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**UNIVERZITA PARDUBICE
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**The Urban and the Rural: Victorian Values
in John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's
Woman***

Bakalářská Práce

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Bachelor Work

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Abstrakt

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá rozdíly mezi venkovem a městem viktoriánské Anglie. Uvádí a charakterizuje hodnoty, morálních zásady a postoje, které byly typické pro toto období a odrážely se ve všech sférách tehdejšího života. Práce je podložena analýzou knihy Johna Fowlese *Francouzova milenka* a zkoumá do jaké míry se odlišoval přístup vesničanů a obyvatel měst k jednotlivým hodnotám. První část analyzuje třídní systém v 19. století a vzájemné vztahy jednotlivých tříd, zároveň poskytuje historická fakta o jejich životních podmínkách, na jejichž základě zkoumá jak tyto rozdílné životní okolnosti ovlivnily chování lidí a dodržování viktoriánských morálních zásad a zvyklostí. Práce se dále zabývá vztahem mužů a žen a jejich úlohami v rámci rodiny, etiketou před uzavřením manželství a s ní souvisejícím vztahem k sexualitě tehdejší puritánské společnosti. V závěru práce je také uvedeno, kam chodili lidé za zábavou a jak se oblékali, neboť i v tomto se život ve městě a na venkově do značné míry lišil.

Abstract

This bachelor paper analyzes the distinctions between the urban and rural Victorian England. It demarcates and characterizes values, moral principles and attitudes that were typical for that period and reflected in all aspects of Victorians' lives. The paper is based on the novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by John Fowles and examines to what extent the approach to particular values differed in the countryside and in the cities. The first part of the paper explores the nineteenth-century class system and the mutual relationships in it and presents historical facts about the living conditions in the rural and urban areas. These facts are utilized to analyze how one's economical situation influenced the observance of the recommended moral principles and conventions. The paper also focuses on the relationship between men and women, their roles in a family, the courtship etiquette and the approach of the nineteenth-century puritan society to sexuality. Further, it provides information on the entertainment and fashion of the Victorians, as these things also varied in different parts of the country.

Content

1. Introduction.....	1 – 2
2. Social Classes.....	3 – 8
3. Victorian Conventions and Moral Standards.....	9 – 16
4. Sex Attitudes.....	17 – 25
5. Lifestyle and Fashion.....	26 – 34
6. Conclusion.....	35 – 36
Resumé.....	37 – 38
Bibliography.....	39

1. Introduction

This bachelor paper characterizes Victorian values in the countryside and the cities of the nineteenth-century England. The main purpose is to show how the social position and place of residence influenced Victorians' thinking and behaviour. By demarcating of several values unique for that period, a framework for study of the distinctions between urban and rural sensibilities will be established.

The first chapter deals with the caste system of the Victorian society, its basic division and the living conditions of the people from different social spheres. This characterization is significant to understand the contrast in lifestyle and perception of the values between one class and another as well as between one part of the country and another part.

This analysis is based on John Fowles's novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, in which the author depicts the Victorian world of the 1860s and makes the reader acquainted with interesting facts about the living conditions, fashion and entertainment, as well as the typical roles of men and women, or the double standards in relation to sex. The novel was written in 1969 and the reality behind the fiction is based on study of nineteenth-century sources, which gives a historical credibility to his piece. In the novel the author comments on particular attitudes and habits of the time and presents his own, more modern point of view. In order to show the absurdity of some of the moral standards and patterns of behaviour, he created a character of a woman who does not follow them and whose thinking is different from that of typical Victorian women.

Majority of the Victorian values originated in minds of the middle class, who experienced an unprecedented prosperity and as a result became the new ruling class in the nineteenth-century England, but who still felt that their social status is lower than that of the aristocracy. Therefore they started to imitate the noble lifestyle and promoted conventions and moral attitudes that they believed were aristocratic ones, which influenced all aspects of the Victorians' lives such as the way they dressed or the activities they performed, but it had impact especially on their privacy and sexual life. But as Fowles points out, "the prudish puritanity we lend to the Victorians, and rather lazily apply to all classes of Victorian society, is in fact a middle-class ethos" (Fowles 261). This implies that the other classes were not so scrupulous about the morality.

The major part of the novel takes place in a small town Lyme Regis but the author follows his characters also to larger cities Exeter and London and reveals the distinction between the life in the countryside and urban areas. He shows the bigotry and hypocrisy of rural society in comparison to the anonymous metropolitan environment, describes the real life of the peasants and servants and adverts to the double lives of many Victorian gentlemen, particularly in relation to sex.

The following chapters deal with the morality and patterns of behaviour that were indoctrinated to the Victorians and concentrate mainly on the position of men and women, the Victorian cult of home as well as their sexual life. It focuses on the divergence in precept and practice of the rules in the countryside and the metropolitan areas and comments them. The last chapter inquires into the entertainment, activities and fashion of the Victorians, because even these were not the subject of personal choice, but of a recommended conventional behaviour.

2. Social Classes

The Victorians lived in a society where the boundaries between particular social classes were clearly defined. It was divided into three basic layers: the upper class, the middle class and the lower class. The settings of the novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* in a small village Lyme Regis and partly in London made possible for the author to depict all the social classes, both in the countryside and in the cities. The novel covers such topics as living conditions of people, yet concentrates mainly on the differences between their morality, status and lifestyle. Because the living conditions of both urban and rural people depended primarily on the amount of money they earned, this chapter deals with the social classes in general with little respect to their place of residence. Aside from the living conditions, it focuses on the mutual relationship of people of different social positions.

First of all, the living conditions of the poor and the working classes shall be outlined. At the beginning of his novel Fowles says that the prosperity in the 'sixties brought plenitude even to the labourers making the possibility of revolution improbable (18). But referring to the situation in 1865 in his essay *Portrait of an Age* G. M. Young mentions that, "in spite of a buoyant revenue and a record expansion of the export trade, there was already a chill in the air" (121). The typical inhabitants of London in 1867, whom Charles meets during his trip to London, were clerks, shop-people, beggars, street-sweepers, hucksters, urchins or prostitutes. "To all of them, he knew, a hundred pounds a year would have been a fortune" (Fowles 281).

Not only the economic situation, but also the living and working conditions of the poor were desperate. Workers in agriculture worked hard often in a bad weather, most of the time being on a monotonous diet consisting mainly of bread and milk, earning no more than what was necessary for the basic needs; and factory workers, including children, lived in poverty enduring their employers' exploitation as well as long working hours. According to *Victorian London*, in the early 1840's there were usually twelve-hours shifts, from 6 a.m. including Saturdays. By 1867 they have gradually shortened and workers could enjoy not only their weekends off, but also holiday leave; however, it was unpaid (Picard 111).

The income was then the main criterion of social status and according to statistics, the amount of approximately £90 a year was the boundary between the middle and working class, however the wages of the latter mentioned were usually much lower. According to *Rural Life in Victorian England*, an ordinary labourer in Dorset earned approximately 11s a week (there were 20 sovereigns in the £) (Mingay 88). And in early 1860's London, a labourer, with a wife and children earning an average wage, £1 10s could after paying all the necessary expenses save no more than 2s a week. "Not much was left for contingencies and clothes" (Picard 100).

In spite of the fact that the income in cities was higher, the rent was more expensive and the wages there were considered low as well. W. J. M. Prins in his study *Urban Growth and Housing Delivery Past and Present* observes that most of the labourers, dependent on the city centre for employment, could not even afford to commute by carriage and had to live within walking distance from it. The poor started to cluster in the centre seeking cheap accommodation in numerous lodging houses, in which sometimes three or four families lived in a single room (59). Thus in particular central areas slums were created. Prins claims that in the nineteenth-century London "the densely populated slums were considered breeding places of epidemic diseases and crime" (60). The river Thames was highly polluted at that time and even the drinking water often came from contaminated sources.

By contrast, rural areas, which were closer to nature, evoked the notion of healthy and better life, reflecting in paintings of many Victorian painters.

Those visions of the contended country labourer and his brood made so fashionable by George Morland and his kind (Birket Foster was the arch criminal by 1867) were as stupid and pernicious a sentimentalization, therefore a suppression of reality, as that in our own Hollywood films of 'real' life. (Fowles 155)

Fowles criticizes this idealization that did not reflect the reality at all and provides the true picture of that age. Millie, a maid servant of Mrs. Poulteney came from a farming family, born as the fourth child of eleven children, "who lived with their parents in a poverty too bitter to describe, her home a damp, cramped, two-room cottage" (Fowles 155). The description of their life is very realistic. As Mingay maintains, everything had to be done practically in one room: "The preparation and serving of meals, the airing of

clothes and the ironing of them, the washing of the children, the mending and making” (Mingay 219). The water had to be brought indoors and in times of drought it had often to be carried long distances, commented Mingay on the living conditions of the poor farm workers. As a consequence, the hygiene in such cottages was insufficient. Mingay further states that a slight improvement of sanitary standard came with the influx of middle-class residents into villages. They needed maids, charwomen and washerwomen and its effect was in encouraging the country women to be tidier (Mingay 218 – 219).

It was an unwritten rule that every better off family employed servants to do all the work in the house. The most influential social layer of the Victorian period was the middle class, consisting of white-collar workers and businessmen. Membership in the middle class was given primarily by the amount of money and the education, by means of which these people could live a comfortable life. The middle classes also included individuals who were not born rich but worked their way up and performed clerical jobs. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman* the characters of Sam Farrow and Mary, former servants, represented the new dynamic people of that time, who were able to change their subordinate position in the society and entered the middle class as well. In *The Victorians*, A. N. Wilson, commenting on the development of trade, observes that the new economic climate “gave the chance for the meanest artisan to rise, through energy or enterprise, through the ranks. The calico-printer and cotton-master becomes within two generations the baronet and the bigwig” (Wilson 60).

The Victorian age and industrialization provided many opportunities for strenuous individuals. Typical products of the industrialization were people then referred to as new money or *bourgeoisie*. Fowles introduces one such character: Mr. Freeman, Ernestina's father, a successful businessman without aristocratic origin, but with a great deal of money on his account. Flanders states that since the income was no longer obtained primarily from the land, the middle class professionals and merchants “were now substantially wealthier than they had ever been, and they imitated the style of their social superiors in order to live up to their new status” (xxviii). The Freeman family led life typical for urban *bourgeoisie*. They used to go on holidays, upholstered their house with the most expensive furniture, Ernestina wore the latest fashions and received the best education that a young rich girl could obtain those days and they also had a newly built mansion in suburb.

Prins explains that in the 1860s there was a fast development of suburbs in the cities, because the middle-class population increasingly left the centrally located areas and settled in the suburbs, where they would be able to lead a respectable life, separated from the poor. The suburbs were associated with a different style of life, similar to that of aristocracy or the squires (61).

Comfortable middle-class houses were far away from the smell, smoke and noise of traffic and industry. Flanders states that they consisted of several rooms, each having a different function. In contrast to the working classes, the middle class family members were separated from each other: boys and girls had separate rooms, the younger children were preferably isolated from older ones and even men and women preferred not to perform their separate functions in the same room. Flanders provides several examples of the most common rooms in a typical middle class house. There was the dining room, the drawing room, the morning room, bedrooms for the family, the visitors and for the servants, the study, the kitchen and the bathroom. Different functions of rooms were also associated with different status. Rooms for the visitors were of higher status than bedrooms for the family while those for servants were of the lowest (xxv). Separate rooms and eventually separate entrances for the servants were present in most of the middle class houses.

Trying to approximate to the lifestyle of aristocracy as well as to express their respectable status, the middle classes often employed servants, even if the woman could cope with the housework herself. “The new rich could [have imagined a world without servants]; and this made them much more harshly exacting of their relative status. Their servants they tried to turn into machines” (Fowles 47). Ernestina never forgot to show Mary who is the mistress and who is only the servant; and when Mary entered the middle class herself, she treated her servants in the same manner.

The middle classes used to show off their fortune and social status. Such emphasis on their position sprang from the fact that ancestors of many of them were servants, drapers, shop-keepers etc. Also Ernestina felt inferior to Charles because of her origin. “Her father was a very rich man; but her grandfather had been a draper, and Charles’s had been a baronet” (Fowles 13). Such worries were, however unsubstantial, because the properties of businessmen equalled or sometimes exceeded those of gentlemen.

Aristocrats and squires were associated with landownership, which provided them with economic as well as political power and the highest social status. Mingay states that symbol of the power was the great mansion, whether in the countryside or in a big city. In the Victorian period it became a resort of leisure and sport and a centre of political discussions. He adds that only the richest ones could afford to maintain such mansion and the range of incomes of nobility as well as greater and lesser gentry was extremely wide, stretching from tens of thousands to a few hundreds a year (32 – 35). Some aristocrats, especially lesser gentry, had in fact financial difficulties. Many squires, who wanted to provide their sons with great portions and their daughters with sufficient dowries so that they could find appropriate spouses, were sometimes over-generous and threatened the financial stability of their estates. As a result, these were inherited with debts and required much investment in maintenance (Mingay 213).

But it was easier for a person with aristocratic title to earn money. Writing in *The Victorians* A. N. Wilson says that the wealth could be obtained in professions where they showed off their nobleness, e.g. in law, office under the crown or eventually by lucky marriages (61). In the Victorian period, marriages in which money was exchanged for rank were common. In this aspect Charles was rather unusual because he hated such idea – to be a bought husband. When he found out that his uncle was getting married and he would not inherit his fortune, Charles started to worry:

As the future master of Winsyat he could regard himself as his bride's financial equal; as a mere *rentier* he must become her financial dependant. In disliking this, Charles was being a good deal more fastidious than most young men of his class and age. (Fowles 211)

Charles's embitterment sprang also from another reason. Mr. Freeman proposed him to control his enterprise. There was a good deal of snobbery among aristocracy and though Charles did not care about Ernestina's position, he would not allow himself get involved in commerce. "He saw now it was an insult, a contempt for his class, that [Mr. Freeman] prompted the suggestion. Freeman must know he could never go into business, play the shopkeeper" (Fowles 283). His laziness as well as snobbism constrained him from starting to work. He was not brought up for a real occupation but for the traditional way of life of the English ruling class, leisurely days spent in riding, fox-hunting, shooting, playing cards and wine-drinking. They were the elite, whose best

qualities Fowles compares to those of knights of the Middle Ages (285). He found degrading for him to be associated with commerce, new money and profits at all costs. This view was presented also in many Victorian contemporary magazines for middle-class women, who hoped to find a husband among gentlemen. Picard mentions one of the basic requirements for being stamped as a lady: "Firstly of course your background cannot contain any trace of trade" (123). How this was to be managed is hard to see, if her luxury was financed by her father's shop, but it is obvious that the upper classes looked down on the middle classes. At the same time both classes looked down on the lower ones. A. N. Wilson concludes that critics of the class system "saw and see it as an instrument of oppression to those at the bottom, encouraging those in its upper ranks to despise those beneath them; and those beneath to hate those above" (59).

In Victorian England there was a caste society consisting of the lower classes, the middle classes and the aristocracy. The industrialization provided opportunities for dynamic people, who wanted to raise their living standard and stepped into the world of commerce and production either as clerical employees or as the factory-owners and merchants. In the nineteenth century they outnumbered the aristocracy and became the new ruling class, though not officially. Aristocratic lifestyle and nobleness were still held in high regard and middle-class members fancied the idea of acquiring title owing to marriage with a person of the class above them. In contrast to the prosperity of the middle and upper classes, the lower classes lived in horrible and often unsanitary conditions, crammed in uncomfortable houses and earned too little to change it.

3. Victorian Conventions and Moral Standards

Victorian moral standards and conventions were based on a religious doctrine. G. M. Young in his *Portrait of an Age* describes it as “guidance of those who did not wish to think at all, and for repression of those who wished to think for themselves” (12). The most praised virtues were respectability, responsibility, philanthropy, chastity, regularity in affairs and discipline at home. These values were unique to that period, but some of them were perceived differently in the countryside and in cities. This chapter deals with the patterns of behaviour recommended in the nineteenth century, including chastity before marriage, the Victorian cult of home or the ideal appearance of women according to the taste of the time.

Most of the novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* takes place in Lyme Regis and the author focuses on rural society and criticizes its bigoted moral values. Fowles's character of Mrs. Poulteney is a typical narrow-minded person. On the outside she is a typical honourable woman living up to the conventions. Because of her hatred for dirt, a quality highly appreciated namely by the middle classes, she would dismiss a gardener if he entered the house with earth on his hands or a maid having a mess under her bed. Young states that “the Victorian insistence, whenever the poor are on topic, on neatness, tidiness, the well-brushed frock and the well-swept room, is significant” (24). Besides, having round them a peaceful and especially moral population, they considered one of the most important aspects of life.

Mrs. Poulteney is a great example of a bigoted rich woman, who, as a proper parishioner, contributed considerable sums to church, read the Bible (also here Fowles adverts to bigotry of that age, because those parts of her Bible which were at variance with chastity such as the Song of Solomon, were omitted) and got involved in charity, as she provided shelter for Sarah. The situation of the poor was not very encouraging those days, but fortunately Christian religion was powerful and held control over thinking and behaviour of the Victorians. Many of them, especially women from the middle and upper classes, made every effort to fulfil their Christian duties and helped other people who needed it. But in Mrs. Poulteney's case such philanthropy is hypocritical. Her contributions to the church were far less than the prescribed one-tenth and the reason for admitting Sarah to the house was only her own interest: she believed

that her soul would get to heaven after her death and besides, she wanted to look good in the eye of Lyme's society. From human point of view she was a wicked person tyrannizing her servants, who did not give them more than one free afternoon in a month, and controlled even their personal lives. They were forced to attend church regularly and their failure to be seen there "both at matins and at evensong, on Sunday was tantamount to proof of the worst moral laxity" (Fowles 26). What concerned Mrs. Poulteney most was the morality of her servants and people in her house. Every error in this aspect made her draw a conclusion leading to rigid resolution. Before Mary became a servant of Ernestina's aunt, she worked for Mrs. Poulteney, but she was seen by her mistress flirting with a stable-boy, which made Mrs. Poulteney think of Mary as a demoralized girl and led Mrs. Poulteney to withdraw her recommendation in attempt to asperse her name.

The Victorian middle classes often made premature conclusions. If somebody was alleged to do something immoral, his or her reputation was stained for a long time. Fowles's main character Sarah Woodruff is an example of such person. She pretends to be a fallen woman, who had a premarital intercourse; moreover she deliberately exhibits her shame by frequenting Ware Commons, a place improper for a respectable girl to go to.

The most serious accusations against Ware Commons had to do with far more infamy: though it never bore that familiar rural name, the car-track to the Dairy and beyond to the wooded common was a *de facto* Lover's Lane. It drew courting couples every summer. ... it [was] sufficient to say among the respectable townfolk one had only to speak of a boy or a girl as 'one of the Ware Commons kind' to tar them for life. The boy must thenceforth be a satyr; and the girl, a hedge-prostitute. (Fowles 92 – 93)

Ware Commons were nothing but a large wood, but it was a place associated with uncanny events and demoralized people, and even though Sarah went there only for walks, her presence there was sufficient as a proof of immorality.

Unlike in villages, the existence of places considered centres of sin and crime prevailed in cities. The best-known centre of prostitution of that period was London's Haymarket, nevertheless brothels and prostitutes were so widespread that their presence

was taken for granted in every larger town. Fowles describes the Victorian centre of Exeter:

There were brothels there, and dance-halls and gin palaces; but rather more frequent were variously undone girls and women – unmarried mothers, mistresses, a whole population in retreat from the claustrophobic villages and small towns of Devon. It was a notoriously a place to hide in short; crammed with cheap lodging-houses and inns like that one described by Sarah in Weymouth, safe sanctuaries from the stern moral tide that swept elsewhere through the life of the country. (Fowles 265)

In general, urban society was very different from the rural one, because of the anonymity the cities provided. Scarcely was a woman dispraised for walking alone with a man, while in a village she had to take interest in her fair name and follow the conventions so that the *respectable townsfolk* would not find a flaw on her character. Even Ernestina, a chaste middle-class girl, yet living in London and therefore used to less bigoted manners, “would not believe that the bridegroom and bride-to-be might wish to sit alone, and walk out alone” (Fowles 32).

The middle-class courtship was bond by chains of etiquette. According to Ronald Pearsall’s *The Worm in the Bud: The World of Victorian Sexuality*, this was caused by their new position after the Industrial Revolution. The middle classes aspired to imitate upper-class lifestyle and this reflected also in the relationship of courting couples (167). Their model was what they imagined as the high ideal of upper-class courtship. They, however, did not realize that mainly “this was a representation by poets and novelists of what *they* imagined upper-class courtship to be, with all the unsavoury bits discreetly omitted” (Pearsall 167). In fact the upper classes knew that things usually arrange themselves and therefore there was no need to formalize a courtship pattern.

According to the middle-class ideal, after a gentleman was assured by the girl that she was interested in him, he was supposed to ask her father for permission to woo her. “Secret meetings were out, naturally, since the whole of the courtship etiquette was a device of parents; to make secret meetings more heinous they were renamed ‘clandestine intercourse’” (Pearsall 168), because it was then considered highly immoral and condemnable to do something secretly.

Fowles appositely describes Ernestina’s and Charles’s engagement as a typical Victorian middle-class one. The bride’s father was asked for her hand, marriage contract

was arranged and when it came to physical contact between the betrothed pair, they kissed chastely as children. Natural behaviour was buried deep inside while on the outside young men and women played their starchy roles. Repression was prevalent in the lives of the middle classes but Pearsall points out that by the end of the century the unnecessary ceremony was taken over by the aspiring working class, who made a compromise between the natural and the correct code of behaviour (168).

Also lives of working-class people were affected by the conventions. Although these were not as strict as for the middle classes because “the lower orders were far too busy working, drinking and sleeping to bother much about the precise manner in which sons and daughters would get married off”(Pearsall 167), still they were criticized if they did not behave in the expected way.

Sarah knew that the conventions were in conflict with the natural in human beings and “her exhibition of her shame had a kind of purpose” (Fowles 68). She preferably chose to live a life of an outcast, facing the shame and condemnation by the society, but at the same time free from the chains of conventions. Her modern thinking made her reject everything that was obsolete in the thinking of the society: the suppression of a character, of women’s intelligence as well as their position inferior to men.

Fowles draws comparisons between Sarah and Ernestina, two women regarding themselves as modern. Only the first one is truly the *new woman* while the latter mentioned only considers herself to be thinking in a modern way, nevertheless succumbs to the conventions in every aspect of her life. She follows daily stereotypes and fulfils expectations of her social class. As typical for middle- and upper-class women, the main purpose of her life was to get married and have children.

Flanders explains that the majority of the nineteenth century population shared similar opinion of women’s biological destiny – to be wives and mothers. This was their God-given job and they were not expected to have any other (xxix). According to the essay *New Men? The bourgeois Cult of Home* Victorians have developed a strong cult of the home that originated in the middle-class families as an answer mainly to the needs of men caused by the gathering pace of urbanisation and industrialization. Before the Victorian period, middle-class men’s place of business was their home. Since the Industrial Revolution, their work has started to be performed elsewhere, e.g. in the factory or the office. As a result, home in a remote suburb became a venerated territory

of wife and children and a refuge of the breadwinner (Tosh 79). It was a place where he could find rest and be far away from problems of any kind.

Despite the fact that the same tendency appeared in the countryside, for example farmers began to replace live-in labourers with those who boarded elsewhere and the home became the place for the family only, the cult of home was not so significant there, because the total separation of home from work was impossible (Tosh 80). Another reason was that the most numerous inhabitants of the villages were labourers. Women participated in the earning of the family income and had less time for looking after their houses which moreover required a lot of work. As a result, especially women were attracted to life in towns, where it was from their point of view much easier. There were "no more pigs to be fed and tended, no more toil in the garden or on the allotment, hardly any baking to be done" (Mingay 216 – 217). Peasant women were often criticized for their disability to secure the neatness of their house and the well-deserved tranquillity for their husbands. Flanders implies that it was presumed that men who were not properly looked after by their wives often started to go to pub and with that decline of the whole family came about (xxxiv). In addition, "domestic disobedience and disorder exposed a man to community ridicule, as being a slur on his masculinity" (Tosh 81).

The Victorians adopted a patriarchal model of family life and the hierarchy of authority was explicit: the most important person was the man, he ruled the woman, and the woman ruled children and servants, through the delegated authority she received from man. As Tosh observes the husband set the agenda, but it was up to women to take care of children as well as the management of the household. Home was men's place of relaxation and "it was taken for granted that wife and daughters be at the husband's beck and call, to attend to his little wants and bolster his self-esteem in what was effectively a protected zone for the exercise of masculine authority" (81). The wife should make it as beautiful and comfortable as possible for him when he came back from his exhausting work and never trouble him with domestic worries or anxiety about children, because it was an evidence of the inability to properly fulfil her duties.

Although the preparation for the role of a wife begun in the childhood, as older sisters often acted as surrogate mothers, there was a lot of domestic advice literature.

Flanders reveals that it was addressed exclusively to women and the advice on how to be a better wife was generally based on these virtues:

to be a cheerful, loving wife, and forbearing, fond, wise, thoughtful mother, striving ever against self-indulgence and irritability. ... as a mistress, to be kind, gentle, thoughtful both for the bodies and souls of the servants. (xxx)

Women were seen as entirely sensitive characters, they were there for encouragement and help when other members of their family were depressed. Flanders points out that their sensitivity had to reflect also in furnishing of the house, cooking and organizing various activities. They could not exercise free will but do it in order to satisfy the tastes of all and of the husband in particular (xxx).

Ernestina's and Charles's relationship had the best dispositions to become an ideal Victorian marriage. He treated her kindly and tolerated her moods when they occurred while Ernestina, especially after a smaller disputes caused by her, was deferential and absolutely respectful. As soon as she realized that women were not supposed to oppose men, she noted in her diary:

[I must] honour and *obey* my *dearest* Charles even when my feelings would drive me to contradict him. Let me earnestly and humbly bend my horrid, spiteful wilfulness to his much greater wisdom, let me cherish his judgement and chain myself to his heart. (Fowles 246)

This citation shows that she was aware of her position inferior to men, but the typically Victorian upbringing made her accept it without any objections. Intelligence and wisdom were virtues appreciated exclusively about men, while women were there only to respect men's attitudes and thinking.

Sarah's refusal of this idea made her different from other Victorian women. She never wanted to marry and become what a husband would expect her to be, but regarded herself as men's equal. Fowles intentionally stresses this equality by Sarah's appearance.

All in [Sarah's face] had been sacrificed, he now realized, to the eyes. They could not conceal an intelligence, an independence of spirit; there was also a silent contradiction of any sympathy; a determination to be what she was. Delicate, fragile, arched eyebrows were then the fashion, but Sarah's were

strong, or at least unusually dark, almost the colour of her hair, which made them seem strong, and gave her a faintly tomboyish air on occasion. (Fowles 118)

She wore unfeminine clothes that made her look like *a girl coachman* or a *female soldier*; also her motions were unladylike – she walked surely and when mounting up the hill with Charles she went ahead of him, but as Fowles comments “a lady would have mounted behind ... him” (162), because he could see her ankles, which was considered inappropriate.

Sarah’s intelligence, independency as well as appearance shocked and confused Charles, who was used to different women, rather like Ernestina, who reflected womanliness in every aspect. Ernestina had a small-chinned oval face with grey eyes, pale skin and fair hair so that the overall complexion was delicate and doll-like. Womanliness was then represented by sensitivity, meekness, fragility and tendency to faint after the slightest emotional excitement.

Ernestina’s parents were obsessed with her health, because women were generally deemed to be suffering from various diseases. Commenting on this issue, Flanders lists several reasons for women’s tendency to be ill more often than men. In the working classes, nutritious food was often held in reserve for the breadwinner and girls were undernourished. Regarding the middle classes, girls were fed protein-poor diets, as it was believed that it would improve the illnesses associated with puberty. Moreover, unlike boys, they spent most of their time indoors and lacked physical exercise. It was believed that exercise could not improve their health but contrariwise cause dizziness, nausea or even could unbalance women permanently (319). Women’s diseases “included puberty in general, menstruation in particular, pregnancy, childbirth, lactation, infertility and menopause” (Flanders 319).

Regarding women’s character, they were habitually considered like children, innocent and sensitive in need of protection by the sterner sex. This sprung from the different upbringing of boys and girls. As Flanders explains, girls were trained for “duty, trials and perseverance” while the virtues of boys were “ambition, achievement and success” (52). Moreover, boys left home early. According to Tosh’s explanation the reason was that sons who spent much time at home with mother and other female residents, might have grown up effeminate (83). Therefore they were sent to school,

where they could play with other boys and became socialized early, while girls were educated mostly at home. Flanders claims that “the more prosperous the family, the less likely girls were to leave its shelter. ... Girls who did not need to go out to work had no break to mark their passing from childhood to adolescence” (52). They were encouraged to remain children as long as possible, which they often did until they married.

Victorians’ lives were affected by countless social conventions which were anticipated to be adhered to. Especially middle-class people strived after respectability and accordingly performed deeds expected to be done. They regularly attended the church and participated in charities for the poor. There was another big issue those days: every respectable woman had to care for her fair name. This was more significant in villages and small towns, while larger towns and cities were ideal places to hide from the judging eyes of rural society that appreciated only the respectable way of life. If a pair of young people wanted to court, they had to follow certain rules based on chastity until they got married. Typical Victorian marriage succumbed to conventions as well and was based on the idea that a woman had to obey her husband. Fowles’s main character Sarah refused all these conventions and considered herself to be men’s equal. To stress this, the author even portrays his heroine as different from other Victorian women, who were delicate, fragile and always prepared to faint as to prove their delicacy.

4. Sex Attitudes

The Victorians were known for their puritan approach to sex and insistence on moral behaviour. Sex within a marriage was considered a duty, while outside of it, it was unacceptable. Such were the moral standards, but the reality was rather different. The following analysis of Victorians' sexual life discusses how people from various social classes and parts of the country perceived and observed these standards.

In the second half of the nineteenth century sexuality was still taboo and respectable lady or gentleman could never dare to talk about it openly. According to *The Worm in the Bud*, the expressions used to refer to particular parts of a body, e.g. *legs* or *breasts* were considered inappropriate and more modest words such as *limbs* and *bosoms* had to be used instead, but ideally they were not mentioned at all (Pearsall 17). Not only talking about sexuality, but also thinking about it was something improper. Fowles demonstrates that such attitudes reflected in behaviour of many Victorians, but the middle- and upper-class ones in particular. His character of Ernestina is a great example of a middle-class girl, whose life and thinking was affected by the Victorian upbringing.

She had evolved a kind of private commandment – those inaudible words were simply ‘I must not’ – whenever the physical female implications of her body, sexual, menstrual, parturitional, tried to force an entry into her consciousness. (Fowles 34)

Although her thoughts extended beyond the range of erotic fantasies, they were not acceptable to the conscious mind and had to be repressed as soon as possible. As this it is difficult to accomplish, the Victorians were to a great extent confused and anxious. Pearsall specifies that “there was anxiety over masturbation, anxiety over too much sex, anxiety over no sex at all” (508). He adds that such feelings were supported by the doctors, who advised their patients to observe a certain sexual norm and threatened them with theories that e.g. too much sex may cause cancer or even early death or that self-abuse leads to various diseases like growth arrestment or distort of the pelvis in women (510).

Because women had fewer activities than men, they felt anxiety caused by repression more often. Women suffered from common nervous disorders and as Pearsall

reveals, some of them were driven to the edge of insanity by the repression combined with anxiety and guilt. In such cases the common break-out was through neurasthenia or hysteria (518 – 519). Also Fowles deals with this matter in his book in order to show the absurdity of moral concepts of the nineteenth century and to demonstrate that repression could have even perverse consequences. In the novel, Dr. Grogan encouraged Charles to read about several cases of middle-class girls, who suffered from hysteria, to warn him of Sarah's potential manipulation. In the first case, a sixteen-year-old Marie de Morell, daughter of commanding officer, accused the Lieutenant Emile de La Roncière of attempted rape. Although there were many discrepancies in Marie's statement, La Roncière was sentenced to ten-year imprisonment and the girl was not even taken to the Court for further examination of the case in order to spare her shame and because of her fragile nerves.

We can see why he was condemned, or rather, by what he was condemned: by social prestige, by the myth of the pure-minded virgin, by psychological ignorance, by a society in full reaction from the pernicious notions of freedom disseminated by the French Revolution. (Fowles 226)

Other cases give evidence of incredible deeds of hysterical girls. One of them wrote offensive letters to break up happy marriages; other set fire to her house and subsequently made thirty attempts at arson until she was caught in the act several years after the first incident. Fowles describes also some cases of self-inflicted wounds. One girl went so far that she pretended pains in her breasts and let the doctors, who believed that she suffered from cancer, amputate them (223 – 229). As explained in *The Worm in the Bud* all such cases had a common motive – to attract attention and sympathy of others. Besides, “pretending to have a hysterical attack was a way through the inhibitions of the upper and middle classes. For a time, it was not necessary to conform to a standard of behaviour” (Pearsall 520).

Although Charles saw many common features in Sarah and these hysterical girls (for example, she also pretended to have a strained ankle to manipulate him according to her plans), he could not believe that women are capable of such deeds. “[Those pages] came as a brutal shock to him, for he had no idea that such perversions existed – and in the pure and sacred sex” (Fowles 229). Owing to the Victorian conception of women as naturally good and innocent beings without any sexual feelings, love of home, children

and domestic duties being the only passions they felt, they were expected to behave in a moral way.

Most middle-class women were like Ernestina – brought up to be mothers and wives, but not acquainted with the reality of sexual life, because they spent most of their time at home with mothers, who were unlikely to talk to their daughters about tabooed matters. This helps to explain why the wedding night was something frightening for many brides-to-be.

It was not only [Ernestina's] profound ignorance of the reality of copulation that frightened her; it was the aura of pain and brutality that the act seemed to require, and which seemed to deny all the gentleness of gesture and discreetness of permitted caress that so attracted her in Charles. She once or twice seen animals couple; the violence haunted her mind. ... She sometimes wondered why God had permitted such a bestial version of Duty to spoil such an innocent longing. Most women of her period felt the same. (Fowles 34 – 35)

While women believed that sexual intercourse was only a duty they were not expected to enjoy, men's attitude towards sex was different. Also boys were brought up in the puritan atmosphere, but they had better chances to see life from a different angle, because they were not secluded from the real world. Contrariwise, it was desirable that the boys spend less time at home and were sent to boarding schools and universities in order to become more independent. Moreover, according to *Victorian London* most middle-class women married between twenty and twenty-five, while men's average marrying age was thirty (Picard 320). Because of such a long interval between adolescence and the age of matrimony, it was improbable that men were getting married without any experience. In the field of sexual maturity, Charles Smithson was miles ahead of Ernestina. During his studies at Cambridge he recognized a merry student life and his first sexual adventure took place right at that time.

But in his second year there he had drifted into a bad set and ended up, one foggy night in London, in carnal possession of a naked girl. He rushed from her plump Cockney arms into those of the Church. (Fowles 20)

The last sentence indicates that he felt guilt, because men were expected to repress their sexual feelings as well, but they were never condemned by the society for the failure to

adhere to moral standards. The nineteenth century was not only an age of moral restrictions, but also an age of hypocrisy

where woman was sacred; and where you could buy a thirteen-year-old girl for a few pounds. ... Where the sanctity of marriage (and chastity before marriage) was proclaimed from every pulpit, in every newspaper editorial and public utterance; and where never – or hardly ever – have so many great public figures, from the future king down, led scandalous private lives. (Fowles 258)

Many middle- and upper-class men pretended, even to themselves, that they were more moral than they really were and the sense of guilt reflected in the way they conducted themselves in public as well as in the daily life. As Pearsall claims, on the outside they acted as dutiful fathers of families, but at the same time made use of the services of prostitutes, who were answering the ordinary needs of ordinary men when their wives refused some pursuits that became common later in the twentieth century. Pearsall adds that Victorian woman's duty was to submit to her husband's tastes and desires, but were it not for the desire of maternity and their natural sense of duty, many of them would rather prefer to be relieved from sex. As a result, men were bored with their domestic sexual life and turned their attentions to women who displayed, or at least pretended some delight in sex (357). "It was understood that a marriage contract deliberately wrote out fun; a wife was there to raise a family, a prostitute for enjoyment" (Pearsall 17).

When speaking about prostitution, it was enormously widespread in the nineteenth century. It was a concern that both fascinated and at the same time gave offence to the Victorian middle class. Ladies were not supposed to know about it, gentlemen might have known the theory, not the practice. But the shocking number of brothels in the nineteenth century gives evidence that this was not true. According to *The Worm in the Bud* the total number of prostitutes may have been 120,000 in London alone (Pearsall 16) and Fowles maintains that "one in sixty houses in London was a brothel (the modern ratio would be nearer one in six thousand)" (258). Picard observes that the prostitutes could be divided into three basic categories depending on the place where they lived and worked. There were poor women in the slums in the East End, the more prosperous ones round the Haymarket, and some high-class prostitutes of the West End (310 – 311).

[Central London] was an area of casinos (meeting-places rather than gaming-rooms), assembly cafés, cigar 'divans' in its more public parts (the Haymarket and Regent Street) and very nearly unrelieved brothel in all the adjoining back streets. (Fowles 292)

It was easy for rich young men to find an amusement, but Pearsall says that if the visitors to London did not know where to go, there were handbooks for them. He explains that the purpose of these handbooks was as a directory of prostitutes, with addresses and eventually prices, but they featured mainly higher-priced West End girls waiting for the customers to knock on their door. For men who longed for a cheaper fun, there was the vast army of so called streetwalkers offering themselves in the cafés or directly on the streets (321 – 324).

Due to their style of living, young Victorians always had to take a risk of catching a venereal disease and it was not only the case of the lower classes. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman* Dr. Grogan cured also "well-bred young men [who came] to him shortly before their marriage. Sometimes it was gonorrhoea, less often syphilis" (Fowles 214). Also Charles ran the risk of being infected when he picked up a prostitute during his trip to London.

A horrid mathematics gnawed at Charles's mind: ... it was six hundred to one that she did not have some disease. He glanced at her again in an advantageous moment of outside light. Her complexion seemed unblemished. But he was a fool; as regards syphilis he knew he would have been ten times safer at a luxury establishment like the one he had left. To pick up a mere Cockney streetwalker ... (Fowles 298)

He was well aware of the fact that regarding syphilis or any other sexually transmitted disease the streetwalkers were the most dangerous.

Picard comments that if a woman took some venereal disease, she was seldom admitted to a hospital, where, on the top of that, the treatment was based on poisonous mercury making the teeth loosen and the hair fall out. Although the cure, which only palliated the symptoms but did not prevent the disease from recurrence, was rarely successful, those who survived had no other means of sustenance and therefore returned to their profession as soon as possible and infected another number of men (311). Subsequently many respectable women caught some disease from their bridegrooms or

adulterous husbands. As Pearsall notes it is delusion to think that women who had venereal disease were immoral or worked as prostitutes. According to the research in 1869, thirty percent of the infected women in London were not prostitutes (346).

While the cities were considered demoralized and corrupted, the Victorian countryside was often portrayed as pure and moral seat of traditional virtues, the source of morality and honesty which belongs to a life not isolated from nature. According to *Portrait of an Age*, the traditional culture of England was based on the patriarchal model of village family, in which the man earned the livelihood, the wife looked after the house and children and all of them regularly attended church on Sundays (Young 21). Such conception inevitably evoked sentiment in poets and artist as well as the ordinary people from cities and larger towns. This general view of the countryside reflected also in Sam's perception of Mary. "Sam first fell for her because she was a summer's day after the drab dollymops and gays who had constituted his past sexual experience. ... What had really knocked him a-cock was Mary's innocence" (Fowles 130). The idealization of the rural England made him think that Mary as well as most country girls were naive and pure, however, as Fowles points out, the truth was different, because

what she was not was an innocent country virgin, for the very simple reason that the two adjectives were incompatible in her century. ... The hard – I would rather call it soft, but no matter – fact of Victorian rural England was what a simpler age called 'tasting before you buy' (premarital intercourse, in current jargon) *was the rule, not the exception.* (262)

Fowles further explains that in comparison to present-day life the farm labourers lived differently in the nineteenth century. For example, in Dorset it was common that unmarried peasant girls were pregnant and did not marry until the pregnancy was obvious. Because of the low wages of the workers, there was the need for extra work force and the children, when they became old enough, supplemented together with the wife the family's earnings (262).

According to *Rural Life in Victorian England* the women and children were sometimes employed in gangs performing agricultural work. Not only was it hard work, but there were also moral dangers of gang labour. In the field, young girls worked all day with people of doubtful character and in addition, the gangs had to walk long

distances to and from the place of work (Mingay 91 – 92). To describe the situation during such trips, Fowles quotes from *Children's Employment Commission Report*:

At the infirmary many girls of 14 years of age, and even girls of 13, up to 17 years of age, have been brought in pregnant to be confined here. The girls have acknowledged that their ruin has taken place ... in going or returning from their (agricultural) work. Girls and boys of this age go five, six, or seven miles to work, walking in droves along the roads and by-lanes. I have myself witnessed gross indecencies between boys and girls of 14 to 16 years of age. I saw once a young girl insulted by some five or six boys on the roadside. Other older persons were about 20 or 30 yards off, but they took no notice. The girl was calling out, which caused me to stop. I have also seen boys bathing in the brooks, and girls between 13 and 19 looking on from the bank. (qtd. in Fowles 258)

It is obvious that the puritanity cannot be generally applied to the whole Victorian society, as the working classes by far did not adhere to the moral standards. Although their immodesty was often criticized by the middle classes, the labourers worked hard to earn the livelihood, which concerned them more than their reputation. Fowles claims that modesty and decency were even impossible among those, who lived in cramped houses, where each member of the family, dressed and undressed or performed operations of the toilette within the sight and hearing of the others; and where the beds of the family members were so close that cases of incest were common (262).

While discussing the immorality of the countryside, Pearsall describes an interesting form of courtship, known as bundling (or courting in bed) that took place in rural areas of Victorian England. It was based on a simple principle, which ensured that the girl retained her fair name. She was not allowed visits by young men in the daytime, but at night, when none of the neighbours could see them, it was all right and the parents gave the couple a full approval to intimacies only with the exception of sexual intercourse. To ensure this, a barrier, which could be a bolster or a specially prepared board was inserted between the courting couple (341 – 342). In the words of Pearsall, this practice was so frequent that “bundling, in effect, was sanctioned premarital sex – sanctioned not only by parents, but by rural society; ... and the artificial barrier ... was easily surmountable” (342). Inevitably, many girls became pregnant through bundling.

When speaking about pregnancy, also the subject of birth-control should be mentioned. In relation to the birth-control methods, Fowles refers to Thomas Malthus, a British economist and clergyman, who in his main work *Essay on the Principle of*

Population of 1798 introduced the theory that the population tends to increase faster than the means of livelihood and “the least fit to survive breed the most” (Fowles 219). Pearsall explains that Malthus saw that working class’s persistent breeding was the core of their economical problems and it was their responsibility to limit the population. But from his point of view the only acceptable form of birth control among the poor was the self-restraint, i.e. man was supposed to copulate only when it was necessary to produce the bare minimum of children. Other means of contraception were condemned by Malthus (273).

Pearsall observes that the issue of birth-control was so inappropriate to talk about openly, that the respectable literature writing about it had to be distributed in an underhand manner and consequently various doubtful pamphlets and booklets promoting even dangerous birth-control methods appeared. For example they advised the use of the douche immediately after coitus. The lotion could be a mixture of water and some additive like alum, sulphate of zinc or corrosive sublimate. The last one can even cause death. Safer methods were e.g. the introduction of a piece of sponge attached to a ribbon into the vagina or the use of condoms, which were made of sheep’s intestines and were considered very reliable (273 – 276). But as Picard points out, they were seldom used in the country and were sold only in a few shops of a low moral character (323). In 1854 Dr. George Drysdale introduced the concept of preventive intercourse and Fowles considers his *Elements of Social Science: or Physical, Sexual and Natural Religion* as the first modern *sex manual*, in which Drysdale mentions interrupted coitus as well as some of the previously listed birth-control methods and discusses their pros and cons (Fowles 259). Most of the techniques were criticized by Drysdale, especially interrupted coitus and the sheaths because from his point of view

the first of these modes is physically injurious, and is apt to produce nervous disorder and sexual enfeeblement and congestion ... The second, namely the sheath dulls the enjoyment, and frequently produces impotence in the man and disgust in both parties, so that it also is injurious. (qtd. in Fowles 260).

On the contrary, he recommended the utilization of the sponge, because it did not have any harmful effect on the health of either party and moreover it could be done by the woman, which was very important to Drysdale, who claimed that “any preventive means, to be satisfactory, must be used by the *woman*, as it spoils the passion and

impulsiveness of the venereal act, if the man has to think of them” (qtd. in Fowles 260). This statement obviously supports the Victorian idea that women were only passive victims of men’s sexual desire and were not capable of enjoying sexual pleasures.

As regards sexuality, the Victorian age was full of paradoxes. On one hand tabooed matters were improper even to think about, so that many Victorians, especially the young middle-class women, who were brought up in a traditional way, felt anxiety, which sometimes resulted in nervous disorder or even hysteria. Because many women regarded sex only as unpleasant duty, their husbands often took trips to towns, where they made use of prostitute’s services. Prostitution meant a threat not only to the marriage, but there was also risk of taking some venereal disease. On that account, the cities were often condemned as immoral places, while the countryside was deemed to be the source of virtues. Rural girls were considered pure and innocent, but the true was different and many of them became pregnant before marriage. Because of this, birth-control was also one of the important issues of the Victorian period.

5. Lifestyle and Fashion

The Victorian age was a period of England's radical transformation. Before the Victorians, the major industry was localized in a few towns in Britain while later the whole country was covered with railways and factories. The lifestyle of both rural and urban people was influenced by the Industrial Revolution, yet for almost all of them the era felt like a time of peace. This chapter focuses particularly on their activities, amusement, or fashion with respect to the distinctions between urban and rural areas.

As mentioned above, the nineteenth-century British experienced tranquil lifetime, but especially the upper-class members like Charles Smithson lived in a permanent leisure. Having a lot of free time, with only one concern – how to fill it with adequate activities – was a typical feature of the then aristocratic lifestyle, which was often imitated by the wealthy bourgeois families. It was the absolute reverse of the present-day hectic life when it is difficult to fit all that one wants to do in a very limited space of time.

But for Charles, and for most of his contemporaries and social peers, the time-signature over existence was firmly *adagio*. ... One of the commonest symptoms of wealth today is destructive neurosis; in his century it was tranquil boredom. (Fowles 18)

He inherited his fortune and did not have to work to enlarge it in any way. Thus, his studies at Cambridge University were rather a convention of a wealthy aristocrat than a preparation for a serious occupation in his future; and it was taken for granted that he would graduate successfully without endeavour. His idleness continued also in his adulthood, when he chose a field of interest that did not require much intellectual nor physical effort: palaeontology.

Palaeontology attracted Charles also because Darwin's evolutionary theories were popular at that time so that his hobby was in accordance with modern scientific knowledge, but "his uncle viewed the sight of Charles marching out of Winsyatt armed with wedge hammers and his collecting-sack with disfavour" (Fowles 21). Charles's uncle was a typical rich rural squire, who lived in a great country mansion and maintained that "the only proper object for a gentleman to carry in the country was a

riding-crop or a gun” (Fowles 21) He approved only of those activities which were in compliance with his aristocratic origin such as hunting, shoots or cricket.

As Mingay mentions many wealthy landowners devoted a great part of their lives to these interests. Both hunting and cricket were sports which brought the squire into contact with other members of the community. But this was supposedly the only benefit of hunting, because the huntsmen in general were careless of damage. They often overthrew fences, left gates open, trampled on the growing crop or smashed their way through market gardens (Mingay 40 – 43). Apart from these incidents, they were also allowed to shoot at rare species of animals and what is more, the hunters who had managed to capture an unusual prey were admired.

One autumn day, many years before, [Charles] had shot at a very strange bird that ran from the border of one of his uncle’s wheatfields. When he discovered what he had shot, and its rarity, he was vaguely angry with himself, for this was one of the last Great Bustards shot on Salisbury Plain. But his uncle was delighted. ... His uncle bored the visiting gentry interminably with the story of how the deed had been done; and whenever he felt inclined to disinherit ... he would recover his avuncular kindness of heart by standing and staring at Charles’s immortal bustard. (Fowles 19)

Mingay points out that while in the country they thought of nothing but horses, hunting and guns, during their frequent excursions to town, the wealthy young noblemen spent expensive evenings drinking and playing cards at their clubs, and eventually enjoying adventures with women of doubtful reputation. The gentlemen’s clubs were places where the gentleman could feel at home because they provided all the amenities such as good and cheap dinners and a comfortable accommodation (43).

Mingay implies that while the young aristocrats as well as middle-class professional men attended these clubs, the labourers and farmers amused themselves mainly in the village inns or town public houses. Until the nineteenth century, the village inns were not only for entertainment, but were also important centres of commerce, because the villages were more or less self-sustaining and the local tradesmen, craftsmen and farmers transacted their business there. But the growth of manufacturing and the expansion of inland and foreign trade made rural people more attracted to urban areas. Due to the spread of railways, the towns became more accessible and thus the prosperity of village inns reduced, because the villagers preferred to go to towns on Saturdays to

visit the local pubs that were better, cheaper and more up-to-date in comparison to the rustic, old-fashioned and boring country ones. Meanwhile, their wives went shopping to the town markets and shops, where they bought almost everything (201 – 203). The Saturday shopping excursion made a welcome change in the monotonous lives of ordinary people.

In the countryside there were not many opportunities for amusement for either of the social classes. Fowles mentions that the only place where the Lyme townsfolk could congregate to drink, play cards or enjoy concerts and balls were the Assembly Rooms. However, as he adds, they “were not much, compared to those at Bath and Cheltenham” (Fowles 125). To Ernestina, her annual stay with her aunt represented an embodiment of boredom.

She always descended in the carriage to Lyme with the gloom of a prisoner arriving in Siberia. The society of the place was up-to-date as Aunt Tranter’s lumbering mahogany furniture; and as for entertainment, to a young lady familiar with the best that London can offer it was worse than nil. (Fowles 33)

Picard remarks that in London, beside the innumerable gin palaces, cafés, gentlemen’s clubs and casinos, there were thirty-three theatres and many music halls, where the audience could drink and smoke while they were listening to songs with sometimes indecent lyrics. The theatrical performances, mostly comedies and melodramas, were also popular, especially when there was a murder in the play. Some theatres were famous for the impropriety of costumes of the female performers, which helps to explain why the respectable people considered actresses and dancers as wicked women. Not all the theatres presented a vicious repertoire, but the upper classes would hardly go there; they went to the opera (Picard 242 – 247).

Picard also mentions that Londoners sought relaxation in the numerous parks. They were open to everybody and especially the West End ones were beautiful and offered a variety of attractions, e.g. pageants during the daytime or fireworks at night. The wealthy people owning carriages went to Hyde Park, where, in the London Season, the famous Rotten Row took place. The celebrities and wealthy people of London, dressed in fashionable clothes riding on the horseback, provided a delightful view to the crowds of spectators. On hot spring and summer days thousands of people visited Hyde Park to swim in the lake Serpentine and whole families of common people could be seen

picnicking on the grass. Parks, botanic gardens, zoos, theatres, operas and many others of the countless urban pleasures were identified in the guidebooks with maps, where the most important locations were highlighted (Picard 253 – 257).

Margot Finn points out that a new women's activity had become popular by the 1870s. Middle-class women, even those living in the suburban areas with well-established local stores, started to frequent towns regularly, especially the West End, an area newly colonized by shops, where they went shopping, window-shopping, or visited matinées and museums. The development of department stores gave women for the first time "a feeling of being at home in the public sphere, which only men had previously experienced" (Finn 26). Until then, as described in *The Victorian House*, they spent most of their time at home, looking after the children and the house. But because almost all the housework was done by the maidservant, middle-class women had a great deal of time on their hands. One way of using it was to visit friends. "For women, calling on people, and being called on, was the main source of social intercourse outside familiar relations" (Flanders 277). Especially in the countryside, the Victorians maintained the habit of visiting each other, but they distinguished between real friendships and only polite acquaintances. Courtesy calls, typical among the middle classes, were not intended to bring them pleasure, but to uphold a mere convention.

Visitors to Lyme in the nineteenth century ... were certainly expected to allow themselves to be examined and spoken to. Ernestina had already warned Charles of this. ... There was nothing fortuitous or spontaneous about these visits. There could not be, since the identities of visitors and visited spread round the little town with incredible rapidity; and that both made and maintained a rigorous sense of protocol. (Fowles 101 – 102)

In addition to visits, women could fill their free time with some handwork. Flanders claims that many women produced endless things that could be sold at charity bazaars. The most popular handworks were various types of needlework such as embroidery. Women embroidered cushions, slippers, spectacle or watch cases and other objects, with lovely ornamental motifs (158 – 161).

Flanders further notes that it was considered womanly to sew and girls began to learn so at home at the age of four and continued when they went to school (265). Even Sarah, a type of a *new woman* with contempt for the Victorian conventions, devoted

herself to embroidery. She studied at young ladies' seminary in Exeter and probably received her skills there. In the nineteenth century, as Picard explains, girls of all classes were taught needlework as a compulsory subject (298). And like all the governesses, Sarah had to be skilled not only in reading, writing, French, drawing and music, but also in domestic duties and needlework.

On Mrs Poulteney's birthday Sarah presented her with an antimacassar – not that any chair Mrs Poulteney sat in needed such protection, but by that time all chairs without such an adjunct seemed somehow naked – exquisitely embroidered with a border of ferns and lilies-of-the-valley. (Fowles 62)

Even though Sarah did not escape this habit of the time, in every other aspect she differed from other Victorian women. Instead of a monotonous and dutiful life in marriage, she preferred to meaningfully utilize and develop her natural intelligence in the house of a famous poet and painter of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, where she was treated as men's equal. Her different attitude was emphasized by the way she dressed.

Something about the coat's high collar and cut, especially from the back, was masculine – it gave her a touch of the air of a girl coachman, a female soldier – a touch only, and which the hair effortlessly contradicted. (Fowles 163)

Sarah did not colour her eyebrows, lips or hair according to the fashion, but preferred the natural look together with simpler and more comfortable clothes different from the Victorian constrictive women's dresses, which also symbolized the physical and mental constrictions imposed by the society.

Picard mentions that women's clothes were generally designed to emphasize the wearer's femininity. Every lady attempted at a full bosom and a waist as slim as possible. To reach this, they wore elaborately boned and sewn bodices or stays, which should have lift the bust and slenderize the waist. Because of this unnatural constriction, Victorian ladies often fainted, and preferred lying on the sofa to taking exercise. But fainting was not the only consequence of wearing uncomfortable clothes (209 – 213). The crinoline, the most famous under-garment worn by Victorian women was considered dangerous as well. Picard explains that its purpose was to expand the skirt to

a fashionable width, but when the wearer misjudged her distance from a fire, it might have flared up (212). More ordinary accidents happened due to its length as women were often stumbling. “The stairs were certainly steep; and in those days, when they could rarely see their own feet, women were always falling: it was a commonplace of domestic life” (Fowles 332). As Fowles points out, the attempts to replace the heavy elaborate and uncomfortable clothes with trousers appeared already in the 1850s, when Mrs. Amelia Jenks Bloomer from New York tried to introduce trousers to London.

But that early attempt at the trouser suit had been comprehensively defeated by the crinoline – a small fact of considerable significance in our understanding of the Victorians. They were offered sense; and chose a six-foot folly unparalleled in the most folly-ridden of minor arts. (Fowles 255)

According to *Victorian House* the way the Victorians dressed was not the question of personal taste, but they had to follow the currently recognized fashion with respect to one’s social status. The details of dress immediately revealed the wearer’s social as well as marital status. The general rule was that a lady should have never dressed above her status, which was important especially in the larger cities where it was easy to present oneself as something one was not. In the countryside, one knew everyone’s background and position; therefore provincial ladies did not feel so strongly the obligations to keep up with fashion, but rather aimed to fit certain pattern. (Flanders 256) By contrast to these rural women, Ernestina always wore the latest London models.

The young lady was dressed in the height of fashion, for another wind was blowing in 1867: the beginning of a revolt against the crinoline and the large bonnet. The eye in the telescope might have glimpsed a magenta skirt of an almost daring narrowness – and shortness, since two ankles could be seen beneath the rich green coat and above the black boots that delicately trod the revetment; and perched over the netted chignon, one of the impertinent little flat ‘pork-pie’ hats with a delicate tuft of egret plumes at the side – a millinery style that the resident ladies of Lyme would not dare to wear for at least another year. (Fowles 11)

As regards the colour of her dress, the combination of violet skirt and green coat seems from the present point of view too strident, but it was fashionable because of the recent discovery of the aniline dyes, which were according to *Victorian London* patented by William Perkins in 1856 and exhibited at the International Exhibition in South

Kensington in 1862 (Picard 210). Fowles further explains that “what the feminine, by way of compensation for so much else in her expected behaviour, demanded of a colour was brilliance, not discretion” (11).

On the contrary, the colours of men’s clothes were subdued, ranging from brown, grey and dark blue to black. Picard lists some of the typical men’s clothes worn in the nineteenth century. The middle-class urban male wore a tall hat, a coat, waistcoat and trousers, with an overcoat in cold weather. The country working men had a practical form of dress called ‘smock frock’, made of heavy linen, which was very durable and almost water-proof. An important men’s accessory was the headgear. Although mere labourers could be bare-headed, it was always better to wear at least the remains of a hat, than to wear none. Workmen wore billycock hats and caps and thus could be immediately distinguished from the gentlemen, who wore top hats (198 – 205). They were uncomfortable and unpractical, but “every person of any respectability takes care to appear in public in a good hat” (Picard 202).

It was important for Victorians not only what they wore, but also for what occasion, place or time of day a particular dress was designed. Flanders claims that wearing an outfit appropriate for one place in a different one was a proof of bad taste (265). Also Charles, though walking alone, was properly dressed and equipped for his role, when he went to the beach to seek for fossils. His clothes were uncomfortable, “but perhaps there is something admirable in this dissociation between what is most comfortable and what is most recommended” (Fowles 52). He did not speculate on the usefulness of such dress and equipment, but without any objections followed the conventions.

Also women were expected to wear different dresses in different times of day, which might have been even seven outfits in one day. But only the richest ones could afford such luxury, while the less affluent and especially the working-class women like Mary had to put up with only a few items in their wardrobe.

[Ernestina] came also with trunkfuls of the latest London and Paris fashions, not the best recommendation to a servant with only three dresses to her name – and not one she really liked, even though the best of them she could really dislike only because it had been handed down by the young princess from the capital. (Fowles 79)

As Picard adds female servants did not have to wear uniforms, nor were given work clothes and had to buy them themselves (210). That is probably why Mary wore cheaper *sad Victorian clothes* of subdued colours. Although she was discontent with her wardrobe, most peasant women dressed similarly and Mary did not have the necessity to invest much money in clothing. By contrast, Sam Farrow is portrayed as a typical metropolitan servant, a new type of dandy. As Fowles comments, dandies appeared at first among the higher classes in the mid-nineteenth century, but later young craftsmen and servants began to imitate them to such an extent that even the former dandies began to call them “snobs” (46).

Sam was a fair example of a snob in this localized sense of the word. He had a very sharp sense of clothes style – quite as sharp as a ‘mod’ of the 1960s; and he spent most of his wages on keeping in fashion. And he showed another mark of this new class in his struggle to command the language. (Fowles 47)

Sam’s Cockney accent was distinguished by the use of *h* at wrong places as well as the “inability to pronounce *v* except as *w*, the centuries-old mark of the common Londoner” (Fowles 47). Because he tried to imitate his master in every aspect, he also made efforts to adopt Charles’s noble accent and literary language. To understand the significance of a good accent, it is important to remind that the industrialization gave the opportunity to a mere artisan within two generations to become a member of the upper class. According to A.N. Wilson, his position in a new class structure marked in the nineteenth century by such characteristic as accent. At the beginning of the century, nobody was despised for speaking with a regional accent, but later it became very important aspect that distinguished a prosperous artisan from an aristocrat (60).

To summarize, the Victorian age was a period of a peaceful lifestyle. Aristocrats had a lot of free time, and those who lived in the countryside filled it with hunting, cricket or visits to towns, while the ordinary villagers amused themselves at the nearest town markets or pubs. Cities certainly provided better opportunities for entertainment. Music lovers were well catered for in London music halls, theatres or operas, and also the delightful parks, botanic gardens and zoos offered various attractions. By the 1870s the public spaces became more accessible to women, whose main hobbies until then were visits or handworks. The nineteenth century also brought some changes in fashion due

to the development of textile industry. The essential women's garment was still the bodice and the crinoline, but and the cut of the skirt has become narrower, shorter and the colours were bright. As regards men's wardrobe, it was more uniform and what distinguished a gentleman from a workman was his headgear and in the late nineteenth century also his accent.

5. Conclusion

In the Victorian age, a period in which the morality was highly valued by many people, rural areas were seen as the source of virtues and chastity in comparison to the cities. This concept was supported also by Victorian poets and artists, but their poems and paintings did not reflect the reality. For example the economical situation of a farm labourer was none the better than of the factory worker in a big city. Both of them lived in a cramped cottage or a lodging house and were exploited by the employer. It is no wonder that each social class perceived the Victorian values differently. The working classes concerned rather about their livelihood than about the appearance in the society, while the middle classes struggled to consolidate their social position. In order to imitate the refined behaviour of the aristocracy, they created a set of values typical for that period. They proclaimed the marriage and home as the meaning of human life; women were brought up for their roles as careful mothers and wives since their childhood and their education consisted mainly of domestic service, needlework as well as social behaviour. They were supposed to be sensitive, fragile and obedient and those who did not fit or at least approximate this pattern were seen as odd women.

No less important than the matrimony was the chastity before marriage. This was expected from everyone, but the society was much more tolerant of men, who were still allowed to have sexual experience outside of the marriage, while a woman whose sin had come to light had to face shame, especially in a small town or village. Paradoxically, the sexual life of peasants was in no way restrained; in fact it was a common matter that rural girls were getting married already pregnant. This implies that the people in the countryside did not behave more morally, but rather were able to keep their immodest conducts from the bigoted rural society. Fallen women commonly sought anonymity in big cities, but there they often ended up as prostitutes providing services to customers from all the social classes including also *respectable* fathers of families or young aristocrats, who frequented cities to seek amusement.

Let us conclude this issue concerning the distinctions between urban and rural perception of the Victorian values. Although the recommended moral standards were expected to be followed by all the people, the pattern behaviour was observed primarily by the middle class, especially in the countryside, where the society was more insistent

on pattern behaviour, proper clothing and chastity. However, rural people were at the same time more hypocritical, because also here, many indecencies took place, but they were carefully concealed and on the outside the sinners acted as respectable people. In urban areas such pretending was not necessary, which resulted in demoralization and widespread prostitution, particularly in London.

Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá kulturními a sociálními rozdíly mezi viktoriánským venkovem a městem, a to především v 60. letech 19. století. Zaměřuje se na životní podmínky jednotlivých sociálních tříd, a zkoumá jak tento faktor ovlivnil chování jednotlivců žijících v té době. Základem pro vypracování práce je román Johna Fowlese *Francouzova milenka*, v němž autor výstižně vykresluje viktoriánskou dobu a zachycuje myšlení lidí jak na venkově, tak ve velkoměstě a ukazuje jak se morální zásady lidí lišily v závislosti na prostředí. Tato práce je členěna do čtyř základních kapitol, z nichž každá se zabývá určitým tematickým okruhem. První část je věnována rozdělení společnosti do sociálních tříd, druhá zkoumá morální předpisy a rozdílné úlohy žen a mužů ve společnosti, třetí pojednává o viktoriánské sexualitě a na závěr se práce zabývá životním stylem a viktoriánskou módou.

Navzdory tomu, že ke konci 19. století došlo ke zlepšení situace dělnické třídy, viktoriánská Anglie se i nadále potýkala s problematikou žebráků a vykořisťování dělníků v továrnách, což přispělo k rozvoji kriminality a především prostituce ve městech. Pro mnohé lidi z velkoměst se proto symbolem poklidného a mravně čistého života stal venkov. Toto byl ideál, který podporovali také malíři a spisovatelé, ovšem skutečnost byla do značné míry jiná a Fowles poukazuje na to, že i zde docházelo k utlačování chudých lidí.

Zatímco dělníci se zabývali hlavně problémem, jak si vydělat na živobytí, starostí střední třídy bylo upevnění svého společenského postavení. Mnozí obchodníci se snažili zbavit pocitu méněcennosti, kterým trpěli kvůli svému původu, jenž nebyl šlechtický, a tak napodobovali aristokratický životní styl. Mimoto vytvořili soubor hodnot typických pro toto období v domnění, že stejné hodnoty uznávají i lidé z vyšších vrstev.

Jednou z významných priorit tehdejší doby a především střední třídy byla rodina, přičemž role mužů a žen v manželství byly jasně vymezeny už od útlého dětství. Dívky vzdělávaly matky nebo guvernanky a jejich výuka spočívala ve společenském chování nebo činnostech praktických pro manželství jako například vyšívání, zatímco v chlapcích byla podporována intelektualita, kreativní myšlení a samostatnost. V manželství pak obstarával živobytí muž a žena pracovala jen pokud to vyžadovala ekonomická situace rodiny. V opačném případě zůstala doma a starala se o děti a domácnost. Její podřízená pozice vyžadovala absolutní poslušnost muži, a to i

v milostném životě. Pro mnoho žen se sex stal pouhou manželskou povinností, což mohlo vést k tomu, že muž znuděný přístupem své ženy hledal potěšení v náručí prostitutky. Takové případy nebyly ojedinělé a přestože se i od mužů očekávalo mravné chování, společnost je za morální poklesky neodsuzovala. Stejně tomu bylo i v případě předmanželského pohlavního styku. Muži se málokdy ženili nezkušení, zatímco žena s takovou minulostí musela čelit hanbě, a to hlavně na malém městě nebo na venkově. Ve velkoměstech byla morálka mnohem uvolněnější a mnoho žen zavrhnutých společností zde hledalo život v anonymitě. Těm, kterým se nepodařilo provdat a které ani neměly vzdělání, díky němuž by mohly získat dobře placené zaměstnání, nezbyla často jiná možnost, než si přivydělávat na živobytí prostitucí. O zákazníky v tehdejší době neměly nouzi, protože za zábavou jezdili do velkoměst muži ze všech společenských vrstev.

Především aristokraté vedli frivolní život. Na svých venkovských sídlech trávili většinu času jízdou na koni a lovem, během výletů do města pak navštěvovali veřejné domy nebo popíjeli a hráli karty v klubech džentlmenů, které poskytovaly veškeré pohodlí a vymoženosti domova. Po dlouhou dobu byl veřejný sektor přístupný výhradně mužům, ale v 70. letech 19. století byla díky rozvoji textilního průmyslu postavena ve městech řada obchodních domů, kam začaly ženy jezdit na nákupy a při té příležitosti navštěvovat kavárny a různé kulturní památky, čímž se jim podařilo alespoň částečně odpoutat od své role ženy a matky pohybující se pouze v domácím prostředí.

Jak již bylo zmíněno, navzdory tomu, že se ve viktoriánské Anglii vyskytovala řada prvků společných pro všechny obyvatele, jako například životní podmínky jednotlivých sociálních vrstev, či kladení rodiny a mravnosti na první místo, dodržování jednotlivých zásad se na venkově a ve městě značně lišilo. Nelze obecně říci, že lidé na venkově měli pevnější morální zásady, ale faktem je spíše to, že se naučili nejen skrývat své morální poklesky ale mnohdy dokonce vést dvojitý život. Často právě ti samí lidé odsuzovali zkaženost velkoměst, kde kriminalita a prostituce byla na denním pořádku.

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ÚDAJE PRO KNIHOVNICKOU DATABÁZI

Název práce	The Urban and the Rural: Victorian Values in John Fowles's <i>The French Lieutenant's Woman</i>
Autor práce	Eva Berjaková
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Vedoucí práce	Mgr. Olga Roebuck, M. Litt.
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