulating discussions and physical recovery. It is the place where Jane can nourish both her spirit and her body. Her relatives, Diana and Mary, are the companions she always wished for, and in their company, she undergoes the lesson of self-awareness and gains more confidence eventually accepting her duality.

The Mill on the Floss

The character of Maggie is a complex one, and similarly to Jane Eyre, the key to its understanding lies in her childhood. From her early age, one suspects that something is not

⁵¹ Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) 113

⁵² Stone 244

right with her. Maggie is clever, in fact too clever for a girl as her father complains: "It's no mischief much while she's a little un, but an over-cute woman's no better nor a long-tailed sheep."⁵³ Indeed, the burden of her imagination and quickness pursues Maggie throughout her life and she is always punished for it. It is because of her fantasy world she forgets to feed Tom's rabbits or pull out her fishing rod. Had she been a boy, she would be educated to direct her abilities by education, but as a girl, she experiences frustration of being not appreciated. As Margaret Fuller, the American feminist, whom Eliot studied and analysed, comments in her work: "Women who combine this organization with creative genius are very commonly unhappy at present. They see too much to act in conformity with those around them, and their quick impulses seem folly to those who do not discern the motives."⁵⁴ Indeed, this is the case of Maggie and her pain of being misunderstood by people whom she would like to love and admire her. Yet, neither her mother nor Tom, to whom she is mostly devoted, share her intellect or ideals. When Maggie expresses her wish to be a clever woman one day, Tom responds with anger: "O, I daresay, and a nasty conceited thing. Everybody'll hate you."⁵⁵

For Maggie, there are three logical consequences of her being the misfit of the family. First, she develops a kind of special love for deformed things and people. Being outcasts as her, she understands them well and can transform her self-pity into tender and patronising care of them. Of course, this is also the case of Philip, who falls in love with Maggie and tries to be her tutor and adviser. However, this kind of love, which is based on Maggie's own feeling of insufficiency, does not permit her to be free and it soon dies as its subject proves not to need her petting anymore. As she expresses: "I begin to think there can never come much happiness to me from loving: I have always had so much pain mingled with it. I wish I could make myself a world outside it, as men do."⁵⁶

This, however, proves to be unrealistic as Maggie's starvation for love is stronger than anything else. Her attempt to challenge this state of affairs inside her ends up in self-renunciation and complete self-denial as she uses Thomas Kempis's ideas as a weapon against herself. She tries to live without needs or interests, without things that would enlighten or amuse her. Ermarth asserts: "She likes to give up her will or, rather, to exert her will only against herself. She now can do to herself what others used to do to her, and it gives her the sense of being "right" for the first time in her life. Being "right" requires Maggie to turn

⁵³ Eliot 12

⁵⁴ Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the nineteenth century* (Toronto: Dover Publications Inc, 1999) 55

⁵⁵ Eliot 122

⁵⁶ Eliot 334

against herself.”⁵⁷ Her consequent submissiveness renders Maggie more dependent than ever and she uses her intellect to punish herself. In fact, it is Maggie herself, who is the fetish doll in the attic, and with every unread book or unheard song, she receives a new blow. Frustrated that she cannot use her abilities to help her family as her brother Tom, Maggie consciously humiliates herself, punishing thus also Tom, who is ashamed of his sister’s self-abasement.

When Maggie begins to meet Philip, she abandons her martyrdom and starts living her life again. At this time, she is a renowned beauty and attracts the attention of men. Her liveliness and impressiveness of her appearance could make her proud of herself; however, she is not able to form a firm relationship as she still grudgingly protects her childhood dependency upon Tom. She lets him break her friendship with Philip and she leaves Stephen in order to come back to St Oggs, where Tom forbids her to live with him in the mill. The dependence is well apparent when Maggie comes to Tom to beg for his allowance to let her meet Philip. Maggie describes her feelings almost as if she was a little girl: “She was obliged to be childish – the tears would come. When Maggie was not angry, she was as dependent on kind or cold words as a daisy on the sunshine or the cloud: the need of being loved would always subdue her, as, in old days, it subdued her in the worm-eaten attic.”⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Ermarth, “Maggie Tulliver’s Long Suicide.” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 14, No. 4, *Nineteenth Century* (Autumn, 1974), pp. 587-601, 595

⁵⁸ Eliot 317

II. Courtship

As the heroine undergoes the process of self-awareness, she virtually prepares herself for the next stage of her symbolic journey – courtship. To be rewarded with a husband requires being successful in this strange strategic game, in which a woman has to prove her worth and to know how to sell her merits. For the female protagonists in these novels, the wished-for goal is not only a marriage, but a marriage based on respect and love. For James Fordyce, the best way to achieve this is to follow his advice: “Your business chiefly is to read Men, in order to make yourself agreeable and useful. It is not the argumentative but the sentimental talents, which give you that insight [...] that lead to your principal ends as Women.”⁵⁹ Yet, in the process of courtship, it seems inevitable for the heroines to argue, to voice their own opinions and desires in order to be intellectually equal partners of their suitors. Hence, Evelina opposes Orville when he advises her not to meet her half-brother, Elizabeth wins Darcy’s admiration for the vivacity of her argument, Jane engages in long discussions with Rochester and Maggie argues with both Philip and Stephen about her moral principles.

The importance of courtship significantly increased in the 18th century, especially among nobility. This was caused primarily by the more affectionate approach to children, who were mostly given the right of choice of their future spouse, provided the partner was of a suitable economic and social background. With the widening possibilities of selection, the important thing in the marriage proves to be not only the financial matter, but also affection; and in order to recognise and kindle affection, it is essential to get know the partner. Hence, courting becomes the key to a happy marriage.

As Lawrence Stone observes, there were two significant shifts in the perception of relationships in the 18th century: “The first was the new confidence that the pursuit of happiness, best achieved by domestic affection, was the legitimate prime in life. The second was the new ideal of the ‘Man of Sentiment’ who was easily moved to outbursts of indignation by cruelty and to tears of sympathy by benevolence.”⁶⁰ Consequently, the depiction of courtship focuses on sentiments and feelings of the couple rather than on practical matters. This is the time when such terms as ‘falling in love’ appear in the vocabulary of a marriage market. Courtship is the period when the ‘falling in love’ should

⁵⁹ Fordyce 138

⁶⁰ Stone 180

happen as “a volatile emotional condition in which need and affection focus on another and commingle for a time.”⁶¹

Yet, there was also a voice calling for moderation of romantic emotions and envisioning courtship more as a developed form of friendship. Jane Austen criticises romantic ideals of Catherine in *Northanger Abbey* (1817); and Mary Wollstonecraft claims that “the vain fears and fond jealousies, the winds which fan the flame of love, when judiciously or artfully tempered, are both incompatible with the tender confidence and sincere respect of friendship.”⁶² Indeed, in the novels of this period the dilemma appears asking whether romantic and sensuous love is desirable or condemnable, and whether it makes a good ground for marriage. On one hand, such a love may be an absorbing experience, but on the other hand, it may be even destructive as Rachel M. Brownstein asserts describing the pressing question: “whether intimacy and identity can be achieved at once, and whether they are mutually exclusive, entirely desirable, and, indeed, other than imaginary.”⁶³ The fear that the heroine may be swallowed by her own desires and deprived of reason governed the tendencies in the depiction of courtship, and so, to combine the two opposites and create the frail harmony of feelings was the combat the novelists tried to win.

II.1. Courtship as Physical Attraction

At one extreme, there is the courtship which is based primarily on the sensual and bodily aspect. In this kind of courting, reason is diminished as the mind is governed by physical obsession with the body of the partner. As Lawrence Stone states, the 18th century introduced “the increasingly open recognition and acceptance of sensuality. One result was the open inclusion of eroticism in marital relations as well as in the extra-marital liaisons to which it has previously been [...] largely confined.”⁶⁴ Yet, the novelists kept handling the sensuality carefully and related it primarily to the sphere of seduction. The sensual is often connected to lust, and therefore seen as sinful, wrong, and most importantly dangerous for women, who often, due to their romantic visions and consequent lack of recognition between virtue and vice, are easy preys to seducers and flatters. With respect to this danger, James Fordyce informs young ladies: “Of artful men the approaches will be silent and slow; all will be soft insinuation: or else they will put on a blunt face of seeming good humour, the

⁶¹ Polhemus 30

⁶² Wollstonecraft 81

⁶³ Rachel M. Brownstein, *Becoming a Heroine* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1994) xix

⁶⁴ Stone 150

appearance of honest frankness, drawing you to every scene of dissipation with a kind of obliging violence.”⁶⁵ Pretending gallantry, seducers treat women as children, making them think that everything they do is for their happiness. If women are not able to push their own interest through, reason and argue, they are lost and the marriage market is virtually closed for them.

Of course, the depiction of seducers varies significantly in individual novels and also their weapons and tactics change with time. Most essential, as Newton remarks, is the shift from physical to psychological violence:

Men’s power in Burney almost always takes the form of force or control in social situations – of assaults in ballrooms or ravishments in carriages. Power is the ability to impose one’s self on another or to defend one’s self from imposition. But in Eliot men’s power is the ability not only to dominate others but to define the self.⁶⁶

Indeed, seduction in *Evelina* is largely represented by the threat of a physical or verbal assault; the heroine finds herself in a perpetual danger. In contrast, Lydia in *Pride and Prejudice* does not fear seduction, she longs for it. She is predestined to end up as a ruined girl since she cannot control her sensuality and has quite unrealistic ideas about romantic love. Jane Eyre even finds her seducer charming and pitiable though he tries to manipulate her to become his mistress, just another Varens. Finally, Maggie’s attraction to Stephen threatens to annihilate her personality and poses a serious danger to her moral integrity.

Apart from seduction, sensuality may appear also as an aspect of a personal affection, yet, in such a case, it is always accompanied with reason and respect, and it is mostly described in hints. In contrast, if the passion and lust stand alone, they are treated as a threat endangering the heroine’s identity.

Evelina

With *Evelina*’s introduction to London society, she immediately becomes an object of interest and a potential prey for seducers. Her beauty and unclear origin render her especially vulnerable; and as her guardians cannot always protect her, she finds herself in perpetual danger. The seducers and flatters who surround her are of different characters, manners and social position. Some of them are aristocrats, other merchants; some only embarrass *Evelina*,

⁶⁵ Fordyce 65

⁶⁶ J. L. Newton. *Women, power, and subversion: social strategies in British fiction, 1778-1860* (NY: Methuen &CO, 1981) 11

others pose a serious threat to her reputation. Yet, all of them make Evelina feel that she is only a woman, therefore helpless and unable to defend herself.

The first man who imposes on Evelina is Mr Lovell, a ridiculous man, who asks her for a dance. Evelina describes him as: “a young man, who had for some time looked at us with a kind of negligent impertinence [...] he had a set smile on his face, and his dress was so foppish, that I really believe he even wished to be stared at.”⁶⁷ At this point, Evelina faces the power of the male gaze for the first time. Being a goods on an overstocked market, the impertinence of lookers seems to be a daily bread for London unmarried girls. Evelina, not yet accustomed to social manners, is so astonished by Lovell’s appearance that she misjudges his air and position as she thinks he virtually desires to be gazed upon and ridiculed; hence she laughs at him and offends him. This is a serious mistake because since this moment, Lovell does not miss a single opportunity to humiliate Evelina in public; for example he hints at her resemblance to Miss Prue, the character from *Love for Love* and a silly country girl. However, Lovell, though being disagreeable, is not a threatening figure and is later silenced by Lord Orville.

Sir Clement Willoughby is a much more dangerous man. Ready to take advantage of Evelina’s innocence, he pretends to be a courtly admirer, a nobleman treating her like a princess. Sir Clement’s tactics is closely connected to his use of language. He uses the power of discourse to confuse and embarrass Evelina. Counting on her delicacy of manners and speech, he virtually renders her defenceless in some situations. For example, when he kidnaps Evelina in his chariot, he calls her a dearest angel, kisses her hand, holds her in his arms and pretends to protect her. His story about a coachman losing his way is laughable; yet, how is Evelina to know this is not true? She is confused, unable to express her real fears and name the danger approaching her. Similarly, when Evelina gets lost in Marylebone gardens and is abused by several young men, Willoughby approaches to rescue her from the painful situation. Yet, as soon as they are alone, he takes advantage of the situation and imposes himself on her. When she protests, he flings himself to her feet, expresses his admiration for her beauty and asks her for forgiveness. Newton comments upon this seducer: “Once Sir Clement has fixed upon her as his sexual prey, he employs the same courtly fiction with greater earnestness to disguise his seductive intentions and to manipulate Evelina’s response.”⁶⁸ Finally, when Willoughby repeats his proposals in Clifton, he tries to soften Evelina up by applying to the romantic notion of a reformed rascal: “you shall govern and

⁶⁷ Burney 23

⁶⁸ Newton 37

direct all my actions, – you shall new-form, new-model me: – I will not have even a wish but of your suggestion.”⁶⁹ To this speech Evelina decidedly responds: “Suffer me [...] to make use of this occasion to put a final conclusion to such expressions. I entreat you never again to address me in a language so flighty and unwelcome.”⁷⁰

Apart from her aristocratic admirers, Evelina has to deal also with her middle-class suitors. Smith and Branghton do not pretend courtliness or respect for Evelina; they simply let her know that she is a property on a marriage market, and as such, she can be treated with insolence. Newton observes: “The status which male privilege and the conditions of the marriage market confer on Smith provides him in turn with the agreeable conclusion that it is natural and even desirable, to women that he impose his will on them.”⁷¹ The truth of this statement may be proved by Smith’s own speech addressed to Evelina: “you must be a little patient [...] there is no resolving upon such a thing as matrimony all at once.”⁷²

Before Lord Orville reveals his intentions to marry her, it is necessary for Evelina to get rid of all her unwanted suitors. She knows well that woman’s reputation is a very frail matter and that any hint of immodesty could ruin her prospects forever. She can also take a lesson from Lady Luisa, the sister of Orville. This aristocratic woman allows her suitors to be impertinent with her and encourages their addresses. Yet, men do not respect her and get soon tired of her. Unlike Evelina, she is not able to prove her virtue and it seems that she will be punished for her carelessness as Lord Merton indicates: “Lady Luisa’s eyes are never off me. She gives me a charming foretaste of the pleasures of a wife! However, it won’t last long.”⁷³

Pride and Prejudice

In comparison with the previous novel, there is a remarkable shift in the depiction of a seducer in *Pride and Prejudice*. Unlike the powerful aristocrats who threaten Evelina with their impertinence, Wickham is an ordinary fop. His only weapons are his appearance and sociability, which render him attractive to young ladies with a weakness for uniforms. Brownstein comments upon his position: “In the world of Jane Austen’s novels, rakes are irresolute and fathers impotent. [...] A young woman is lost not by being taken or given, but by

⁶⁹ Burney 284

⁷⁰ Burney 284

⁷¹ Newton 31

⁷² Burney 186-187

⁷³ Burney 256

throwing herself away.”⁷⁴ Indeed, it seems that if Wickham succeeds with imposing himself on Elizabeth and Lydia, it is because of the girls’ own foolishness and blindness.

Yet, there is one thing Wickham shares with Willoughby, and that is his ability of speech. Elizabeth finds Wickham particularly agreeable as he manages to adapt to the tone of a conversation and the character of his partner. He soon recognizes Elizabeth’s loathing for Darcy and is ready to take advantage of it and make her his ally. When he communicates the history of his acquaintance with Darcy to her, Wickham pictures himself as a humiliated yet forgiving victim of Darcy’s cruelty. He recounts: “His behaviour to myself has been scandalous; but I verily believe I could forgive him any thing and every thing, rather than his disappointing the hopes and disgracing the memory of his father.”⁷⁵ Indeed, it seems that it is precisely the seeming lack of Wickham’s pride which kindles Elizabeth’s compassion towards him and makes her believe his story without reflecting upon its trustfulness.

Of course, there is a good reason for Elizabeth’s blind willingness to see Mr Darcy as an immoral man. Having offended her, Darcy poses a threat to her pride, and the girl is therefore glad for any accusation of Darcy, which would confirm her in the debasement of his character. If Darcy is really as bad as Wickham describes him, Elizabeth may consider herself to be morally superior to her enemy and his remarks become less painful. With Wickham by her side, Elizabeth is even looking forward to the Netherfield ball where she will meet Darcy. She wants him to watch her dancing with Wickham, which will prove both her ability of finding a partner who thinks her attractive, and will make Darcy know that she is acquainted with his past. Indeed, Elizabeth admits she “thought with pleasure of dancing a great deal with Mr. Wickham, and of seeing a confirmation of everything in Mr. Darcy’s looks and behaviour.”⁷⁶

Yet, to her great disappointment, Wickham does not appear at the ball. Though she is willing to accuse Mr Darcy of the sudden disappearance of Wickham, she soon finds out that her idea of this man is strongly idealized. Wickham, though clearly courting Elizabeth, leaves her for another girl with a better dowry, and thus proves that his character is not without a fault. With this lesson Elizabeth learns that her partiality for Wickham was just an illusion as she writes to her aunt: “I am now convinced, my dear aunt, that I have never been much in love; for had I really experienced that pure and elevating passion, I should at present detest his very name, and wish him all manner of evil. But my feelings are not only cordial towards

⁷⁴ Brownstein 95

⁷⁵ Austen 54

⁷⁶ Austen 59

him; they are even impartial towards Miss King.”⁷⁷ The formulation ‘pure and elevating passion’ may be chosen by Elizabeth with a bit of self-irony. Her love for Willoughby was not pure and not elevating as it was really based on self-delusion and her wish to defame Darcy. Eventually, with Darcy’s letter, Elizabeth realizes fully her blindness and blames herself not only for her foolishness, but also for the danger she imposed on her younger sisters who became extremely fond of Wickham.

Indeed, her fear comes true as Lydia indeed elopes with Wickham. She is an easy prey for seducers as she has never been taught to govern her emotions and develop her reason. She lives by her frivolity; and hence her expansiveness, unlike that of Elizabeth, is egoistic and irresponsible. She feels no remorse that she caused pain to her parents and ruined marriage prospects of her sisters. After her elopement, she lives with Wickham as his mistress without any intent to marry him. In other words, with her wild sensuality and romantic images of love Lydia represents the worst of femininity. Polhemus comments upon Lydia’s sexuality: “Erotic desire becomes limitless and, without reason or discipline, loses the power of distinction: humanity becomes imaginary, an army of fantasy whose mission it is to make the self infinitely desirable.”⁷⁸ However, the love between Lydia and Wickham soon dies away and their future suggests no happy ending. Thus, Lydia’s destiny, similarly to that of Lady Luisa, shows how women writers created pictures of the destructive female sensuality and carelessness and how they used the frivolous characters to give a warning to the main female protagonists as not to follow blindly their passions.

Jane Eyre

If the character of Wickham signifies an important shift in the depiction of tempters since Sir Willoughby, Charlotte Brontë goes even further with her portrait of a dark gothic hero. Indeed, it is unclear whether Rochester is a seducer or a victim of seduction, whether he is condemnable or pitiable. Most probably, he combines all these aspects as his Byronic nature renders him both a violently passionate and a tenderly loving man.

When Rochester speaks about his first love affairs, he clearly envisions himself as a victim not only of his lust but also of female sensuality. Bertha, his first wife, attracts him with her voluptuousness and seduces him to marriage; yet, after they are wedded, her sexual needs apparently exceed the limits of feminine delicacy and Bertha’s previous charm transforms, at least in Rochester’s eyes, into madness. Rochester is disgusted by his

⁷⁷ Austen 100

⁷⁸ Polhemus 44

animalistic spouse; he feels betrayed and decides to leave for England. After he safely confines his mad wife in the attic of Thornfield, he wanders through Europe and finally ends up in the arms of a beautiful French opera girl, Celine.

Rochester finds himself devotedly in love with the girl and lets himself be enchanted by female sensuality again. He admits: “so much was I flattered by this preference of the Gallic sylph for her British gnome, that I installed her in an hotel; gave her a complete establishment of servants, a carriage, cashmeres, diamonds, dentelles, &c. In short, I began the process of ruining myself in the received style, like any other spoony.”⁷⁹ Yet, female sexuality proves again a tricky thing and betrays Rochester one more time. His beloved finds herself a lover and the disappointed Rochester wanders through Europe and tries vainly to find comfort with other mistresses, Giacinta and Clara.

With such a bad experience of female sensuality, there is no wonder that the power of the beautiful and dominating Blanche is clearly diminished. Yet, when Rochester brings her to Thornfield to provoke Jane’s jealousy, it seems that Blanche will win Rochester’s heart. Her tactics, however, suspiciously remind those of Celine. Like her, Ingram also admires her ‘gnome’ calling him attractive; she encourages Rochester’s addresses, lets him adore her beauty and secretly speculates on the extent of his fortune. It is then surprising that with all her passion and courage she lets herself be deceived by Rochester. Gilbert suggests: “the charade of courtship in which Rochester engages her suggests a grim question: Is not the game of the marriage ‘market’ a game even scheming women are doomed to lose?”⁸⁰

Finally, it is Jane herself, whom Rochester attempts to seduce and make his mistress. After the revelation of his first marriage, he struggles to convince Jane not to leave him. His speech is passionate and proves both his desperate love and the ability of manipulation: “I am not married. You shall be Mrs. Rochester – both virtually and nominally. [...] You shall go to place I have in the south of France: a white-washed villa on the shores of the Mediterranean. [...] Never fear that I wish to lure you into error – to make you my mistress.”⁸¹ Of course, Jane knows well that Rochester is married and that she would be nothing more than his mistress despite whatever he says. She is aware that in such a state, she would be reduced to a pure body, sensuality without spirit as Rochester described it when talking about his mistresses. Yet, it is difficult for her to resist this tempter, who is at the same time threatening and pitiable, manipulative and noble. She says: “Not a human being that ever lived could wish to

⁷⁹ Brontë 123-124

⁸⁰ Gilbert 12

⁸¹ Brontë 267

be loved better than I was loved; and him who thus loved me I absolutely worshipped: and I must renounce love and idol.”⁸²

Though the temptation is strong, Jane decides to leave Thornfield and Rochester, preserve her moral unity and thus protect her own identity, which is threatened by Rochester’s demands. Menon comments upon the ambiguous passion Jane experiences while being seduced by her beloved: “Brontë perceives sexual love as perilous, entailing the risk of self-annihilation which she sees as occurring through the loss of power inherent in the need for another’s love. At the same time, however, for her that threat to freedom is as exhilarating and erotic as it is terrifying.”⁸³ In other words, the invisible governess dwelling safely in the sphere of the spiritual is excited by the possibility of the bodily attraction. Yet, her passion must not be the animalistic sensuality of Bertha; she must learn how to govern it with her reason. In order to do this, Jane must define herself as both spiritual and physical being, and she must fight against people who try to impose their definitions upon her. She is not a fairy or any other unearthly being as Rochester sometimes calls her and she is also not an object he could decorate with jewels and colourful clothes. She is – and will remain – a frantic wild bird beating its wings against any cage which might usurp her.

The Mill on the Floss

The illustration of female sexuality as Maggie Tulliver experiences it is even more explicit than in *Jane Eyre*. During their courtship, Maggie and Stephen exchange many looks and touches; they explore each other with their senses and finally acknowledge their mutual physical attraction. Maggie Tulliver represents the kind of heroine who is clearly sensual, but also sensible and tender-hearted. Yet, the description of her relationship with Stephen provoked a discussion whether it is normal and adequate for a woman to have such sensual feelings and whether it is proper for a woman to write about them. The *Saturday Review* in April 1860 informed: “but we cannot think that the conflict of sensation and principle raised in a man’s mind by gazing at a woman’s arm is a theme that a female novelist can touch on without leaving behind a feeling of hesitation, if not repulsion, in the reader.”⁸⁴

⁸² Brontë 278

⁸³ Patricia Menon, *Austen, Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, and the mentor-lover* (London: MacMillan, 2003) 2

⁸⁴ Sir Edward Bulwer-Lyton, “Letter to John Blackwood” *The Mill on the Floss*, ed. by Carol T. Christ (NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1994) 448

Similarly to Wickham, Mr Stephen Guest is also not a dangerous seducer, and his ability to tempt Maggie lies primarily in her own desire to be seduced. The first time Stephen appears in the book, he is engaged in a boyish, grotesque situation. Similarly to The Baron in *The Rape of the Lock*, he threatens Lucy and her dog Minnie with scissors. Of course, Lucy is delighted to be courted by Stephen, who is the richest mill-owner in St Oggs. Yet, it is apparent that the relationship between the two of them is not based on equality but on the masculine superiority of Stephen. Indeed, it is Stephen who likes women insipid as Philip reveals and who asks his future spouse to sing “And from my obedience grows my pride and happiness.”⁸⁵ After meeting Maggie, Stephen’s masculine dominance is threatened by his passion. Though unwilling to admit it to himself, he is physically attracted to Maggie with an unbelievable force: “Has he fallen in love with this surprising daughter of Mrs. Tulliver at first sight? Certainly not. Such passions are never heard of in real life. [...] But when one is five-and-twenty, one has not chalk-stones at one’s finger ends that the touch of a handsome girl should be entirely indifferent.”⁸⁶

Maggie and Stephen perceive each other through their senses – hearing, looking and touching. When Stephen sings a song, the strings of passion vibrate in Maggie’s heart; when Stephen touches Maggie’s hand, he is equally lost in his emotions. The power of the gaze is perhaps the strongest element of their mutual sensual exploration and since they meet, it becomes even an obsession for Stephen: “He thought it was sort of monomania with him, to want that long look from Maggie.”⁸⁷

The mingling combination of love, sexual desire and need for protection Maggie experiences in her relationship to Stephen makes her lose her will and subdue herself to the will of someone else. When she elopes with Stephen, she describes the situation suggesting a transient loss of her conscience and consciousness, a metaphorical drowning:

Maggie obeyed: there was an unspeakable charm in being told what to do, and having everything decided for her. [...] All yielding is attended with a less vivid consciousness than resistance; it is the partial sleep of thought; it is the submergence of our own personality by another.⁸⁸

Eventually, Maggie wakes up from her lethargy and she becomes aware of the responsibility for her deed. Yet, she does not blame herself for eloping with a man who just sexually attracts her; instead, she accuses herself and Stephen of “breaking the most sacred

⁸⁵ Eliot 297

⁸⁶ Eliot 309

⁸⁷ Eliot 328

⁸⁸ Eliot 378

ties that can ever be formed on earth. If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie?”⁸⁹ Of course, at this point, Maggie has already hurt both Lucy and Philip and there is no way of taking this back; yet, she finds herself unable to stay with Stephen. This would mean to be confined wholly to the bodily; to be deprived of her spiritual self. This spiritual self is represented by Maggie’s selflessness, which has always governed her decisions.

The fact that Maggie lets herself be seduced and hence hurts other people signifies that the spiritual self is seriously endangered. Ablow comments upon the threat: “Maggie’s attraction to Stephen is involuntary, unconscious, and apparently irresistible. Further, it makes her utterly subject to her desire and to his will.”⁹⁰ However; Maggie is not able to voice her fears about the sensuality which menaces her, as it also menaced Jane, with self-annihilation. She has never been taught to use her language creatively and express herself in singing or drawing like for example Philip. Instead, she prefers acting destructively, returning to St Ogg’s and causing still more pain to herself and her friends.

II.2. Courtship as Personal Affection

Attempting to combine reason and feeling, spirit and sensuality, the courtship as personal affection stands in the middle of the two extremes. Whereas seducers try to reduce women to pure body and mentor-lovers to sheer spirit, suitors in this kind of courtship do not aim to define and subdue their partners, instead, they want to discover their personality and know more about their character. Lawrence Stone describes this phenomenon as “companionship and friendship, a well-balanced and calculated assessment of the chances of long-term compatibility, based on the fullest possible knowledge of the moral, intellectual and psychological qualities of the prospective spouse, tested by a lengthy period of courtship.”⁹¹ Indeed, it seems to be the best mode of courting regarding the potential prospects in marriage. It prepares the partners for sharing their future together and it secures that with a spark of attraction and wit they will not lead a dull and uninteresting life.

In order to achieve this, many word fights have to be undergone and many passionate discussions endured. By learning about each other, finding mutual respect and affection, and finally deciding to accept one’s partner as his/her future spouse, the two people go also through a journey of self-recognition, which is often painful. Yet, it is necessary as it prepares the couple for accepting responsibility for making each other happy, and thus it forms a firm

⁸⁹ Eliot 385

⁹⁰ Rachel Ablow, *The marriage of minds: reading sympathy in the Victorian marriage plot* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007) 76

⁹¹ Stone 182

basis of their relationship. Not surprisingly, courtship as personal affection usually makes the main plot of the novel and the other kinds of courting serve primarily to stress its desirability as the only worthy model of wooing. Hence, its content is very complex and intermingles closely with the other kinds of courtship.

Evelina

When Evelina sets out on her husband quest, she has quite a clear idea of what her future husband should be like. Her ideal is represented by her guardian, Rev. Villars, and the important qualities for her are nobility of character and ability to protect her. The father-like figure she looks for is, of course, embodied in Lord Orville, about whom she later writes: “Once, indeed, I thought there existed another – who, when *time had wintered o’er his locks*, would have shone forth among his fellow-creatures with the same brightness of worth which dignifies my honoured Mr. Villars.”⁹² The fact that Evelina describes her ideal of a partner in these words is not accidental as it corresponds to her vocabulary of feminine delicacy. She is not able to voice her physical attraction towards Orville, and even the possibility of her falling in love with him makes her feel abashed. After she receives the fake letter of Orville, she confides in her friend: “Indeed, I fear I was in greater danger than I apprehended, or can now think of without trembling, – for oh, if this weak heart of mine had been penetrated with too deep an impression of his merit, – my peace and happiness had been lost for ever.”⁹³ Yet, what Evelina does not recognize is that it is actually too late for her because she has already fallen in love with this man. Her innocence and modesty forbid her to see this, but the impression actually was too strong. Being linked to him through various embarrassments she experienced in London and being rescued by him from many painful situations, Evelina’s affection for Orville does not actually disappear even after she is convinced of his immorality, which is proved by her readiness to renew her esteem for him in Clifton.

Indeed, Orville’s role in Evelina’s entrance to society is of a great importance. Being introduced to balls and assemblies, Evelina struggles to preserve her innocence and to appear sociable at the same time. Disposed to looks and judgements of men, she feels insecure and desperately needs a guardian who would help her to acquire appropriate manners. Yeazell describes Evelina’s dilemma: “Yet as she comes precisely in order to be seen, to stand out and be chosen, she remains subject to the contradictory injunction to keep herself modestly

⁹² Burney 217

⁹³ Burney 215

concealed, or at least to avoid any sign of aggressive self-display.”⁹⁴ In such a situation, when the only defence of Evelina is her blush, Orville seems to be her invaluable protector. He rescues her when Lovell attempts to humble her in public; he forgives her that she uses his name to avoid other suitors and does not complain when Evelina’s grandmother asks with insolence for his coach. All these situations bring the couple closer together and give Evelina the opportunity to validate her innocence just by her feeling so embarrassed.

To Evelina, it is clear that proving her innocence is necessary in order to impress Orville, whose ideal of a woman is revealed when he talks about Angelica from *Love for Love*. He asserts: “Angelica bestows her hand rather with the air of a benefactress, than with the tenderness of a mistress. Generosity without delicacy, like wit without judgement, generally gives as much pain as pleasure.”⁹⁵ Fortunately, Evelina manages to combine all desirable feminine qualities, and thus she is able to capture Orville’s heart and win his personal affection. Despite of making such a strong impression on Orville, she remains ignorant of her own feelings towards him. In other words, Evelina admires Orville, she values him as a great friend in spite of Villar’s warning; yet, she does not think about him as about her husband. Yeazell explains this: “Though Evelina’s heart proves to be vulnerable to virtually the first man she meets, [...] her guardian can nonetheless permit her to cross his threshold because she has internalized the prohibition against knowing her own desire – or at least against knowing it until her future husband ‘speaks’ and thus speaks it for her.”⁹⁶

Indeed, Evelina’s love is kindled exactly in the way it is supposed to develop in a delicate woman. John Gregory informs in his conduct book: “in the course of his acquaintance he contracts an attachment to you; when you perceive it, it excites your gratitude, this gratitude rises into preference, and this preference perhaps at last advances to some degree of attachment.”⁹⁷ Thus, Evelina can cross the border between friendship and love without questioning her delicacy or feeling frustration of having no possibility to express her feelings to Orville. Eventually, her worth is proved when Orville proposes her and kneels in front of her, which indicates his respect for Evelina and acknowledgment of her virginal dignity.

Pride and Prejudice

⁹⁴ Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Fictions of modesty: women and courtship in the English novel* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press., 1991) 130

⁹⁵ Burney 69

⁹⁶ Yeazell 126

⁹⁷ Gregory 40

It is at a ball where Elizabeth and Darcy meet for the first time. Traditionally, attending a ball was an opportunity to meet a partner, to discover sympathy for someone from one's own class. Paradoxically, Elizabeth and Darcy begin their relationship by feeling mutual antipathy, which transforms into love only with passing of time and undergone difficulties. At the first ball, Elizabeth experiences the weight of male social power. She, as an unmarried girl, is, similarly to Evelina, exposed to looks and remarks of men present at the ball; her femininity is judged, and in the case of Darcy, severely criticised. Moreover, as it is only men, who can propose a dance to women, Elizabeth has no real defence except for her satire. This she uses abundantly and, at the Netherfield ball, it serves her to punish Darcy for his unsociability. She teases him when dancing: "It is *your* turn to say something now, Mr. Darcy. – I talked about the dance, and *you* ought to make some kind of remark on the size of the room, or the number of couples."⁹⁸ Indeed, their whole dance is a dialogue scrutinising each other's character and criticising their bad qualities. Hence, when Elizabeth hints at Darcy's abuse of Wickham, Darcy warns her against making premature judgments about him "as there is a reason to fear that the performance would reflect no credit on either."⁹⁹

Of course, Darcy wishes Elizabeth to think well of him because at this point, he already knows that he is attracted to her. Like in *Evelina*, in this case it is also the man, who understands his feelings first. Yet, if Orville admires Evelina for her innocence and beauty, Darcy finds Elizabeth bewitching for absolutely different characteristics. Polhemus explains: "Austen imagines that a woman could be loved for the particular qualities of her mind, that her mental energy could be the focus of her attraction, that her complex psychological vitality, rather than her mere beauty [...] or any other of the traditional feminine allurements, could provoke the fall into love."¹⁰⁰

Indeed, Darcy falls in love with Elizabeth because her playfulness and vivacity distinguish her from other artificial girls. He expresses his love and admiration for Elizabeth when he proposes her for the first time in the Rosings park. Yet, the communication of his feelings reveals also his pride and disdain for her inferior connections, which the girl is not willing to suffer at this moment. She criticises Darcy for his snobbishness, due to which, as she thinks, her sister was separated from Bingley, and Wickham became a poor soldier. Elizabeth listens to the proposal with great anger; yet, as she later admits herself, also with the pride that she received an offer from such an influential man. Paris remarks: "If, before,

⁹⁸ Austen 62

⁹⁹ Austen 64

¹⁰⁰ Polhemus 31

Elizabeth was disposed to think ill of Darcy because he had hurt her pride, she is now disposed to think well of him because he had fed it. The more admirable he is, the more gratifying is his proposal and the greater is its tribute to herself.”¹⁰¹ This feeling is even magnified after Elizabeth reads Darcy’s explanatory letter and finds herself mistaken in most of her prejudices concerning him. Yet, it is still not love, which she feels towards her former enemy, and she does not regret her rejection. Anyhow, this scene prepares her for the Pemberly meeting with Darcy, by which time, she is already more inclined to accept him as her potential partner.

In Pemberly, as she walks through various rooms and listens to the housekeeper’s praise of her master, she realizes Darcy’s greatness, his possibilities and influence. Though she later jokes with Jane that she fell in love with Darcy when she saw Pemberly, it may be partially true because she actually found there the real potential for her expansiveness. When she stands in front of Darcy’s portrait, she feels his gaze fixed upon her. Though it is usually a portrait, which is meant to be exposed to looks, in this case it is Elizabeth, who finds herself looked at. Brownstein comments: “Looking at his portrait, Elizabeth can study a fixed manifestation of her lover as she studied it in his letter [...] Seeing him look the way he looked when he looked at her, Elizabeth sees a shadow of herself in his image, as she did when she knew herself by reading his letter.”¹⁰² Indeed, shortly after the Pemberly scene, Elizabeth contemplates on her feelings finding one strange emotion – “Gratitude, not merely for having once loved her, but for loving her still well enough, to forgive all the petulance and acrimony of her manner in rejecting him.”¹⁰³ Hence, similarly to Evelina, Elizabeth also finds her way to love via gratitude and preference; and when it seems that she will lose Darcy for ever, she finally admits herself that she loves him: “and never had she so honestly felt that she could have loved him, as now, when all love must be vain.”¹⁰⁴ Not accidently, Darcy and Elizabeth spend most of their time after their proposal by explaining each other their feelings, ideas and motifs of behaviour. Elizabeth asks Darcy what made him fall in love with her; Darcy wants to know what Elizabeth felt when she received his letter. When all misunderstandings are gone, the couple can finally enjoy their mutual affection and feel sure about the desirability of their marriage.

Jane Eyre

¹⁰¹ Paris 172

¹⁰² Brownstein 130

¹⁰³ Austen 172

¹⁰⁴ Austen 180

Since the first moment Jane and Rochester meet, the two of them engage themselves in a strange power game full of hints, clues and interpretations. It is a word fight for equality, whose rules are defined by men, and in which women are often cheated and deceived. Nonetheless, for Jane, it is the only option in her relationship to Rochester which enables her to preserve her self-integrity.

It is during the first evening of their acquaintance that Rochester and Jane begin to discover and decipher the character, ideas and feelings of each other. Without a doubt, Rochester is a better reader of Jane as he, from his position of a master, has the logical right to question his employee. Yet, it is not his position, which claims him superior as he himself says: "The fact is, once for all, I don't wish to treat you like an inferior: that is (correcting myself), I claim only such superiority as must result from twenty years' experience in age and a century's advance in experience."¹⁰⁵ Soon, it is clear, what kind of an experience Rochester means as he talks about his love adventures and former profligate life-style. Jane, as a woman, whose femininity is annulled by her position as a governess, and who has probably never experienced sensuality, is thus clearly seen by Rochester as a 'little girl'. He tells her: "You never felt jealousy, did you, Miss Eyre? Of course not: I need not ask you: because you never felt love. You have both sentiments yet to experience: your soul sleeps; the shock is yet to be given which shall waken it."¹⁰⁶ Indeed, what Rochester suggests is that one day, Jane's calmness will be shaken by some man who will wake up her feelings and voice her desire for her, and this man, of course, will be him. His prognosis is right, as Jane, similarly to Evelina and Elizabeth, soon begins to feel gratitude towards Rochester and this gratitude transforms to love. Yet, Jane does not need a letter from her guardian or a portrait of her lover to confirm her in her feelings, the source of her confidence about her affection dwells clearly in the beloved himself: "I had wrought hard to extirpate from my soul the germs of love there detected; and now, at the first renewed view of him, they spontaneously revived, green and strong! He made me love him without looking at me."¹⁰⁷ Jane's love springs from Rochester's generosity as he treats her as his partner, talks to her and values her work. She, indeed, proves to be his equal as she virtually saves his life and helps him to care for wounded Mason. Jane actually needs to love and help Rochester in order to feel loveable and useful. When Rochester does not bestow his attention upon her, Jane considers herself ugly and unable. It is

¹⁰⁵ Brontë 117

¹⁰⁶ Brontë 125

¹⁰⁷ Brontë 153

true that Rochester is well aware of this vulnerability of Jane's nature and often uses it as his weapon against her.

First, he uses Blanche to provoke Jane's jealousy and kindle her passion for him. He courts Blanche and devotes his attention primarily to her; meanwhile, he takes care that Jane is present at this charade suffering from humiliation and frustration of unrequited love. At this time, Jane spends her time brooding about her own inferiority to Blanche and Rochester and trying to cope with it. However, her efforts are vain as she keeps falling in love with Rochester more and more deeply. Confirmed in his success, Rochester plays yet another game, in which he pretends to be an old hag and predicts Jane's future. As his identity is masked, it is easy for him to read Jane as an open book and manipulate her. He is sure he can manage to make her fall in love with him but for only one thing which worries him: "I see no enemy to a fortunate issue but in the brow; and that brow professes to say, –'I can live alone, if self-respect and circumstances require me to do so. I need not sell my soul to buy bliss.'"¹⁰⁸

Apparently, what makes Rochester insecure about Jane is her unwillingness to subdue. Hence, he tortures her some more time by pretending to love Blanche and overlooking her. Shuttleworth comments upon his method: "He attempts constantly to baffle her powers of deciphering external signs: he withholds information, offers misleading explanations, and even engages in masquerade, as in his courtship with Blanche, and his impersonation of a gypsy. Jane is never allowed to rest secure in her own interpretative powers."¹⁰⁹

Even after Jane proposes Rochester and confesses her love, the game does not end. On the contrary, Rochester becomes even more ownership-like as he attempts to get hold of Jane's whole personality, her thoughts and spirit. He says: "I must have you for my own – entirely my own."¹¹⁰ As the power game culminates, Rochester tries to impose on Jane's identity by naming her anything from a bird, fairy to an imp. When he calls her an angel hinting so at the image of a moral but passive woman, Jane protests: "I am not an angel [...] and will not be one till I die: I will be myself."¹¹¹ In spite of all her efforts not to subdue, Jane begins to lose the game. She worships Rochester as a god, lets him dress and decorate her like a sultan gilds his slaves. Submerging into Rochester's passion, she becomes unable to resist him. Therefore it is crucial for her to leave the man after he suggests her to become his mistress. When she returns to Thornfield, she automatically continues in their game; yet, this

¹⁰⁸ Brontë 177

¹⁰⁹ Sally Shuttleworth, "Jane Eyre: Lurid Hieroglyphics", *Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre*, ed. Harold Bloom (NY: Infobase Publishing, 2007) 28

¹¹⁰ Brontë 224

¹¹¹ Brontë 228

time, it is her, who teases Rochester and lets him guess who she is; it is her, who tortures him with jealousy by telling him about St. John's proposal. In other words, with Rochester's injury, his inability to see and consequently to threaten, Jane becomes the winner of their game.

The Mill on the Floss

As Maggie is unable to create a relationship based on a personal affection as the harmony of spirit and senses, and prefers therefore either Philip as a mentor-lover or Stephen as a physically attractive man, the representation of a personal affection in this novel is seemingly none. Yet, there is one relationship which combines both the quality of beauty and intellect. Mr Stephen Guest describes his courtship to Lucy: "A man likes his wife to be pretty: well, Lucy was pretty, but not to a maddening extent. A man likes his wife to be accomplished, gentle, affectionate, and not stupid: and Lucy had all these qualifications."¹¹² By these words we can deduce that had Maggie not met Stephen, he would have most probably married Lucy and their marriage would have been reasonably happy.

Lucy may be seen as Evelina living almost one hundred years later; and yet, her innocence and modesty do not bring her the desired reward as they did to Evelina. Her perpetual entrapment within the realm of domesticity renders her vulnerable to submissiveness and dependence. Moreover, Lucy is aware of this but it does not worry her as it is simply the way women are supposed to be in St. Oggs. When she is teasing Stephen about his approach to women, she asks calmly: "And my silliness is part of my charm?"¹¹³ Norbelie sees Lucy's character as the result of her mother's teaching and explains Mrs Deane's expectations: "As a social climber, she sees her daughter as part of competition and as a means to an end; Lucy is marketable and will get the highest prize, Stephen Guest, son of Mr Deane's employer, thereby realising her mother's social aspirations."¹¹⁴ Yet, Lucy's delicate education does not prepare her for the passion she will witness to occur between Stephen and Maggie. Being a perfect 'angel in the house', she does not recognise the spark Maggie kindles in Stephen and is therefore unable to secure her lover for herself. Evelina's tactics of delicacy and modesty proves useless and Lucy ends up a loser instead of a winner.

¹¹² Eliot 299

¹¹³ Eliot 294

¹¹⁴ Norbelie 132

Yet, she still has something Maggie strives for hardly and cannot get – the admiration of Tom. Since their childhood, Tom punishes Maggie by preferring Lucy as his friend. In his adulthood, his feelings become apparently more serious as his colleague Bob suggests: “He's close, Mr. Tom is; but I'm a 'cute chap, I am, an' I thought tow'rt last Christmas as I'd found out a soft place in him. It was about a little black spaniel - a rare bit o' breed - as he made a fuss to get. But since then summat's come over him, as he's set his teeth again' things more nor iver, for all he's had such good luck.”¹¹⁵ It is most probable that the black spaniel is Minnie, and the reason Tom is bitter is that Lucy has another suitor. Of course, his preference to Lucy is clear to Maggie, who is jealous of her brother. Moreover, when she elopes with Stephen, Maggie has a dream resembling the old legend of St. Mary taken across the water by St. Ogg. In Maggie's dream, Lucy is the virginal Mary and Tom is St. Ogg, who takes care of her. Hence, considering Maggie's love for Tom, we may deduce that her decision to come back to her brother could be influenced also by her fear that Lucy might usurp Tom for herself.

Generally, courtship as personal affection does not work in this novel. What Eliot might have wished to suggest by this is the fact that without equality between the two sexes, there is no possibility of establishing a relationship based on the qualities of personal affection, and that love in the patriarchal culture may be either purely reasonable or merely sensual matter.

II.3. Courtship as Knowledge

On the other side of the imaginary scale of the wooing depiction there is the courtship as knowledge. Such courting is based primarily on the process of social learning, which is undergone either by one or both potential lovers, and is a significant aspect of their relationship. This subchapter introduces also the concept of a mentor-lover, a partner, who illuminates the path of understanding, supports the beloved in his/her development of skills and abilities, and helps him/her to achieve self-awareness. The character of a mentor-lover was a well-established concept in literature by the end of the 18th century. In 1724, Mary Davys published her novella, *The Reform'd Coquet*, in which the mentoring fatherly figure of Formator reveals to be a young and desirable lover/husband, Alanthus. Formator/Alanthus virtually forms the character of his beloved and he later harvests the fruit of his labour as he

¹¹⁵ Eliot 316

marries a perfect and tutored girl. The tradition of a mentor-lover continues in the works of Richardson, who describes his female heroines as morally perfect mentor-lovers. Similarly, the process of social learning plays a significant role in the fiction of J.J. Rousseau and appears also in Mary Hays's and Mary Wollstonecraft's writing. In *The Wrongs of Woman*, Wollstonecraft introduces a different concept of a mentor-lover as she describes the life-story of Maria, a young woman, who relies upon male mentors and their views, which eventually ruins her life. Hence, the perception of a mentor-lover varied similarly to the different opinions regarding the use of conduct books. Those who approved of moral advices represented in conduct manuals had no reason to mock or criticise mentors in their fiction; those who promoted more liberal attitudes often considered the mentor-lover as a good target for their criticism of social conventions.

Not surprisingly, if we look into the history of the mentor-lover, it is mostly men, who are the bearers of knowledge. This is perhaps caused by the fact that women had more difficult access to education than men, who were traditionally considered to represent the sphere of reason, law and norms. Arthur F. Marotti explains that this privilege of men in fact "presents females as not simply ignorant of correct behaviours and attitudes but as actually a- or anti-social in their natural state and as needing to be socialized."¹¹⁶ Indeed, to socialize seems to be one of the most pressing tasks of a male mentor-lover, similarly as the capacity to learn social manners and become a part of society is the main task of the subject of his affection. Thus, the improvement of a character logically leads to socialization and may be even rewarded with acquiring a better social position.

When analysing the courtship based on reason and education, it is apparent how powerful a weapon knowledge actually is. Sometimes, it has a form of boring conventions, in other cases, it is a temptation – a ripe apple to be plucked by curious Eve. In any case, by its very nature it transforms the heroine, her character and opinions; it makes her know herself and the world around her. Moreover, the process of social learning may be subdivided into two categories. That is to say that it may follow either conservative or radical tradition of the mentoring. In the conservative tradition, the person acquires social knowledge through a series of social embarrassments and mistaken judgements. In this way, the tradition confirms the conservative role of a woman, who must accept that her knowledge of social order is inferior to the male perspective and that it is essential for her well-being to rely on the male mentor-lover. This tradition is represented in *The Reform'd Coquet* and its traces are apparent

¹¹⁶ Marotti 24

also in *Evelina* and *Pride and Prejudice*, though in these novels, it is in some moments challenged by the necessity to act against social conventions and to risk social embarrassment in order to act right. In the latter tradition, the social learning is accomplished through dialogues and verbal conflicts. Consequently, the female heroine is led to consider various issues and defend her judgements. Indeed, this radical process is reflected in the arguments Jane and St. John Rivers have about the purpose of duty and religion, and it is also present when Maggie and Philip discuss the issues of love and art.

Evelina

The mode of Evelina Anville's education certainly focuses on the accomplishment of her character during her journey from innocence to experience, from countryside to her stay 'en ville'. It is true that Evelina does not aspire to reach some kind of special knowledge, to penetrate into the matters of science and history. Indeed, this would not be desirable as she sees the example of an overeducated woman in Mrs Selwyn and is shocked by her behaviour: "She is extremely clever; her understanding, indeed, may be called *masculine*; but, unfortunately, her manners deserve the same epithet; for, in studying to acquire the knowledge of the other sex, she has lost all the softness of her own."¹¹⁷ Unlike Mrs Selwyn, Evelina needs to learn what is to be *feminine*, that is, how to survive in society as a woman. To achieve this, she uses two tutors, one of them being Rev. Villars, the other Lord Orville.

At the beginning, it is her step-father, who guards her steps and advises what to do; yet, as his letters often arrive late and he cannot understand all that is happening in London, Evelina desperately seeks for another mentor and she finds him in Orville. In several weeks, her letters to Villars express more concern about Orville's opinion than about that of her step-father. After her faux pas at the ball when she uses Orville's name to avoid other suitors, she writes in despair: "I am inexpressibly concerned at the thought of his harbouring an opinion that I am bold or impertinent, and I could almost kill myself for having given him the shadow of a reason for so shocking an idea."¹¹⁸ As this passage implies, at this point, Evelina already declares Lord Orville as the main arbiter of feminine delicacy and manners.

Indeed, Orville himself accepts this role without any difficulties and thus he finds himself bound to visit Evelina after he saw her in Marylebone with prostitutes. Of course, he does not suspect Evelina of being a fallen woman; yet, he thinks it his duty to inform her that

117 Burney 224
118 Burney 60

such a behaviour is socially unacceptable and therefore dangerous to her reputation. Lord Orville informs Evelina:

I will own myself to have been greatly surprised [...] when I met you yesterday evening; in company with two persons who I was sensible merited not the honour of your notice. [...] I was satisfied that their characters must be unknown to you, and I thought with concern of the shock you would sustain, when you discovered their unworthiness.¹¹⁹

The manner of Orville's speech suggests that he either cannot or does not want to talk explicitly about these delicate things with a woman. Maybe finding Evelina too frail, he speaks just in hints not even naming the women as prostitutes. Yet, other times, his delicacy poses a danger to Evelina and makes him unable to help her. This happens after the opera when Sir Clement urges Evelina to let him take her home in his chariot. Of course, Orville knows Willoughby's character; yet, he does not inform Evelina about the great danger which is awaiting her. Hence, Orville as a mentor proves to be unreliable.

It is also Lord Orville, who warns Evelina against meeting Macartney. When he sees Evelina walking with a strange man in a park, he disbelievingly exclaims: "I could never suppose Miss Anville would make an appointment with a stranger."¹²⁰ Had Evelina obeyed him and let her half-brother be, she would not risk being criticised by Orville. Yet, at this point, she already knows that there are moments when one must abandon conventions in order to act right. When she saved her half-brother from a suicide, she contradicted the feminine ideal of conduct books, which describe the proper sphere of women in this way: "No, my friends, you were not made for scenes of danger and opposition. I repeat gain; fearfulness to a certain degree becomes you."¹²¹ Hence, Evelina ventures to disobey the law of convention again and decides to oppose Orville by meeting Macartney. By this act, she finally receives Orville's credit after the due explanation is made. Eventually, the lesson Evelina receives is not simply learning manners and being socialized. She becomes able to distinguish the right from the wrong for herself and to act according to her conscience even if it means to defy social norms.

Pride and Prejudice

119 Burney 200
120 Burney 247
121 Fordyce 112

Similarly to Evelina, who, till her adulthood, respects her guardian Villars above all men, Elizabeth also forms a special mental bond with her father. She has always valued him and was more of his companion than the real Mrs Bennet. The father taught Elizabeth his ironic viewpoint of the world so that they could support each other in their feeling of exceptionality. For Mr Bennet, Elizabeth represents the continuation of his own ego; she is the wife he would have wished to have – supporting his dominance and flattering his vanity. At the same time, she is also his equal in wit and understanding. For Elizabeth, her father represents the ideal of a man, and she is satisfied with her position of a privileged daughter to such a degree that she does not need to think about marriage.

Hence, the father jealously guards the affection of his daughter and keeps the right to advise her in her marriage plans. When he is asked about his opinion about Mr. Collins's proposal to Elizabeth, he asserts: "From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents. – Your mother will never see you again if you do *not* marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you *do*."¹²² Though said with a grain of irony, the speech clearly shows the special affection between Mr Bennet and Elizabeth, which undermines the authority of the mother. It also shows the possible danger that by clinging to her father and his esteem, Elizabeth may in the future exclude herself from the marriage market. Eventually, after she finds out that her father is unable to govern his family and take care of his daughters, Elizabeth finds herself another mentor, a husband. Of course, Mr Bennet is not overwhelmingly pleased when he is told about Elizabeth's decision to marry Darcy though he passes his daughter to her future husband without any further claims on her. Brownstein comments upon Mr Bennet's attitude to his daughter: "Because she has decided to marry, Elizabeth seems to her father no longer the special creature she was when she was altogether his, altogether virgin, altogether different from her mother and other women."¹²³

Yet, there is also another example of a mentor-lover, and that is Mr Collins, Elizabeth's cousin and the heir of Longbourn. However, the way in which Collins is depicted makes him prone to ridicule and mockery. He is, in fact, "not a sensible man, and the deficiency of nature had been but little assisted by education or society; [...] and though he belonged to one of the universities, he had merely kept the necessary terms, without forming at it any useful acquaintance."¹²⁴ Collins lives in the world of conduct books and his language is the language of Fordyce, whose essays he unsuccessfully tries to read to his cousins. One of

¹²² Austen 76

¹²³ Brownstein 103

¹²⁴ Austen 48

his greatest accomplishments is the art of flattery, which makes him doubly ridiculed when compared with the dangerous flatters seducing Evelina.

Acquiring the position of a mentor-lover, Collins does not let himself be advised by Elizabeth or any other women except for Lady Catherine. For him, there are either women to be feared of or women to be petted, and since Elizabeth is not of a higher social rank, she counts among the second group. Thus, when she asks Collins not to introduce himself to Darcy at a ball, Collins confidently responds: "Pardon me for neglecting to profit by your advice, which on every other subject shall be my constant guide, though in the case before us I consider myself more fitted by education and habitual study to decide on what is right than a young lady like yourself."¹²⁵ Consequently, Collins ridicules himself by interrupting Darcy in his conversation and forcing his attention upon him. Acting in this way, Collins proves to be an exemplary fool as described by John Gregory: "But the worst circumstance that attends a fool is his constant jealousy of his wife being thought to govern him. This renders it impossible to lead him and he is continually doing absurd and disagreeable things."¹²⁶ Indeed, Collins fears that Elizabeth may threaten his privilege of a mentor; he may be even jealous of her intelligence and tact. As proved by his reaction, he does not consider Elizabeth as his partner in intellectual matters, but as a pupil to be tutored with fatherly indulgence.

Yet, there is one lesson Collins paradoxically teaches Elizabeth, and this is his marriage to Charlotte, Elizabeth's good friend. Charlotte is a down-to-earth woman, who is aware of her plain appearance and small dowry. Hence she decides to accept Collins to ensure her future and have a household of her own as she herself informs Elizabeth: "I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state."¹²⁷ This surprises and shocks Elizabeth as till now, marriage has been to her a silly matter, which is taken seriously only by such girls as Kitty and Lydia. She is astonished by what Charlotte is going to sacrifice in order to hope for just a moderate happiness. Of course, she disagrees with her friend, she maybe even despises her for her decision; yet, it also makes her consider the matter thoroughly. It seems clear that one day she will have to stop being just a clever daughter and become a wife of some man; otherwise, her prospects are not very favourable. Paris observes: "Elizabeth's pain in this situation is the result partly of hurt pride, partly of a sense of loss, and partly of her feeling of identification

125 Austen 67
126 Gregory 58
127 Austen 85

with Charlotte.”¹²⁸ She may ask whether this is really what happens to women, and whether all other girls including Charlotte or Miss Bingley are right about their marriage hunt.

Besides her father and Mr. Collins, Elizabeth encounters also another mentor figure, who places the mirror in front of her and thus makes her see her faults, and that is Mr Darcy. The two of them are meant to correct themselves, mutually improve their qualities and hence form the desired harmony in their relationship. Their common fault, pride, makes them hurt each other; and yet, whenever one of them manages to humiliate the ego and self-satisfaction of the other, it always brings the moment of self-recognition. Thus, when Darcy proposes Elizabeth for the first time, she accuses him of snobbishness and egoism, whereas he responds by asserting that “these offences might have been overlooked, had not your pride been hurt by my honest confession of the scruples that had long prevented my forming any serious design.”¹²⁹ All in all, this painful situation prepares both of them for their meeting at Pemberly where they get a chance to prove each other how different their characters actually are. While Darcy treats her relatives with gentleman-like politeness and respect, Elizabeth transforms from a satirical shrew to a sweet girl. It is clear that she longs to show Darcy that she also may be an accomplished and lady-like woman :

She had instinctively turned away; but, stopping on his approach, received his compliments with an embarrassment impossible to overcome. [...] Her coming there was the most unfortunate, the most ill-judged thing in the world! How strange must it appear to him! In what a disgraceful light might it not strike so vain a man! It might seem as if she had purposely thrown in his way again! [...] She blushed again and again over the perverseness of the meeting.¹³⁰

Elizabeth undergoes the lesson of social learning in the conservative tradition and the change in her behaviour is apparent. In this scene, Elizabeth is no longer interested in the way she observes and mocks people around her; on the contrary, she is worried about the way other people view and judge her. She experiences the feeling Evelina describes during the balls and assemblies – she feels exposed. Moreover, her reaction to this exposure is the same Evelina and other proper ‘conduct book’ females adopt – embarrassment and blushing. The language of irony is for this time replaced by the language of silence and blushes. Hence, Elizabeth proves her willingness to embrace certain norms of female behaviour though it does

128 Paris 163
129 Austen 127
¹³⁰ Austen 163

not means that she would completely abandon her liveliness and irony. She learns to value Darcy when she finds him valuable, but it does not mean that she would submit to him wholly. She does not let herself be absorbed in Darcy's world; yet, she is able to cooperate with it under the condition of his respect towards her and her family.

Showing thus their repentance, Elizabeth and Darcy can teach each other how to abandon the proud individualism in order to become more sociable. This proves to be necessary as at the end of the book, Elizabeth and Darcy are responsible for the whole social community concentrating at Pemberly. Thus, by being able to improve themselves, they can help other characters to achieve the same goal.

Jane Eyre

When Jane comes to know her cousin, St. John Rivers, she has not a very positive experience with any male authority. John Reed and Mr Brocklehurst tyrannised her, and Rochester urged her to become his mistress. The more it is surprising that the meeting with a mentor-lover in the form of St. John Rivers makes Jane to stumble again and she borders on the edge of losing self-identity once more.

Since her arrival to the Moore House, Jane plays again 'Rochester's game' with St. John as they try to read each other as a deciphered text. While St. John remains a puzzle for his cousin, Jane feels that St. John manages to penetrate into the very depth of her soul: "St. John's eyes, though clear enough in a literal sense, in a figurative one were difficult to fathom. He seemed to use them rather as instruments to search other people's thoughts, than as agents to reveal his own."¹³¹ While Jane struggles to analyse St. John's mind, she, as a good observer, realizes that he is not a happy man. After listening to her cousin's sermon, she expresses her feeling that "St. John Rivers – pure-lived, conscientious, zealous as he was – had not yet found that peace of God which passeth all understanding."¹³²

Shortly after Jane recovers from her illness, St. John starts teaching her the lesson of self-denial and renunciation. He misses no opportunity to elevate her spirit and subdue it to his will. He appreciates Jane as an object, a tool he could use in his noble mission. Without letting her know his reasons first, he asks her to learn Hindustani and Jane, as a good disciple, does not ask about the purpose of learning such a strange language and contains herself with explaining that St. John Rivers simply cannot be refused. With Jane's willingness to obey, St. John Rivers increases his demands on his pupil. Eventually, he informs Jane about his design – she is to go with him to India, as his assistant and as his wife. With easiness of a deity, he

¹³¹ Brontë 304

¹³² Brontë 310

enlightens Jane about the purpose of her very being: “God and nature intended you for a missionary’s wife. It is not personal, but mental endowments they have given you: you are formed for labour, not for love. A missionary’s wife you must – shall be. You shall be mine: I claim you – not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign’s service.”¹³³ Though Jane knows that such an enterprise would cost her her life, she agrees with a firm intention to “throw all on the altar – hearts, vitals, the entire victim.”¹³⁴ She has only one objection to St. John Rivers’s offer; she wants to go with him only as his assistant and not as his wife. This is, however, a condition St. John finds unacceptable. His will, as the will of God, must be absolute, and if he finds it necessary to marry Jane, he admits no argument. It takes much time, energy and courage for Jane to discover St. John’s despotisms. She realizes that her vocation is not something other people can decide for her and that her acceptance of such an offer would not be right. Moglen claims:

St. John must make a religious duty of sexual need. He explicitly denies his own and therefore her own sexuality, fearing the passion which would make him mortal and vulnerable. As she comes to understand St. John, Jane is so distressed by his twisted, sadistic (albeit unconscious) misrepresentation of his own feeling and by his misunderstanding of hers that she angrily and openly opposes him.¹³⁵

By declining the proposal of St. John, Jane eventually finds enough strength to fight masculine authority and reject any mentor-lover. While Rochester tried to reduce her to a pure body when he asked her to be his mistress, Rivers wishes to do the same thing by forcing her to be only a spirit. Yet, this time, Jane knows that to maintain the harmony of her character, she must combine both the elements and decline any patriarchal interference. To complete her individualism, she must get rid of her desperate need to be loved and respected which has led her to dependency. The mysterious night calling when Jane makes her final decision to leave the Moore House may be interpreted as the call of Providence or desperate Rochester; yet, it may also be the voice of Jane’s psyche, which warns her against making a fatal attachment. By acknowledging both her sensual and spiritual needs, Jane acquires maturity and can return to Rochester, who, as she guesses, will accept her new personality as it is.

The Mill on the Floss

¹³³ Brontë 354

¹³⁴ Brontë 356

¹³⁵ Moglen 138

Unlike Evelina and Elizabeth, who worship their fathers as their mentors, Maggie identifies most with the opinions of her brother Tom, so that her love for him borders on the edge of an incestuous relationship. Even the review from 1860 which appeared in *Spectator* notices that Maggie's love for Tom is "clinging, exacting in its excess of lovingness"¹³⁶. Indeed, her idea about her common future with Tom resembles the expectation of a wife-to-be: "When he grows up, I shall keep his house, and we shall always live together."¹³⁷ Her inclination and strange partiality for Tom make her abandon both her suitors, Philip and Stephen; she is not able to form a firm attachment with any man since no future husband can supplement what Tom represents for her.

What Tom teaches Maggie is her position as a woman in the St. Ogg society. Whenever he talks to her, he lets her know his privilege as a man. Even when they are just children and Tom wants to humiliate Maggie for her cleverness, he boasts: "you see, it's not such a fine thing to be quick. You'll never go far into anything, you know."¹³⁸ Since her early childhood, Maggie is often referred to as a misfit, too clever and strong-willed for a woman. She is frustrated by the impossibility to express herself creatively as a woman, she cannot gain respect and admiration for her hard work as Tom; hence, she falls in love with Tom's very masculinity. Polhemus adds to this: "Maggie loves Tom for his potential, for being at the centre of concern rather than on the periphery. He is the right sex, can do things she cannot, can go where she cannot; he is bigger, more mature."¹³⁹ It is true that in some scenes, Maggie is fascinated with Tom's masculinity. This is most clearly visible in the passage when Tom performs his little drama with a sword. At this moment, he demonstrates his masculine power and gains all Maggie's admiration and respect. Though he finally hurts himself, his sister deduces a clear message. It is only men who have power in the patriarchal society, for women, the only acceptable role is to admire, love and envy – even with obsession.

The discouragement of her brother concerning her education hurts Maggie with great intensity. For Maggie Tulliver, art and knowledge are the keys to happiness. Yet, having been often punished for her intellect, the girl is insecure whether it is right to strive for such things. In the view of the St. Oggs society, it is improper and not feminine, and as Maggie struggles to be appreciated and fulfil her duty as a sister and a daughter, she gives up all the pleasure and accepts self-renunciation. All the same, the hunger for beauty is still there and Maggie wanders "if she could have had all Scott's novels and all Byron's poems! – then, perhaps, she

¹³⁶ *Spectator*, April 7, 1860, *The Mill on the Floss*, ed. by Carol T. Christ (NY: Norton, 1994) 441

¹³⁷ Eliot 27

¹³⁸ Eliot 126

¹³⁹ Polhemus 176

might have found happiness enough to dull her sensibility to her actual daily life.”¹⁴⁰ Ultimately, with the appearance of Philip Wakem, her father’s enemy, the temptation grows stronger and Maggie has to use all her arguments to convince herself and Philip about the necessity of her self-denial. Meanwhile, Philip puts all his effort to make Maggie accept and improve her desire for the beautiful. He responds to her asceticism: “There are certain things we feel to be beautiful and good, and we *must* hunger after them. How can we ever be satisfied without them until our feelings are deadened?”¹⁴¹

Philip is a keen mentor-lover. He is confident that he can be a guardian angel of Maggie, that he can help her to uncover the beauty of the world and make her understand her own accomplishments. Yet, it is Philip, who is able to sing, to draw pictures and who knows all the books. Maggie is only a passive receiver of art, preferring not to use her creativity and expresses herself. Accepting as inevitable that it is only men who can develop their talents in a creative way, Maggie uses her potential in a destructive manner, hurting everybody around her including herself. Philip is aware of this tendency, but still, he is glad to be admired. His love for Maggie, being it the only love he experiences except for his affection for his father, is largely possessive. Though he knows that Maggie does not consider him as a lover, Philip hopes that her weird devotion for weak and deformed things will prevent her from rejecting him. Similarly to St. John Rivers, Philip is not contented with only friendship, he wants a wife. Barrett comments upon this: “The form of coercion explored here is that in which the man persists in pressing his suit on the woman, because his pleasure consists in possessing the woman rather than in knowing that he is desired by her.”¹⁴² Though Maggie does not find Philip attractive, she responds to his need for love because it is something she knows well from her own life; and as she finds a joy in self-renunciation, she accepts his proposal with these emotions: “She had a moment of real happiness then – a moment of belief that, if there were sacrifice in this love, it was all the richer and more satisfying.”¹⁴³

Yet, Maggie’s meetings with Philip, however enlightening and refreshing they may be, have one serious fault – they are forbidden. The secret is revealed, and the question is whether accidentally, just at the time when Philip begins to express his claims on Maggie. Tom Tulliver finds out about the secret rendezvous and decides to stop the whole matter resolutely. During the word combat between Tom and Philip, Maggie remains notably passive and silent, which indicates that she is actually glad the whole affair is over. As she later asks

¹⁴⁰ Eliot 233

¹⁴¹ Eliot 246

¹⁴² Dorothea Barrett, *Vocation and Desire* (London : Routledge, 1991) 58

¹⁴³ Eliot 274

herself: “How was it that she was now and then conscious of a certain dim background of relief in the forced separation from Philip?”¹⁴⁴ She does not see Philip till she arrives to her cousin Lucy and meets him only in the society of her relatives and Stephen Guest. At this point, Maggie uses her affection for Philip as a tool which is to help her to resist the sensuous desire she feels for Stephen.

However, the power of her mentor-lover is not strong enough to prevent her destructive efforts; and Maggie ends up in a boat with Stephen – drifting away from St Oggs. Being not taught how to govern her emotions by developing her reason, Maggie becomes a pure victim of her own feelings. As Jane Eyre, she also struggles to define herself as either spiritual or sensual being and hence she is able to have either merely spiritual relationship with Philip or purely sensual affair with Stephen. Unlike Jane, she never manages to combine the two opposites and after her return, the catastrophe is quickly approaching. The letter of forgiveness she later receives from Philip does not save Maggie. As a devoted disciple of Thomas Kempis, her true mentor, she re-embraces the doctrine of self-abasement preferring to live as an outcast and finally to seal her destiny in the last act of destruction.

¹⁴⁴ Eliot 283

III. Marriage

Legally, with The Marriage Act of 1753 (Lord Hardwicke's Act), there were many changes in the legal form of marriages. In order to avoid clandestine weddings, which often happened without the consent of parents, the act stipulated new conditions for the validity of a marriage. Joan Perkins describes the change: "Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753 declared that no marriage in England was valid unless celebrated by an ordained priest according to the Anglican liturgy in a parish church or public chapel of the Established Church, and after due public notice had been given."¹⁴⁵ In practice, this meant that the banns were required to be published at least three weeks before the marriage unless the couple could afford to buy the expensive Marriage Licence from the Bishop. The Marriage Licence enabled privacy of the wedding and was used mainly by higher classes. Yet, as the Act was valid only in England and Wales, many young people headed to Scotland in order to be wedded there without their parents' knowledge, which is, for example, recorded in *Pride and Prejudice*, in which the Bennets hope that Lydia and Wickham are to be married secretly in Scotland.

From the literary viewpoint, wedlock is the desired, though maybe questionable, happy ending of the novel. If the heroine manages to succeed on the marriage market and finds the right partner, the next stage awaiting her is a marriage. Not accidentally, all of the chosen novels focus primarily on the process of courting. This is usually followed by few sentences hinting at the future happiness of the couple, their position in society and description of their mutual love and respect. Hence, marriage is not only the desired aim of most women, it is also the end of heroine's narrative; it is a silence and beginning of guesses and deductions – what comes next? Even after the middle of the 19th century, marriage was seen as the basic achievement of women, as the only possibility of their social elevation. Mill comments upon its importance: "Marriage being the destination appointed by society for women, the prospect they are brought up to, and the object which it is intended should be sought by all of them, except those who are too little attractive to be chosen by any man as his companion."¹⁴⁶

Yet, if it is the symbol of opportunity, happiness and safety, it is also without a doubt a threat. Once accepting a husband, woman does actually accept her master. Her possibilities regarding law and property were clearly subordinate to that of her husband who was mostly allowed to dispose of her dowry freely. Therefore, Mill complains about the prospects of women in marriage: "She can do no act whatever but by his permission, at least tacit. She can

¹⁴⁵ Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in the Nineteenth-century England* (London: Routledge, 2002) 21

¹⁴⁶ Mill 246

acquire no property but for him; the instant it becomes hers, even if by inheritance, it becomes *ipso facto* his.”¹⁴⁷

Indeed, marriage and its depiction in the novels arises many questions, some of them being explicitly handled in the novels, some being hinted or completely silenced. Yet, all of them are in some degree connected to the woman’s position in society and the possibility of preserving her identity in marriage. Listing the essential themes, Brownstein writes that the marriage plot: “poses question about how the sexual is bound up with the moral life, about the coexistence of intimacy and identity, about how very odd it is to choose another so as to choose a self.”¹⁴⁸ Having these issues in mind, the novelists comment upon marriage, its role in the relationship between man and woman, its advantages and disadvantages. The unique picture of their descriptions enables to put the mosaic together and understand the fears and hopes the heroines experience when approaching matrimony.

III.1. Marriage as a happy ending and (or) a threat

Traditionally, if the heroine achieves her goal and marries the man she wants, the novel ends up in a happy ending. She becomes full, completed and there are no other quests to be undertaken. Marriage is her harbour, the place, where she can realize her dreams and expand her feminine soul. Brownstein comments upon this ideal state: “Her quest is to be recognized in *all* her significance, to have her worth made real by being approved. When, at the end, this is done, she is transformed: her outward shape reflects her inner self, she is a bride, the very image of a heroine.”¹⁴⁹

Yet, it is clear that where one journey ends, the other one begins, and with marriage there comes the whole range of duties and obligations. Of course, the prior one is to please her husband and to keep his affection as John Fordyce claims: “She will not only avoid whatever might provoke or displease, but study do deserve well of him by promoting his interest, and raising his reputation.”¹⁵⁰ Of course, it can be argued that the marriages of the heroines suggest not such a severe obedience of a wife. Elizabeth teaches Georgiana that she can tease Darcy and Jane helps Rochester to regain his sight.

¹⁴⁷ Mill 247

¹⁴⁸ Brownstein xvii

¹⁴⁹ Brownstein xv

¹⁵⁰ Fordyce 107

Nonetheless, the heroines have still a good reason to wish to please their husbands because if the men had disapproved them, the wives, though charming and clever, would have ended up in a serious trouble. Joan Perkin explains the conditions women were sometimes subjected to: “Generally speaking, if a husband ill-treated his wife or was unfaithful to her, there seemed little likelihood of her getting a full divorce (even if she could afford the action).”¹⁵¹ Thus, to live in a marriage could be perceived as living on the edge of a knife. In most cases, there were happy, or at least moderately content, marriages, but in case a woman found herself entrapped in a unity with a cruel husband, there were not many possibilities of taking the step back.

Evelina

For Evelina, the proposal of Lord Orville poses a serious dilemma since it reopens the painful question of her origin. Indeed, the real problem troubling Evelina’s mind is not whether she will be happy with Orville, but to whom she actually belongs and hence, who should decide whether she can marry and whom she can marry. Of course, Evelina knows that her guardian Villars would not have objections against her unity with rich and moral Orville; yet, as the proposal scene occurs in the middle of the negotiations with Sir John Belmont, Evelina is convinced that the whole matter should be approved also by her biological father. In other words, as goods on the marriage market, she will be passed from her father to her husband, and to make the transaction legitimate and right, Evelina must first find her father, who will acknowledge her and bless her marriage. She writes to Villars: “it would be highly improper I should dispose of myself for ever, so very near the time which must finally decide by whose authority I ought to be guided.”¹⁵²

Though Evelina is eventually accepted by Belmont as his daughter, she cannot enjoy her so desired daughterhood for a long time. As both Belmont and Orville force her to marry as soon as possible, she has only few days to use the name Belmont before she becomes Lady Orville. This means that despite Evelina’s happiness about her marriage with Orville, wedlock implies also a loss as suggested by R.B. Yeazell: “In a patriarchal culture the acquiring of husbands always entails the losing of fathers, and during the period of courtship the woman’s fear of loss balances precariously against her imagination of gain.”¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Perkin 24

¹⁵² Burney 306

¹⁵³ Yeazell 135

Moreover, Evelina has one more reason to doubt her future happiness in marriage. As the depiction of all other matrimones represented in the novel suggests, the desired unity may end up in catastrophe. Her grandfather, Mr Evelyn, regretted his marriage because his wife proved to be unworthy of him. Caroline, Evelina's mother, married Belmont, who deserted her, destroyed their marriage certificate and left her in shame just because her dowry proved to be less than he had expected. In her letter to Belmont, Caroline bitterly complains about his cruelty: "Oh hardened against every plea of justice, remorse, or pity! How and in what manner, may I hope to move thee? [...] No! I have exhausted all the bitterness of reproach, and drained every sluice of compassion."¹⁵⁴ Caroline's story certainly throws a shadow on Evelina's own happiness. If society takes no measures to punish such a cruel behaviour of a husband to his wife, there is no telling of what is to become even of the delicate Orville. Kenneth W. Graham explains: "The second plot offers a counter-myth based on the novel's perception of relations between the sexes in a social setting characterised by an underlying violence."¹⁵⁵

Indeed, the social setting implies that the violence against women and wives is rarely punished. Captain Mirvan abuses his whole household including his daughter, wife and mother-in-law. Moreover, Mrs Duval becomes also the subject of his cruel jokes as he takes great delight in humiliating and even physically attacking her. There is no help for Mrs Duval or any chance of bringing Captain to law. When Evelina asks Mrs Mirvan to talk to her husband and prevent him from any other mischief, the woman proves to be helpless as she has no power over him. Mrs Mirvan, though being the ideal of femininity and delicacy, finds herself entrapped in a bad marriage. Hence, the question arises if a marriage is really the reward of tender-hearted women or rather their punishment. With such an experience behind her, Evelina's last letter informing about her marriage does not sound so cheerful. She writes to her guardian: "All is over, my dearest Sir, and the fate of your Evelina is decided! This morning, with fearful joy, and trembling gratitude, she united herself for ever with the object of her dearest, her eternal affection."¹⁵⁶ Indeed, the choice of vocabulary is suspicious as 'all is over', 'fate is decided', joy is 'fearful' and gratitude 'trembling' – 'for ever'.

¹⁵⁴ Burney 280

¹⁵⁵ Kenneth W. Graham, "Evelina: Marriage as the Dangerous Die" *Evelina*, ed. Stewart J. Cooke, (NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1998) 411

¹⁵⁶ Burney 336

Pride and Prejudice

Similarly to *Evelina*, marriage in this novel stands for the reward of the heroine and it provides the desired space in which Elizabeth's female soul can expand. It gives her new social opportunities, prestige and refuge from her embarrassing family. Yet, the distribution of happiness in a marriage differs from the previous novel. Whereas the gentle and innocent *Evelina* gets the best man in the novel together with the title of a countess, Jane, similarly mild and tender-hearted, has claim only to the second best price. At the end of the novel, the proud and lively Elizabeth surpasses her in wealth as well as in happiness.

Yet, Elizabeth Bennet's views about marriage and matrimony are from the beginning rather sceptical and there is a good reason for it. The match between her mother and father is a disaster as there is no love or mutual respect between them. Mrs Bennet is a frivolous, silly, garrulous woman, who does not care about her family except for the marriages of her daughters. She spends whole days by chattering and gossiping as she has no real aim in her life. Mr Bennet "fatigued with the raptures of his wife"¹⁵⁷ closes himself in his study, preferring not to care about the family and leaving his younger daughters to be spoilt by his wife. Moreover, he constantly teases Mrs Bennet and thus actually humiliates her in front of their children. Though Elizabeth admires her father, it is clear, that such a model of family must be repugnant to her. It is then no wonder that she does not intend to marry and despises all the girls who engage themselves in the marriage hunt.

Yet, the greatest sceptic about the marriage matters in this novel is Charlotte, Elizabeth's friend. She considers marriage as the necessary affliction imposed on women by the patriarchal society. Being realistic, she has no illusions about husbands taking them just as the means to gain her own home and have her own family. She explains to Elizabeth:

Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. If the dispositions of the parties are ever so well known to each other, or ever so similar before-hand, it does not advance their felicity in the least. They always contrive to grow sufficiently unlike afterwards to have their share of vexation; and it is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life.¹⁵⁸

Indeed, Charlotte follows her doctrine precisely as she chooses Collins for her future husband. Being arrogant and silly, Collins does not represent the best of manhood; yet, Charlotte decides not to see his faults and focuses rather on his status and property. When

¹⁵⁷ Austen 6

¹⁵⁸ Austen 16

Elizabeth visits her friend, she is clearly curious about Charlotte's happiness in marriage, and when all three of them are together, she observes the situation: "When Mr. Collins said any thing of which his wife might reasonably be ashamed, which certainly was not unseldom, she involuntarily turned her eye on Charlotte. Once or twice she could discern a faint blush, but in general Charlotte wisely did not hear."¹⁵⁹ In fact, Charlotte's marriage is the reversed version of Bennet's wedlock, only in this case, it is the wife, who is reasonable and the husband, who is foolish. Yet, Charlotte certainly finds a kind of happiness, though it is not the overwhelming bliss Elizabeth later experiences with Darcy. It secures her financial-wise and provides her with new social opportunities. Hence, finding what she expected, Charlotte is content. Alistair Duckworth comments upon her choice: "Charlotte's marriage to Collins is not the total loss of integrity that Elizabeth considers it, for it shows her willingness to become part of society, to play a social part."¹⁶⁰

Nonetheless, it is not only Charlotte's marriage, which is overshadowed by doubts and compromises. From the beginning of the book, Darcy is seen as arrogant, snobbish and proud man, and though in the second half of the book Austen takes great pains to assure readers about Elizabeth's misinterpretation of Darcy's character, the transformation is not very convincing. Darcy feels himself justified to interpret and judge Jane's character better than his friend Bingley, who knows her more than Darcy. Moreover, his pride never diminishes, it only becomes justified by Elizabeth as it is apparent by the fact that Darcy never accepts all relatives of his wife – her mother and Lydia are excluded from Pemberly. Most importantly, Darcy feels clearly superior and dominant to the women in his own family. He blames his mother for spoiling him and encouraging him in his egoism, and humiliates his aunt, Lady Catherine as he decides to ignore her after she sends him an abusive letter about Elizabeth. Though this lady proves to be extremely disagreeable and her ideas misleading, she is, more or less, only the exaggerated picture of Darcy's own fault, arrogance. At first, Darcy tolerates his aunt's trespasses and when she insults Charlotte about her piano skills, Darcy looks only "a little ashamed of his aunt's ill breeding"¹⁶¹ and says nothing. Later, as he struggles to prove his own worth in Elizabeth's eyes, he turns against his aunt resolutely and severs his ties with her. In other words, Darcy is not willing to tolerate his own fault in his aunt. At the end, he must differentiate himself from her in order to make his transformation believable, and thus he teaches her her lesson and lets her wait for him and his wife on the stairs at Pemberly.

¹⁵⁹ Austen 104

¹⁶⁰ Alistair Duckworth, "Pride and Prejudice: The Reconstruction of Society" *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. by Donald Gray (NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2001) 313

¹⁶¹ Austen 115

As for Darcy's last female relative, his sister, she worships him as a deity as Elizabeth herself describes: "Her brother's recommendation was enough to ensure her favour: his judgement could not err [...]"¹⁶² Indeed, with such attitude to women in his family, Elizabeth can worry about her position as his wife. It is apparent that Darcy does not abide the weakness in character which his female relatives may have; he wants them to be perfect. He is the ruler in the masculine world and hence he may decide what roles his sister, aunt or wife will play in his realm. If he allows Elizabeth more freedom in her behaviour towards him, he is also the one, who can take this freedom back.

Jane Eyre

Jane is brought up in the Lowood School with little expectations that she will ever marry. Because of their poverty and low social status, Lowood girls are excluded from the marriage market and their only hope is to become a teacher one day. As such an outcast, Jane develops very sceptical approach to marriage and she does not hesitate to communicate it. When Rochester as an old hag asks her about what she observes in looks and gestures of people, she responds: "Oh, I have not much choice! They generally run on the same theme – courtship; and promise to end in the same catastrophe – marriage."¹⁶³ Yet, it is probable that Jane's scepticism springs from her frustration that she, as an unloved governess, can only witness courtship and marriage, but never experience them on her own. Hence, when Rochester tells her about his plans to marry Blanche, she takes this as a matter of course and does not complain; however, at the same time, she feels the necessity to express her feelings towards him, and thus she actually proposes him a marriage. After Rochester assures Jane of his love to her, the girl has all reasons to be happy. Yet, she is not as blind as to overlook Rochester's ownership-like attitude towards her and she starts worrying about their relationship after the marriage. She tells Rochester about her fears: "For a little while you will perhaps be as you are now, – a very little while; and then you will turn cool; and then you will be capricious; and then you will be stern, and I shall have much ado to please you."¹⁶⁴

The most striking evidence of Jane's worries are her dreams which torture her shortly before their marriage. In these dreams, she always carries a little child in her arms and she struggles to catch up with Rochester, who is a long way before her. As the distance between them grows with every second, Jane becomes desperate and wakes up. With regard to Jane's

¹⁶² Austen 175

¹⁶³ Brontë 174

¹⁶⁴ Brontë 228

past, we can interpret the small child as her Lowood self – dependent, striving for love and unconfident. It is clear that with such a self, Jane is unable to be equal to Rochester. Instead, as he dresses her and decorates her with his jewels, she assumes the role of a dependant, a slave or a mistress. As such, she becomes another Celine, Giacinta or Clara, who were all given expensive presents by Rochester and were left abandoned. Fighting against her growing vulnerability, Jane informs Rochester: “Do you remember what you said about Céline Varens? – of the diamonds, the cashmeres you gave her? I will not be your English Céline Varens. I shall continue to act as Adèle’s governess; by that I shall earn my board and lodging, and thirty pounds a year besides.”¹⁶⁵ Yet, her efforts are vain since she is not strong and confident enough to resist and rebel Rochester. It is crucial for her to separate from the man for a while and cope with her past and complexes. The episode at the Moor House and her conflict with St. John Rivers make her stronger and hence she can return to Thornfield without fear of any further submissiveness.

Indeed, when she comes back to Rochester, their positions are reversed. The Byronic self-willing, masterly character is subdued as he is blind and lamed, meaning dependent. Resuming their old game, it is now Jane, who sets the rules and who has all the possible advantage. She knows Rochester’s complete story whereas he knows nothing about her stay at the Moore House, she can torture him by descriptions of handsome St. John. Moreover, Jane assumes Rochester’s right of naming and defining since she compares her beloved to an unlit lamp or featherless eagle. It is apparent that Jane is glad for the new state of affairs as she herself admits: “I love you better now, when I can really be useful to you, than I did in your state of proud independence, when you disdained every part but that of the giver and protector.”¹⁶⁶

It seems that with Rochester ‘in chains’, the two of them can have a happy marriage; yet, there are some elements to spoil the happy depiction of matrimony. First, by the Common Law, all Jane’s money belongs after their marriage to Rochester, so she is actually dependent upon him financial-wise. Moreover, with the partial recovery of Rochester’s sight, he stops being absolutely helpless. Last, the place of their dwelling is conspicuous as it is both isolated and unhealthy, which is proved by the fact that Rochester did not even consider it suitable for Bertha. Gilbert comments upon Ferndean: “As a dramatic setting, moreover, Ferndean is

¹⁶⁵ Brontë 237

¹⁶⁶ Brontë 392

notably stripped and asocial, so that the physical isolation of the lovers suggests their spiritual isolation in a world where such marriages as theirs are rare, if not impossible.”¹⁶⁷

The Mill on the Floss

Like Elizabeth Bennet, Maggie also comes from the family, in which there is a dominant father and a silly unable mother. Mr Tulliver consciously chooses his wife because she cannot be his equal and therefore does not threaten his authority. Whereas Elizabeth responds to such a situation with sarcasm, Maggie finds a refuge in romantic books, poetry and blind devotion for her brother. If she later renounces most of these things and decides to accept asceticism as her destiny, she also gives up her expectations about marriage. When she promises her love to Philip, it is a sacrifice, which she later willingly rejects; and when she experiences the physical attraction to Stephen, it is a temptation, which she also refuses. Indeed, the image of a marriage as either a sacrifice or a temptation is rooted deeply in the St Oggs society. For Mrs Tulliver or Mrs Moss, marriage is martyrdom one must simply endure. Mrs Tulliver suffers when her husband loses the suit and thus deprives her not only of his but also of her property; and Mrs Moss marries poorly and becomes dependent upon her brother. On the other hand, there is a marriage as temptation, in which a wife is molycoddled by her husband and maintained in the state of perpetual childhood. This is the kind of marriage Stephen offers Lucy and which is perceived as the best woman can get from matrimony.

In fact, Maggie is closer this matrimonial bliss than any other woman in the novel. When she elopes with Stephen, he proposes her exactly the kind of future in which she will have no troubles and no responsibility. Indeed, Eliot suggests that had Maggie married Stephen, her return to St Oggs would not have been as painful as she imagines. She would have been an object of curiosity for some time, but as a wife of a rich and influential man, she could easily face all the gossips. The novelist describes the public opinion:

If Miss Tulliver, after a few months of well-chosen travel, had returned as Mrs. Stephen Guest, with a post-marital trousseau, and all the advantages possessed even by the most unwelcome wife of an only son, public opinion, which at St. Ogg's, as else where, always knew what to think, would have judged in strict consistency with those results. [...] What a wonderful marriage for a girl like Miss Tulliver – quite romantic!¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Gilbert 803

¹⁶⁸ Eliot 396-397

In other words, if Maggie had married Stephen, all responsibility for the deed would have fallen on her husband; and he, with his social position, could easily bear the burden. Yet, what would this do to Maggie? Of course, as Stephen's wife she would be provided for; however, she would be also deprived of her personality, she could not decide for herself, she could do no wrong but also no right. In other words, this would be the end of Maggie as she was depicted throughout the novel; it would be her complete self-annihilation, submerging in Stephen's will, her symbolic gilded death. Rachel Ablow comments upon this: "In *The Mill on the Floss*, by contrast, marriage itself constitutes a kind of 'murder,' for it 'drowns' one in one's love for and absorption in the beloved."¹⁶⁹ What Maggie eventually experiences is a quite different fusion. Since childhood, she is in love with water and in the end of the novel, she symbolically returns to her childhood love:

O how welcome, the widening of that dismal watery level – the gradual uplifting of the cloudy firmament – the slowly defining blackness of objects above the glassy dark! [...] now she was in action; [...] but she was hardly conscious of any bodily sensations – except a sensation of strength, inspired by mighty emotion.¹⁷⁰

Indeed, this passage raises more questions than it gives answers. Why does Eliot use such a sensual language? Does the passage indicate the submergence of Maggie's consciousness with some eternal element as water? However, it could also describe Maggie's sensuality, her sexual need, which cannot be accommodated in any Victorian marriage. The truth remains that it is water, in which Maggie always lost her consciousness as for example when she went fishing with her brother or eloped with Stephen; her sensuality always betrayed her. Yet now, she is in action as she herself says. This might indicate that she finally accepts her sensuality and dares to look under the calm surface of water. What she finds there is the sleeping Bertha – confined, mad, but self-aware.

III.2. Out of the marriage market

To complete the depiction of courtship and matrimony, it is necessary to look also behind the curtain of the marriage market. With closer examination one can realize that each of the selected books actually contains two categories of women, though only one of them is

¹⁶⁹ Ablow 73

¹⁷⁰ Eliot 419

the focus of the reader's attention. It is the young and 'marketable' women, whose story is the important one, who struggle to succeed on the marriage market and to find themselves the desired partner. Living in the shadow of these characters, there are women who stand out of the marriage market, being no longer young and beautiful. They either lose or avoid the protection of men in a marriage, acquiring thus something of the symbolic masculine independence. The status of these women is essential to understand in order to complete the picture of a marriage in the novel. As they live without any masculine authority to interfere in their matters, they are seemingly their own masters and should enjoy greater freedom than women who are socially submitted to their husbands. Indeed, Jane Spencer discusses the status of widows in the 18th century society in quite favourable terms: "The widow [...] held the most independent place a woman had in society. Freed from masculine authority she could trade on her own account, in many cases taking over her husband's business."¹⁷¹ On the other hand, Spencer mentions the trend in the 18th century middle-class society, which began to imitate the gentility of its social superiors. Hence, the women did not work and their economic opportunities declined. In such cases, when the widow was left without money after the death of her husband, she often found herself in poverty.¹⁷² Widows or unmarried women were consequently considered as useless; they had little possibility of earning their own money and had no man who would provide them with protection and economic support. Such is the destiny of Mrs. Fairfax in *Jane Eyre* or Mrs. Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*, who rather stay at their masculine relatives than face poverty. Yet, the widowed or unmarried women cannot be seen simply as victims without any power. They often aspire to gain something of the masculine authority, they are angry when they are cheated or mocked by men, and struggle to challenge the symbolic order of the male-governed world. Thus, beside the group of helpless and dependent women, there is a specific category of 'raging women', who are generally seen as unfeminine and unfitting within their female social roles. By refusing to accept the masculine authority, these women logically cannot enjoy the traditional romantic happy ending. Sarah Ellis laments their destiny in her conduct book: "What pen can describe the wretchedness of that woman who finds herself doomed to live unloved; and to whom can she look for confidence and affection, if shut out from the natural sources of enjoyment at home?"¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986) 12

¹⁷² Spencer 18

¹⁷³ Ellis 216

Evelina

Evelina's entrance to society is accompanied by her fear that she will attract unwanted attention and that she will look out of her place. Indeed, when her grandmother, Madame Duval, appears on the scene, her worries prove grounded as all looks are captured by Duval's appearance. Not caring about conventions and social manners, ignoring the proper behaviour recommended for her age, Duval "dresses very gaily, paints very high,"¹⁷⁴ and dances minuets without noticing she is the object of mockery. Most importantly, Madame Duval ventures to fight male authority by arguing with men, especially with Captain Mirvan, which often brings her into trouble. She opposes Captain's hatred against everything un-English, fights his prejudices and does not pay attention to his commands. Of course, Captain Mirvan, who is not used to such behaviour of women, uses his power to punish Duval for her boldness. When their chariot gets broken, it is probably him, who pushes Duval and du Bois into the mud leaving them without help. As Duval has no powerful masculine protector who would either offer her his hand or revenge her, the only weapon she can use is her anger. Hence, when Captain repeatedly mocks her appearance after the chariot accident, she acts in despair and frustration: "The rage of poor Madame Duval was unspeakable; she dashed the candle out of his hand, stamped upon the floor, and, at last spat in his face."¹⁷⁵ To this, the Captain reacts by demonstrating his physical dominance and he violently shakes Duval so that the old lady is forced to cry for help.

Since the only man who could possibly carry out vengeance on Mirvan is the feminine du Bois, Captain feels encouraged in this sort of unequal fight and repeats his trick one more time when he attacks Duval's chariot as a robber. This time, Duval is finally defeated as Evelina describes: "She was sobbing, nay, almost roaring, and in the utmost agony of rage and terror. [...] Almost bursting with passion, she pointed to her feet, and with frightful violence, she actually beat the ground with her hands."¹⁷⁶ Indeed, in this case, the humiliation of the Captain's enemy goes even further as he virtually dehumanizes Duval, reducing her to an animal unable to speak or move.

Thus, in Duval's case, masculinity in a woman is severely punished, and the woman has no means of defence except for her verbal accusations. Even when Duval finds out that the robbers were the Captain and Sir Clement and she confronts them with her knowledge,

¹⁷⁴ Burney 44

¹⁷⁵ Burney 55

¹⁷⁶ Burney 121

she threatens them only with her speech: “I’ve found you out, I assure you: so if ever you go to play your tricks upon me again, I’ll make no more ado, but go directly to a justice of peace.”¹⁷⁷ However, Duval does not go to justice and she does not start a lawsuit. Consequently, she is not able to protect herself or her grand-daughter against the Captain and Sir Clement. Her desire to fight men verbally, to be seen and to be heard has the clear subtext of vulgarity and does not help her to achieve anything. Moreover, it makes her blind to the real danger which is imposed on Evelina. In this way, Madame Duval represents the powerlessness of masculine language used by females. By assuming this authority of language without any trace of female delicacy, Duval is ridiculed and mocked by her own weapon – her tongue.

Yet, it is not only the Captain, who can afford to degrade women freely. When Lord Merton sees Mrs Selwyn, he mockingly exclaims: “I don’t know what the devil a woman lives after thirty: she is only in other folk’s way.”¹⁷⁸ What Merton implies is that the value of women consists purely in their beauty and thus the older Selwyn is an inconvenient addition to beautiful Evelina. Moreover, Selwyn challenges the masculine superiority of Merton and his companions by her wit and ‘masculine education’.

Yet, Selwyn’s desire to impress men by her power of reasoning poses a threat to Evelina, who is in such moments unguarded and thus vulnerable. Selwyn presumes that to be an equal partner to men, she must be twice as intellectually able to impress them with her knowledge and thus she does not miss an opportunity to prove her wit. Indeed, she manages to mock Lord Merton and Coverley when she uncovers their ignorance about Homer; she also achieves to meditate the meeting between Evelina and her father. Yet, on the other, she is not able to protect Evelina against Willoughby or to prevent the disgraceful bet when Merton and Coverley force two old women to run a race. In a sense, Selwyn’s power is limited within the scope of her reason and wit; when it comes to real physical danger, she is revealed to be helpless like Madame Duval. Kristina Straub comments: “Mrs. Selwyn’s characterization confirms both the powerlessness of the mature woman and the need for romantic love – which at least makes women ‘treasures’ – as an escape from the grimmer aspects of that powerlessness.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Burney 174

¹⁷⁸ Burney 226

¹⁷⁹ Kristina Straub, *Divided fictions: Fanny Burney and feminine strategy* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1987) 27

Pride and Prejudice

Since the character of Mrs Bennet is often mocked and ridiculed, it is easy to consider her only as a silly incompetent woman. Yet, behind her hysteria about the marriage prospects of her daughters and behind her blind admiration of aristocracy and riches, there is a profound fear about her insecure future. The danger which awaits the Bennet family and which terrifies Mrs Bennet is described at the beginning of the seventh chapter:

Mr. Bennet's property consisted almost entirely in an estate of two thousand a year, which, unfortunately for his daughters, was entailed in default of heirs male, on a distant relation; and their mother's fortune, though ample for her situation in life, could but ill supply the deficiency of his. Her father had been an attorney in Meryton, and had left her four thousand pounds.¹⁸⁰

Hence, the position of the family is such that it stands on the brink of poverty. If Mr Bennet dies, the whole inheritance will, due to the entailment, pass to a male in another branch of the family, that is, to Mr Collins. Even the small dowry of Mrs Bennet cannot save the situation as Donald Gray asserts telling that the meaning of such money is that “on her marriage a woman’s money will pass as a capital to her husband. Having been one of the reasons for her desirability, her money will become one of the sources of the income by which his economic status is measured.”¹⁸¹ This means that the potential widowhood of Mrs Bennet would leave her and her daughters in destitute. The widow would be most probably dependent on the charity of her brother in London and would have to move from Longbourn. Moreover, she would have no means to secure the economic position of her daughters on the marriage market.

It is then not surprising that Mrs Bennet laments her destiny as a potential widow and even exclaims in terror when she finds out that her husband is leaving to find the eloped Lydia and Wickham: “And now here's Mr Bennet gone away, and I know he will fight Wickham, wherever he meets him, and then he will be killed, and what is to become of us all? The Collinses will turn us out, before he is cold in his grave; and if you are not kind to us, brother, I do not know what we shall do.”¹⁸² The only hope for Mrs Bennet is to marry her daughters well so that they will be able to look after each other and after their mother. With such a goal,

¹⁸⁰ Austen 19

¹⁸¹ Donald Gray, “A Note on Money” *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. by Donald Gray (NY: Norton, 2001)

¹⁸² Austen 186

it is understandable that what she values most about the suitors of her daughters is their property: “Oh, my dear Lizzy! pray apologise for my having disliked him so much before. I hope he will overlook it. Dear, dear Lizzy. A house in town! Every thing that is charming! Three daughters married! Ten thousand a year! Oh, Lord!”¹⁸³ Indeed, what else is there for Mrs Bennet to notice than the worth of money? The fact that her daughters marry rich means not only that she herself will not end up in poverty, but also that her daughters will avoid the insecurity she had to face in her own marriage.

Following the tradition of angry women, Austen introduces the character of Lady Catherine de Bourgh, aunt of Mr Darcy. Though she plays a minor role in the book, her interference in the matters serves the main plot as it makes Darcy and Elizabeth confess their mutual love. It is the arrogance and pride of Lady Catherine, which bring the young couple together. Yet, though these are characterizations, which make Darcy more interesting and powerful, in the case of Lady Catherine they seem to lose their efficiency. Lady Catherine is just a woman and as such, she has no right for the haughtiness of her nephew. She may be the goddess of Mr Collins; however, all other characters can mock her as they want.

The reason of this mockery lies in the anachronistic behaviour of Lady Catherine. In, fact, as Edward Ahearn suggests, even the name de Bourgh implies an anachronism:

To be named de Bourg(h) while asserting claims to aristocracy, however, is to be caught in a historical paradox, since the word in medieval French designated a fortified town, whose inhabitants, possessors of a special status, existed in contradistinction to the landed nobility.¹⁸⁴

Indeed, the way Lady Catherine treats the people around her is rather feudal. She likes to decide the lives of other people, to have power over those who are socially subordinated to her. Elizabeth describes Lady Catherine’s behaviour in her parish noticing that

though this great lady was not in the commission of the peace for the county, she was a most active magistrate in her own parish, the minutest concerns of which were carried to her by Mr. Collins; and whenever any of the cottagers were disposed to be quarrelsome, discontented or too poor, she sallied forth into the village to settle their differences, silence their complaints, and scold them into harmony and plenty.

As for her womanhood, Lady Catherine, similarly to Madame Duval, likes to be exposed to gazes and admiration. In this way, she responds to the Restoration idea of a

¹⁸³ Austen 247

¹⁸⁴ Edward Ahearn, “Radical Jane” *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. by Donald Gray (NY: Norton, 2001) 400

woman, who, like Angelica in *Love for Love*, does not hesitate to mentor men and exercise her power over them. Yet, this world in which these women try to live is lost, and thus their battle for recognition and power is also forfeited. The new idea of a perfect woman implies silence, morality and domestic care. No man in the beginning of the 19th century will let himself be tutored by Lady Catherine, except for Mr Collins and other men worshipping the power of riches and social status. Nonetheless, even the aristocratic origin of Lady Catherine cannot secure her the blind admiration and submission of lower classes. Hence, when she comes to Elizabeth to prevent her from marrying Darcy, she proves absolutely powerless. She threatens Elizabeth: “You are to understand, Miss Bennet, that I came here with the determined resolution of carrying my purpose; nor will I be dissuaded from it. I have not been used to submit to any person's whims. I have not been in the habit of brooking disappointment.”¹⁸⁵ Elizabeth’s answer does not reveal fear; on the contrary, she mocks Lady Catherine and thus becomes the winner of their word fight.

Knowing that the influence of Lady Catherine is limited to words and threats and that the real authority is owned by her nephew, she responds: “*That* will make your ladyship's situation at present more pitiable; but it will have no effect on *me*.”¹⁸⁶ Indeed, the effect is none and though Lady Catherine promises to act in order to forestall the marriage, she does not succeed. She cannot forbid Darcy to marry whom he wants or influence the matters at Pemberly; in fact, her social influence does not even allow her to make Darcy an outcast in the aristocratic circles. Hence, the novel tellingly ends by Lady Catherine waiting on the couple at Pemberly – defeated and disappointed.

Jane Eyre

Similarly to Lady Catherine, Mrs Reed is also a widowed woman living alone with her children. Her power over little Jane is clear as she is to be her guardian; yet, instead of the beloved step-daughter, Jane is treated as a dependant, less than a servant because she cannot earn her living. Nonetheless, however powerful Mrs Reed may seem to be, she is also a subject to an authority. Though her husband is dead, his memory and masculine dominance is still represented by the Red Room. Hence, though this room reflects the subconscious processes of Jane’s rebelliousness and female sexuality, it simultaneously represents the male presence and its power in the house. Besides the intimacy of drawers and red tapestry, it is also the place where Mr Reed died and where the superstitious servants expect to see his

¹⁸⁵ Austen 232

¹⁸⁶ Austen 232

ghost. Even Mrs Reed avoids coming into this room if it is not necessary as Jane describes: “Mrs Reed herself, at far intervals, visited it to review the contents of a certain secret drawer in the wardrobe, [...] and a miniature of her deceased husband; and in those last words lies the secret of the red room – the spell which kept it so lonely in spite of its grandeur.”¹⁸⁷ Jane rightly guesses that it is the memory of her husband, who made her promise to care for Jane as for her own child, which keeps haunting Mrs Reed. Though being an independent woman, she is not able to deal with Jane and send her away without having the consent of another male authority, Mr Brocklehurst. With his approval, she finally finds the capacity to oppose the wish of her long-dead husband. Yet, as soon as Brocklehurst is away and Mrs Reed and Jane are together alone, the fight begins again with Jane’s re-kindled passions. Hitting at her aunt’s fear of the patriarchal authority, she blames her for her unloving care: “My uncle Reed is in heaven, and can see all you do and think; and so can papa and mamma: they know how you shut me up all day long, and how you wish me dead.”¹⁸⁸ Indeed, Mrs Reed feels afraid as Jane recognizes with satisfaction, and she leaves the room unable to fight a small child just because Jane manages to use the power of a male authority for her own benefit. Even years later, when Jane visits Mrs Reed shortly before her death, her aunt feels remorse about her ill-treating Jane not because she would become fond of her niece, but because she still fears what consequence will come out of her broken promise to her husband.

If Mrs Reed fears masculine authority, Bertha, Rochester’s first wife, mocks it with fierceness of a madwoman. Bertha represents the destructive side of a ‘raging woman,’ her power is in her powerlessness, that is, in her madness. Her status may be seen as ambiguous as on one hand she is imprisoned and reduced to the lowest level of being; yet, on the other hand, it is her, who keeps haunting Rochester and who throws a shadow of bigamy on his long-desired unity with Jane. Helen Moglen comments upon Bertha’s power over Rochester: “She is a jealous, vengeful mother who prohibits marriage to the beloved father. An androgynous figure, she is also the violent lover who destroys the integrity of the self, who offers the corruption of sexual knowledge and power – essentially male in its opposition to purity and innocence.”¹⁸⁹ Indeed, Bertha assumes the masculine power, which renders her at the same time mad and influential. She prevents the marriage between Rochester and Jane since bigamy, as Joan Perkin asserts, was in the 19th century considered as “a felony,

¹⁸⁷ Brontë 11

¹⁸⁸ Brontë 23

¹⁸⁹ Moglen 126-127

punishable by imprisonment or penal servitude.”¹⁹⁰ Yet, what frightens Rochester most about his first wife is her sexual appetite. He calls Bertha his ‘Indian Messalina’ and criticizes her household management, cruelty and dominance. She refuses to accept the role assigned to her by Rochester and the whole patriarchal society, and thus becomes labelled as a bad wife, that is, a mad wife. Phyllis Chesler comments upon Bertha’s position when she fails to satisfy Rochester as his wife: “In female culture, not being married, or being unhappily married, is experienced as an ‘illness’ which psychotherapy can, hopefully, cure.”¹⁹¹ Moreover, this illness is largely hurtful and destructive as it is apparent in Bertha’s behaviour. Bertha is not restricted by social conventions and limits of reason, her madness gives her the freedom other unmarried or widowed women only dream of. As she has nothing to fear and nothing to lose, she assumes the uttermost end of masculine power – physical aggressiveness. Bertha attempts to kill Rochester by setting his bedroom on fire; later she destroys the wedding veil of Jane, which reminds her of her own confinement in marriage. Last of all, she destroys the Thornfield Hall, which represents both Rochester’s social status and her imprisonment. It is actually her, who is responsible for Rochester’s injuries and consequently for his inner transformation, which enables Jane to come back to him and establish a relationship based not only on her equality, but on her physical and psychological dominance over Rochester. Eventually, Bertha as the undesired wife commits a suicide as she falls down from the battlements. Hence, she mercifully murders not only herself but also the taboo of bigamy, which prevented Rochester from marrying Jane.

The Mill on the Floss

Similarly to Mrs Bennet, Elizabeth Tulliver, Maggie’s mother, also fears the bitterness of widowhood accompanied with poverty. Moreover, her situation is still the worse as it is actually her own husband, who brings all the trouble on her. After Mr Tulliver loses his lawsuit, the property of the family is left in debts and there is no hope of paying off all the bills and court costs. Since all the money and possessions Mrs Tulliver brought to her marriage belong after the wedlock to her husband, they are also lost. For Mrs Tulliver, the parting with all her beloved things is a heavy blow as it means to be deprived of all her Dodson pride. She sits in the store-room surrounded by all her linen and silver teapots, desperate about the family bankrupt. Maggie observes that “the poor woman was shaking her

¹⁹⁰ Perkin 12

¹⁹¹ Chesler, Phyllis. “Women as Psychiatric and Psychotherapeutic Patients”. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 33, No. 4, Special Double Issue: Violence and the Family and Sexism in Family Studies, Part 2 (Nov., 1971), pp. 746

head and weeping, with a bitter tension of the mouth, over the mark, 'Elizabeth Dodson', on the corner of some table-cloths she held in her lap."¹⁹² What Mrs Tulliver fears is that there will be an auction and her personal property will be exposed and sold to strangers because, according to the Common Law, "A wife's personal property before marriage (such as stock, shares, money in hand, money at the bank, jewels, household goods, clothes, etc.) [...] became her husband's absolutely, unless settled in trust for her."¹⁹³ Hence, it is not surprising that Mrs. Tulliver feels bitterness towards her husband and even accuses him of wasting her own money: "I've had to sit by while my own fortin's been spent, and what shoud ha' been my children's too."¹⁹⁴

In such circumstances, it is understandable that Mrs Tulliver is afraid about the conditions in which she will have to live after her husband's death. Indeed, after Mr Tulliver dies, his wife has to move from the mill and live as a dependant at her sister's household. Since she was always used to live under the protective wings of a male authority, she keeps relying on her son, Tom, who, as a male, is the only remaining member of her nuclear family who has the power to re-establish her social position and change her desperate economic situation. Yet, Tom's affection for his mother, similarly to his attitude to Maggie, is largely patronising and ownership-like. This is revealed especially in his treatment of Mrs Tulliver after she decides to accompany Maggie in her banishment. Eliot describes the subordinate position of Mrs Tulliver to her son and her fear of his judgment as Tom is warning her: " 'My house is yours, mother, always. [...] You will come and let me know everything you want – you will come back to me.' Poor Mrs. Tulliver took the money, too frightened to say anything. The only thing clear to her was the mother's instinct, that she would go with her unhappy child."¹⁹⁵ However, the mother's instinct does not help Mrs Tulliver to save Maggie from humiliation and suffering. She is not able to stand for her child in public, to fight patriarchal society and its order. Without the protection of her husband and her son, she is frightened and helpless.

The opposite of Mrs's Tulliver is her sister Glegg, who is seems to be a very courageous woman. Though Mrs Glegg is a married woman, her attitude to her husband reminds more that of a parent to a child than anything else. She considers his hobby of gardening as foolish and practically takes care of all the matters in their household. Even when Mr Glegg considers borrowing Tom some money, Mrs Glegg loudly protests: "It's pleasant work for you to be

¹⁹² Eliot 167

¹⁹³ Perkin 13

¹⁹⁴ Eliot 168

¹⁹⁵ Eliot 393

giving my money away, as you've pretended to leave at my own disposal. And my money, as was my own father's gift, and not yours, Mr Glegg."¹⁹⁶

Indeed, after years of the marriage with her husband, Mrs Glegg cannot stop being a Dodson and her manners and opinions are thoroughly Dodson-like. No matter what her husband thinks, she remains faithful to her Dodson principles even if it means to oppose men in the largely patriarchal society of St. Ogg. This happens when she confronts Mr Tulliver as she disagrees with him about the education of Tom. The forcefulness of her argumentation makes Tulliver exclaim in anger: "Let her go, and the sooner the better: she won't be trying to domineer *over* me again in a hurry."¹⁹⁷

Yet, Mrs Glegg is not so naïve as to think that she can fight the masculine order of society. When she contemplates her situation after her husband's death, she, similarly to Mrs Reed, finds out that even a diseased husband can influence her situation and possibilities as a widow. This concerns primarily the financial matters since wives have, according to law, no access to property. Mrs Glegg therefore reflects on her future:

Mr. Glegg, like all men of his stamp, was extremely reticent about his will; and Mrs. Glegg, in her gloomier moments, had forebodings that, like other husbands of whom she had heard, he might cherish the mean project of heightening her grief at his death by leaving her poorly off, in which case she was firmly resolved that she would have scarcely any weeper on her bonnet, and would cry no more than if he had been a second husband.¹⁹⁸

Indeed, as a woman, Mrs Glegg has no other means of revenging herself on her husband than deciding not to wear the weeper on her bonnet. On the other hand, she proves the strength of her will as she offers Maggie to take her under her protection after the girl comes back from her elopement. Aunt Glegg is ready to irritate the St. Oggs society by taking the side of her niece; yet, her power is limited and can affect neither the public opinion nor Maggie's self-destruction.

¹⁹⁶ Eliot 176

¹⁹⁷ Eliot 63

¹⁹⁸ Eliot 107

IV. Conclusion

As this thesis demonstrates, with the turn of the 18th century and the progress of the 19th century, there were many important shifts in the perception of courtship and marriage. Reflections of these changes may be traced also in the literature of this period focusing upon the issues of love and matrimony. The rising influence of the nuclear family appears repeatedly in the chosen novels and plays a significant role with regard to the heroine's marriage prospects. Yet, as the dysfunction or incompleteness of the original family often endangers the process of courting, it becomes essential to leave the closed unit in order to be accepted by the wider society. Hence, Evelina leaves Rev. Villars as well as Elizabeth finds an objective distance from Mr Bennet; Jane has to put up with her childhood trauma of being unloved in her family and leaves her past behind her to become Mrs Rochester. Eventually, for Maggie Tulliver, her inability to cope with the chaotic family relationships ends up tragically since she values only the ties of past.

Similarly, the character of the heroine mirrors different concepts of womanhood of the 18th and 19th century. Evelina is still influenced by the ideals of conduct books as her main virtues are modesty and innocence. In spite of this, her attempts to act right even for the price of appearing indelicate remind something of the vivacity of Elizabeth Bennet, who represents much less perfect character. Women of the middle of the 19th century, Jane and Maggie, leave the ideal of an angel far behind them and their natures become more troubled with the demonic and sensual.

All these transformations reflect also the changing manner of courtship. In the 17th and 18th century, there were remarkable tendencies in the rising importance of courtship since the affection in marriage gained more attention and respect. From the three kinds of wooing represented in the thesis, the courtship as physical attraction is perceived as most dangerous and it poses threat not only for the heroine's reputation but for the whole integrity of her person. Yet, whereas in *Evelina*, it is seducers and flatters who voice their desire and their lust endangers women, in *Pride and Prejudice*, it is already a profligate girl, who represents the sensual. The books of the second half of the 19th century introduce the problem of how to combine female sensuality and morality. In the case of Jane Eyre, this finally becomes possible; yet, for her follower, Maggie, sexuality means again the loss of conscience and consciousness.

Regarding the courtship as knowledge, the power of mentor lovers also proves to be limited as their success depends largely on the willingness of their partners to accept their

message. Hence, the influence of Mr Collins is as vain as that of Philip Wakem though their personalities and intellectual messages differ significantly. In other words, the heroines themselves have to find the knowledge they need and if they seek enlightenment, they find it mostly in learning from their own mistakes.

Last, there is a courtship as a personal affection, which can ultimately lead into marriage. Yet, similarly to seducers, the power of these suitors is also questionable as the potential future husbands become less reliable and their natures more prone to bad qualities. Thus, Lord Orville is depicted as an ideal husband, whereas Darcy's pride renders him less admirable. Rochester's Byronic character poses threat to Jane's integrity as it symbolically devours her will, and in *The Mill on the Floss*, there is virtually no complete courtship as personal affection except for the symbolic love of Maggie for water – the selfless and enriching mutual love simply does not exist.

Marriage as the desired destination of the heroine's journey for self-recognition is endangered by various struggles and tensions. Not only she must choose the right partner and refuse the rest of her suitors, she must also cope with her subconscious psychological dilemmas concerning the relationship with some members of her family. Yet, even if these traps can be managed, there is no security of ending up in the safe harbour of marriage. The representation of the family life in the four novels suggests that a harmonious and equal marriage is rare, if not impossible. Moreover, the common law forbade women to own property in marriage and thus wives became dependent on their husbands and their whims. Eventually, after the death of a husband, a widow is often left in destitute, unprotected and powerless. Consequently, the widows find themselves vulnerable to any attack of men or women under masculine protection, being mocked or ignored. All these facts implied in the novels disrupt the convincingness of the ultimate happy ending awaiting the heroine in the marriage.

As a result, the depiction of matrimony may seem to be the desired goal as far as it corresponds with the traditional line of the plot. Yet, marriage in these novels signifies not only the end of amusing period of courtship, but also of the heroine's narrative. However accomplished and beautiful the heroine is, after the wedding, her voice becomes silent and her story uninteresting. With such idea in mind, the reading of the novels suggests dissatisfaction and silent criticism of the social position of women in marriage at this period. Hence, the magic of courtship full of discussions and mutual recognition leading into the blissful state of matrimony reflects rather the dreams and wishes of the novelists than the real state of affairs. Nonetheless, as marriage was seen as the main goal of women and successful courtship as the

peak of their ambition, the plot based on wooing offered the then novelists the only way their heroines could possibly distinguish themselves and become attractive for the audience. Eventually, the illusion of the eternal matrimonial joy is refused by George Eliot, whose heroine is so frustrated by the lack of possibility for expressing herself creatively and distinguishing herself in any other way than marriage that she sets on the journey of self-destruction. With this act, Maggie symbolically differentiates herself from other heroines not by finding a better or richer husband, but by her ability to sacrifice herself. In this way, she opens new possibilities for literary heroines and introduces a new perception of womanhood.

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Abstract/ Abstrakt

Abstract

This thesis focuses on the motifs of courtship and marriage as experienced by the female characters in the novels published from the end of the 18th century till the second half of the 19th century. These novels include *Evelina* (1778), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *The Mill on the Floss* (1860). As all these novels are written by female authors, the thesis provides a unique female perspective of the issue. The chosen texts deal with the motifs of courtship and marriage, play with the conventional discourse, and at the same time challenge the established perception of the role of a woman in the process of courting. Besides discussing the novels, I explore also the way the themes of courtship and marriage are presented in the original 18th and 19th century literature. For this purpose, I scrutinized various conduct books and essays of the period.

The first chapter of the thesis is introductory and explains the main ideas and terms used in the thesis. The second chapter focuses on the social background the heroine comes from – her family, character and education. Hence, the role of the family is discussed in reference to the process of courtship. Great attention is given primarily to the role of a father as a possible social guardian and the model of a future husband. The third chapter deals with the motif of courtship itself. I describe the way courting is depicted in the novels and the barriers which are necessary to be overcome in the progress of courting. The courtship is subdivided into three main categories including courtship as seduction, courtship as knowledge and courtship as personal affection. In the fifth chapter, the issue of marriage is scrutinised as the desired goal of successful courtship. I explain the significance and meaning of marriage as perceived in the 18th and 19th centuries and describe various laws and regulations governing the institution of marriage. Consequently, I discuss the issue of matrimony as both a safe harbour for the heroine and a possible threat. The last subchapter analyses the role of women without masculine protection, their social status and social possibilities.

By discussing the issues of courtship and marriage, this thesis hopefully achieves to provide an insightful picture of courtship and marriage as they are represented in the chosen

novels. It demonstrates the main trends in the perception of these issues; it shows how some new ideals of courtship and marriage were created and as other notions related to these issues were rejected.

Abstrakt

Tato práce se zaměřuje na motivy námluv a manželství, tak jak je vnímají a prožívají hrdinky románů publikovaných od konce osmnáctého století do druhé poloviny devatenáctého století. Mezi tyto romány se řadí *Evelina* (1778), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Jane Eyre* (1847) a *The Mill on the Floss* (1860). Vzhledem k tomu, že jsou všechny tyto romány dílem žen a spisovatelek, nabízí tento výběr zajímavou, feministicky orientovanou perspektivu na dané téma. Zmíněné texty detailně popisují motivy námluv a manželství, tak jak byly tyto udalosti vnímány v daném období. Zároveň si však autorky pohrávají s koncepty tradičního dikurzu, odmítají některé konvenční myšlenky týkající se těchto témat a představují tak výzvu dobové představě o roli ženy v námluvách a manželství. Kromě analýzy těchto románů jsem se snažila prozkoumat i způsob, jakým byly námluvy a manželství zobrazeny a reprezentovány v původní literatuře osmnáctého a devatenáctého století. Za tímto účelem jsem se detailně zaobírala dobovou literaturou adresovanou mladým dívkám, kde je vyobrazen pomyslný ideál ženy a její role v námluvách a manželství.

První kapitola této práce je úvodní a vysvětluje hlavní pojmy, myšlenky a cíle výzkumu. Druhá kapitola se zaměřuje na prostředí, ze kterého hrdinka pochází a na další faktory ovlivňující její společenskou pozici a vyhlídky na manželství. V této části je rozebráno dívčíno vzdělání, charakter a vzhled a jejich vliv na možné námluvy. Zároveň je analyzována i role rodiny v průběhu dvoření. Zvláště pozornost jsem věnovala zejména postavě otce coby možného ochránce a učitele dcery, a zároveň i jako vzoru pro budoucího manžela. Třetí kapitola se zabývá samotným motivem námluv. Zde se pokouším popsat a analyzovat způsob, jakým jsou námluvy vyobrazeny v daných románech a možné překážky, které je nutno překonat v průběhu vzájemného poznávání. Téma námluv je rozděleno do tří hlavních kategorií, které zahrnují námluvy jako svádění, námluvy jako proces osvojení si nových znalostí a společenské role, a námluvy jako náklonnost a zalíbení. V páté kapitole se věnuji analýze manželství coby kýženého cíle námluv. V této části vysvětluji význam a podobu

manželství tak jak bylo vnímáno v osmnáctém a devatenáctém století, a zároveň popisují různé právní zvyklosti a zákony, kterými se manželství řídilo. V této návazanosti je manželství vyobrazeno jako poklidný přístav, kde hrdinka může čerpat jistotu, a stejně tak i jako možná hrozba. Poslední podkapitola je věnována analýze postav žen, které buď ztratily manžela nebo se rozhodly žít bez společenské ochrany muže. Zároveň v této části zkoumám i jejich společenské postavení a možnosti, které se jim ve společnosti nabízely.

Doufám, že jsem skrze podrobnou analýzu námluv a manželství v jejich literární podobě dokázala podat zajímavý a detailní pohled na toto téma. Tato práce líčí trendy ve vnímání námluv a manželství v osmnáctém a devatenáctém století, tak jak byly zachyceny v jednotlivých románech. Analýza vybraných děl ukazuje, jak vznikaly nové myšlenky a přístupy k námluvám a manželství, a jak naopak jiné konvence a představy o těchto záležitostech byly odmítnuty.