Abstract

This thesis explores the reformed heroine tradition in the English literature of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It focuses on four novels: *The Reform'd Coquet* by Mary Davys from 1724, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* by Eliza Haywood from 1751, *Evelina, Or, the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* by Fanny Burney from 1778 and *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen from 1813. In the centre of the thesis stands the fallible heroine who is capable of development. The first chapter concerns the social changes of the eighteenth century which introduced the idea of companionate marriage, and it explores the establishing novel of the reformed heroine tradition, *The Reform'd Coquet*. It stipulates the main characteristics of the reformed heroine character: inexperience, vanity, absence of a reliable authority and overrating her own judgment. Additionally, it describes the relationship of the reformed coquette and the lover-mentor and notices the absence of female guardianship.

The second chapter focuses on *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* and explores similarities and differences between Betsy and Amoranda. It also describes Haywood's critics on the discrepancy in approach to male and female virtue and the hypocrisy of distinguishing between the public appearance and private chastity. Besides, it comments on the effect of the heroine's first marriages on her development as the instrument of her accepting social rules and appreciating of the hero.

The third chapter comments on *Evelina, Or, the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*. In addition to the comparison the heroine with the main characteristics of the reformed heroine, it explores the vulnerability of Evelina's social position as an unacknowledged child and the importance of being recognized both by her father and her future husband. Another part of this chapter describes the role of female guardians and the means of limitation of their reliability.
The fourth chapter introduces Elizabeth from *Pride and Prejudice* as a part of reformed heroine tradition. It explores the impact of her family and her financial situation on her marital expectations, notices the connection between her fallibility and unreliability of her father's opinions and describes Elizabeth and Darcy's mutual impact.

The conclusion summarizes the main characteristic of all heroines and comments on the changes within the tradition. The main similarities present heroine's recognizing fallibility of her judgement, submitting to husband's authority and protection, and limited presence of female guardians. The main changes are hero's increasing fallibility, establishing of his authority as a transfer of reliability from the father to the husband, and more options granted to the heroine during choosing her future husband.