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Real Life vs. Mores: Victorian Values in John Fowles's
The French Lieutenant's Woman

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the thesis is to analyze the values specific for the people in mid-Victorian England, to explain reasons for the values and to describe the way they influenced lives of the Victorians, especially those belonging to the middle-classes. Further, the thesis also presents how the Victorian values are reflected in the lives of the characters of John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, a twentieth-century novel, which setting is found right in mid-Victorian England. The thesis is divided into six parts.

The brief introduction describes life and literary work of John Fowles, the author of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, as well as the general background of Victorian England. The following chapter focuses on the middle-class concept of domesticity and explains why domesticity was so highly valued and protected. Further, the chapter describes the specific position of servants and domestic role of women. The chapter dealing with the Victorian conception of marriage focuses on what marriage represented especially in women's life. The following chapter dealing with sexual attitudes focuses on Victorian prudery, hypocrisy and double standards for which the Victorians are usually remembered. The chapter explains what stood behind Victorian sexual attitudes and shows the contradiction between what was publically claimed and privately done. The last chapter briefly focuses on the Victorian conception of religion and how it was influenced by sudden outburst of the natural science. In the conclusion all findings are summarised.

Key words:

John Fowles, nineteenth century, Victorian England, the Victorians, morality, marriage, sexual attitudes

SOUHRN

Cílem diplomové práce je analyzovat hodnoty specifické pro život lidí ve středo-Viktoriánské Anglii, vysvětlit důvody vzniku těchto hodnot a popsat způsob, jímž tyto hodnoty ovlivnily život Viktoriánů, především těch patřících ke středním vrstvám společnosti. Diplomová práce dále ukazuje, jakým způsobem se tyto hodnoty odrážejí v životech postav románu *Francouzova milenka* od Johna Fowlese, románu napsaném ve dvacátém století, jehož děj je zasazen do středo-Viktoriánské Anglie. Diplomová práce je rozdělena na šest částí.

Stručný úvod popisuje život a dílo Johna Fowlese, autora *Francouzovy milenky*, a zároveň v hrubých rysech nastiňuje prostředí Viktoriánské Anglie. Následující kapitola se zaměřuje na pojetí rodinného života středními třídami společnosti a vysvětluje důvody, proč byl rodinný život tak vysoce ceněn a střežen. Kapitola dále popisuje specifickou pozici služebnictva a domácí úlohu žen. Kapitola zabývající se Viktoriánským pojetím manželství se zaměřuje na to, co manželství představovalo především v životech žen. Následující kapitola zabývající se postoji vůči sexu se zaměřuje na Viktoriánskou prudérii, přetvářku a dvojí normy, pro které jsou Viktoriáni většinou vzpomínáni. Tato kapitola vysvětluje, co stálo za Viktoriánskými postoji vůči sexu a poukazuje na rozpor mezi chováním v soukromém životě a tím, co bylo veřejně hlášáno. Poslední kapitola se ve stručnosti zaměřuje na Viktoriánské vnímání náboženství a na způsob, jakým bylo toto vnímání ovlivněno náhlým rozmachem přírodních věd. Závěrem práce jsou veškeré poznatky shrnuty.

Klíčová slova:

John Fowles, devatenácté století, Viktoriánská Anglie, Viktoriáni, morálka, manželství, sexuální postoje

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. John Fowles (1926-2005): Life and Work

As his biographer Barry N. Olshen writes, John Fowles was born in 1926 in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, where he also passed his early years. He received his formal education at the Bedford School, a typical boarding school, which he left at the age of eighteen. He proved there an excellent scholar and athlete. After a period near the end of World War II. in the Royal Marines, Fowles went to Oxford, where he studied French language and literature, and received his B.A. in 1950. Upon leaving Oxford, he taught English at the University of Poitiers in France, then at the Anargyrios College in Greece, and consequently in two colleges in and around London (1-7).

Olshen continues that Fowles did not publish until he was almost forty. His first novel *The Collector* was published in 1963. The sale of the film rights enabled Fowles to finally afford to be a full-time writer. After that he moved to Lyme Regis, Dorset where he spent the rest of his life. His other novels were *The Aristos* (1964), *The Magus* (1965), *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), *The Ebony Tower* (1974), *Daniel Martin* (1977), *Mantissa* (1981) and *A Maggot* (1985). Concerning his writing, Fowles had no writing routine and would go for long periods of time without writing anything. However, when he had inspiration, he was able to work even sixteen hours a day, sometimes producing around 10,000 words a day. For instance, the first drafts of *The Collector* and *The Ebony Tower* were written in less than a month. Typical of him was also that after finishing a draft, he would often shelve it for months, sometimes indefinitely. For instance, the first draft of *The Magus* had been written more than a decade before the novel was published. Fowles was usually at work on more than one book at a time. For instance, *The Collector*, his first published novel, was actually his eight or ninth manuscript (8-11).

1.2. The French Lieutenant's Woman and the Victorian Age

The French Lieutenant's woman, a best seller on both sides of the Atlantic, is a historical novel of a special kind in which, as Olsen states, "Fowles has succeeded equally in illuminating the age of which he writes and the age in which he writes" (65).

The setting of the novel is Lyme Regis, which is the same place where Fowles lived until his death in 2005. The year chosen for the setting is 1867, which is exactly a century before Fowles began writing it. Olshen points out that the year 1867 was chosen on purpose as it was the year in which Nobel invented dynamite and the first volume of Marx's *Das Kapital* appeared. It was also the year when the United States purchased Alaska, the Dominion of Canada was established, and the second great Reform Bill was passed by the British parliament. All these events, as Olshen continues, provide a paradigm of the dynamic changes that happened throughout the whole Victorian period – the period in which *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is set (66). When reading the novel, the readers are invited to enter the world of the Victorians, which they find to be expertly depicted. However the readers are often reminded that the author is only an observer from a great historical distance, as Fowles also makes references to the present world.

Commenting on the Victorian age, it should be said that it was an age of great confidence, progress, transformation and also contrasts. It is almost unbelievable how the society transformed during that sixty-four years of the Queen Victoria's reign. Sally Mitchell points out that the Victorian age was an age of great transition, and comments: "The England that had once been a feudal and agricultural society was transformed into an industrial democracy. Between 1837 and 1901, social and technological change affected almost every aspect of daily existence" (xiv).

The year 1837 was when the young Queen Victoria ascended the throne. The early period of her reign was especially in the name of building the railways. W. J. Reader states that in England before 1825 there were no railways at all, and by 1848 there were about 5,000 miles of the railways built (16-17). This was a heroic achievement. The people knew that they were building the first industrial power in the world, and the Great Exhibition in Crystal Palace in 1851 only proved it to the rest of the world. The unthinkable progress caused that the Queen's subjects borrowed her name and started to call themselves the Victorians. To this, Reader points out that this was "a gesture which not even the subjects of Elizabeth I., in many ways so similar, had thought of" (Reader, 17). With the same energy as for building the railways also towns were built, and their population grew enormously. As the country was rapidly changing, the people had to face many problems that the new industrial society brought, and often

they were not ready for that. Reader comments: “The machinery of government and administration [...] was quite inadequate to hold things together. [...] [T]hose who governed did not know what the needs of the governed were” (18).

Besides the unthinkable progress, it has been stated that the Victorian age was an age of great contrasts. The contrast was obvious especially on the lives of the rich and the poor, as it was never more marked than in mid-Victorian times (Cathcart Borer, 48). Socially, the Victorian age also represents the triumph of the middle-classes, which gained power, and throughout the whole Victorian age the dominating ideas influencing the society were theirs.

It has been also stated that the Victorian age brought changes that affected almost every aspect of daily existence and therefore, in the same way, it could be commented on the politics, art, science, and every imaginable field of people’s activity. The Victorian age was an age of Disraeli and Gladstone, Karel Marx, Charles Darwin, the Pre-Raphaelites, Charles Dickens and many others famous names. It was also an age of photography, the telegraph, Penny Post, etc. It is impossible here to comment on everything. However the Victorians had certain values and attitudes which were supposed to bound society together and are traditionally ascribed to all of them as a group.

Above all, the Victorians valued domestic life. They are also known for their prudery and hypocritical attitudes towards sex. Also, religion represented a special part in their lives. The aim of the thesis is to analyze the values which seem the most typical of the people in mid-Victorian England, to explain reasons for them and to describe the way they influenced the Victorian lives, especially those of the leading middle-classes. Further, the thesis presents how the Victorian values are reflected in the lives of the characters of John Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, a twentieth-century novel, which setting is found right in mid-Victorian England. The thesis contains four main parts.

The first part deals with Victorian domesticity, which was often considered to be more than piety. It explains the reason why, as well as it comments on specific aspects of Victorian domestic life. The second part focuses on various issues connected to Victorian marriage, which together with domesticity was considered to be all-important and the ultimate goal in women’s life. The following part deals with Victorian attitudes

towards sex, which are considered to be full of hypocrisy and unhealthy prudery. It tries to explain the reason why the attitudes were adopted as well as it describes how they were applied in everyday life. The last part briefly focuses on religion as the middle-class life revolved around it, and also describes sudden outburst of natural sciences which brought tension as the science seemed to undermine certain pillars of Christian dogma. All the four parts are consequently briefly summarised in the conclusion.

2. DOMESTICITY

Despite its imperfections, domesticity was all-important to the Victorians as it represented a stable value in the age where many aspects of life were rapidly transforming. Victorian society was confronted with progressive urbanization and industrialization, commerce, and with new scientific ideas suddenly undermining religious beliefs. For many, the world was no longer comprehensible and therefore they were in search for something that would provide comfort and assurance that society would not fall apart. Commenting on a special perception of domesticity, H. L. Beales states that the family represented “a noble social institution, upon whose continuance depended all that was fine and stable in British civilisation” (343). In accordance with Beales, John Tosh also mentions the fact that the Victorians were convinced that the stability of society was dependant on the stability of the family. Therefore, it was so highly valued and protected (78-80). To illustrate beliefs of the time and the fact that domesticity really represented something special, Tosh presents observations of foreign visitors to Victorian England, namely Hippolyte Taine and Ralph Waldo Emerson, who were convinced that “[Victorian] domesticity was more than piety” (80).

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman* a glimpse of the ideal Victorian domestic life can be seen in the memories of Sarah Woodruff, who for some time worked as a governess for the Talbot family. Her memories were bittersweet. Sarah viewed the Talbots as very generous people and loved to work for them; however, their domestic happiness brought her intolerable pain. The pain originated from the simple fact that it was not her family. She lived together with the Talbots, but was a mere spectator of something that she desired to have and that was denied to her. She felt that because of her tarnished reputation, she would never have such a family of her own. In her words, it was as if “[she] were allowed to live in paradise, but forbidden to enjoy it” (Fowles, 148).

Even Charles Smithson comes to realize the value of the family, as he contemplates the purpose and direction of his life. Charles was a young gentleman, fascinated by the transformation of the Victorian age, who liked to fully enjoy the life of a bachelor and yet, he suddenly realizes that he is not happy. He starts to be anxious about the fact that “he [is] growing like his uncle at [their family mansion] Winsyatt”

(Fowles, 74), who was an elder bachelor surrounded by his fortune, but lonely. Charles eventually admits that life is passing him by and longs find a wife in order to experience real domesticity (Fowles, 15-20, 74).

2.1. Work and Home: Separate Spheres

It has to be said that it was the middle-class concept of domesticity that dominated Victorian England, as power of middle classes grew enormously. The concept was based on the fact that, in their minds, people desired to separate work from home. In connection with this, Claudia Nelson writes about the concept of “separate spheres” (6). To fully understand this concept, it is important to realize the situation prior to the nineteenth century. As Tosh states, people worked at home, as they were mostly farmers or artisans. Therefore, most activities naturally revolved around the home, because it was everyone’s place of business. What happened as the nineteenth century progressed was that Victorian England had to face a sudden burst of commerce and industrialization (79-80). This logically brought physical separation of work and home, as people no longer lived where they worked.

It remains to be explained why the two spheres also needed to be separated mentally. Judith Calder explains that commerce and industry were viewed as something vulgar. The situation was contradictory. On the one hand, progress and hard-work were viewed positively; on the other hand, work represented by commerce and dirty noisy factories was unacceptable. The middle-class men wanted to mentally separate themselves from the busy dirty world that surrounded them. They searched for an alternative, for a refuge represented by their homes (10-14). Judith Flanders, supporting Calder, also comments that “[t]he home was a microcosm of the ideal society, with love [...] replacing the commerce and capitalism of the outside world” (xxii). In another place Flanders presents the Victorian home as “a place apart from the sordid aspects of commercial life, with different morals, different rules, [...] to protect the soul from being consumed by commerce” (xxi).

The world of commerce in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* is represented by Mr. Freeman, a newly recruited member of the upper-middle class. He owned a big store in central London and as it was very successful, he planned to open other stores in Bristol and Birmingham. To separate work from his private live, he bought a mansion in

the Surrey pinewoods, so that he could escape from London in order to be with his family and leave the world of commerce behind (Fowles, 72, 244, 248).

2.2. Servants

It is important to mention also servants, as without them Victorian middle-class and of course upper-class domesticity would be unthinkable. They represented a significant feature. As regards to their number, Theodore Hoppen states that “[Victorian] England had relatively more domestic servants than any other major European country” (35). However, the point of this chapter is not to state their precise numbers, or comment on their types, but to rather show their specific position within Victorian homes. Calder states that “[t]he Victorian family image would be impossible without servants” (28). In agreement with Calder, Flanders further explains that “[s]ervants were [...] a symbol of status, signalling to the world the stage that the family had reached” (93). In other words, households with no servants simply could not claim the status of the middle class, speaking nothing of higher classes. Therefore, many people struggled just to have servants, although, of course, employing servants had most time more than symbolic value.

Enjoying the privilege of having servants brought inevitably its price. Calder comments that “there was a price more than the simply monetary that had to be paid for the privilege of servants” (29). Because of the fact that servants were involved in so many aspects of their employers’ lives, it was impossible for employers to have as much privacy as they would desire. To a certain extent, they were forced to share their lives with their servants (Calder, 30). Such a situation brought inevitable tension. On the one hand, the Victorians longed for their homes to be a private refuge; on the other hand, they wanted to keep servants, as they confirmed the social status and therefore it was impossible to lead entirely private lives. Commenting on the tension, Bridget Hill states that according to Cissie Fairchilds, in relationships between masters and their servants there was “[a] suggestion of simultaneous closeness and distance, intimacy and enmity” (6).

Although masters tried to keep their lives private as much as possible, many times servants knew well everything that was happening. As servants were often considered to be mere household components, masters treated them in that way and

forgot the fact that servants had eyes and ears. In his novel, Fowles himself comments that “[s]ervants [...] were regarded as little more than furniture, and their masters frequently forgot that they had both ears and intelligences” (183). In *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* there are several situations illustrating the tension between servants and their masters. There are moments when servants logically have to be present, but are not desired to be. There are also moments when the readers can see how servants comment on their masters’ private lives.

“[...] [T]hey knew very well what was going on” (Fowles, 183). This is how it is for example commented on servants at Winsyatt. When Charles comes to visit his uncle sir Robert, the servants already know what Charles is going to be told and thoroughly discuss the whole matter of him being disinherited, Sir Robert getting married and possibly having a son. However, the role of these servants in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* is minor, in contrast to the one of Mary and Sam Farrow.

Sam Farrow, a young Cockney man, has been working for Charles Smithson for four years. Charles has to face Sam in several delicate moments, as for example when he returns completely drunk to his Kensington house after a wild night spent with his London fellows (Fowles, 275). Sam learned not to comment before his master, but his eyes monitor everything and the feeling that Sam “just knows things” is rather unpleasant to Charles. What Charles does not know and can only presume, is that his wild clubbing night was thoroughly discussed by his own servants while he was fast asleep. Sam shares with Mrs. Rogers, who works as a cook, that “[Charles] was blind drunk [...]” and hints that he knows much more – things that the cook would not believe (Fowles, 276). Besides random gossiping, Sam also has control over his master’s private correspondence, as everything passes through his hands. This fact will later prove to be crucial.

When Charles opens the envelope sent by Sarah telling him the address of her stay in Exeter, he does not know that earlier that day, the envelope was already opened and re-gummed by Sam. Sam’s motives are clear. From a distance, he watches how the situation between Charles, Ernestina and Sarah is developing. Then when he feels that his own future is endangered, he of course takes action. Sam starts to play a matchmaker, as he desperately needs to make sure that Charles will marry Ernestina and will be given her dowry. Only with the dowry can Sam hope for a brighter future

for him and Mary, whom he wants to marry (Fowles, 286). As the story progresses, there is another private correspondence, this time sent by Charles to Sarah, which passes through Sam's hands (Fowles, 320-323). As Sam is unable to open it without destroying the seal, he decides not to obey his master's commands and never delivers it. Charles trusts Sam and does not have the slightest suspicion. Unfortunately, he realizes Sam's betrayal when it is too late (Fowles, 344-345).

Mary, another servant already mentioned, worked as a maid for Ms. Tranter, Ernestina's aunt. While staying at her aunt's house in Lyme, Ernestina also experiences moments when Mary interferes with her privacy. As it is Mary who usually opens the door when Charles comes to visit, Ernestina is rather jealous, suspecting her to be flirting with him. Mary is a young cheerful girl, but Ernestina views her as "wicked and irreverent" (Fowles, 67). It is true to say that also from Mary's side there are some negative feelings towards "the young princess from the capital" (Fowles, 69). Mary envies Ernestina's beautiful clothes and her engagement to Charles. Within her position of a maid, Mary tries to see Charles as much as possible. Mary finds Charles to be an interesting young man and thinks that he is "a great deal too good for a pallid creature like Ernestina" (Fowles, 69). However, she never does anything to betray her young mistress.

Probably the most delicate moment that Ernestina has to share with Mary is Ernestina's breakdown shortly after Charles announces his decision to break their engagement. Mary finds her mistress collapsed on the floor of her aunt's drawing room (Fowles, 331), which has to be very humiliating. It is the moment when all of Ernestina's hopes have just been terribly shaken and therefore, the last person she wants to be around is probably the young maid. But such was Victorian domestic life, when servants interfered with their masters' privacy.

2.3. Women: Guardian Angels

What has been outlined so far is the general Victorian image of home and the specific position of domestic servants within it. What remains to be commented on is whose duty and responsibility it was to create the refuge, which Victorian home should represent. Calder states that "[it was] women [who] were expected to both create the

soothing atmosphere of the home, to sustain it, and to symbolize it” (128). In agreement with Calder, Duncan Crow also comments that “[i]t was her [woman’s] duty to provide a place of refuge, a sanctuary from the remorseless skin game outside. She was the guardian angel of the citadel of respectability” (52).

As homemaking was considered to be the only essential function for women, there was a generally accepted belief that they should not have any other activities besides those performed at home. Calder states: “Home was a refuge, and women made it such. They could not make it such if they were allowed beyond its walls” (10). Besides the argument that other activities would only distract women from what was essential, it was also widely believed that keeping women at home helped to morally protect them from the ugly world outside. In another place Calder comments: “The [...] woman, of course, was not to have any dealings with the real world. She could only preside over man’s refuge, create man’s refuge, if she were unsullied by the horrors that lay without” (10). Therefore, in the nineteenth century, the women’s position was often symbolized by “the caged bird” (Flanders, 210), which was both imprisoned and sheltered, similarly as Victorian women.

The justification for keeping women locked at their homes was considered hypocritical by some of them; however, the majority of women accepted their position. The reason why the majority of women did not complain and were more or less content was the fact that for them home represented “a place where [they] had at least some freedom of choice and activity, which [they] might not have had at all in the parental home” (Calder, 9). Within certain limits permitted by society, married women had their own place, where they could fulfil themselves.

Although Ernestina Freeman was still waiting to become a real mistress, as she was only engaged to Charles, the readers of *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* can see that she was ready to dutifully accept her future position. As Ernestina wrote in her diary, she was ready “to honour and obey [...] Charles even when [her] feelings would drive [her] to contradict him” (Fowles, 219). It cannot be said how much she was aware of the fact that she could become “the caged bird”. Nevertheless, it is clear that for her getting married and being a mistress meant certain freedom and an opportunity to fulfil herself, which was something she lacked in her parental home.

While being at her aunt's house, Ernestina could play a mistress, especially before Mary, and could imagine that one day she would give orders to her own servants. Ernestina felt delighted by the fact that she would have her own establishment: "The idea [of being a real mistress] brought her pleasures, of course; to have one's own house, to be free of parents [...]" (Fowles, 71). She already had some plans how to fulfil herself as a mistress. One of the first things she hoped to do was to choose the new interior of the future house that she and Charles would live in. As there was a possibility that they would settle down at Winsyatt, Ernestina was dreaming of how to replace the furniture and everything that "did not meet her approval" (Fowles, 166). This was something that would be impossible for her to do in her parental home and therefore, such planning fulfilled her as it enabled her to feel useful.

3. MARRIAGE

It has been previously written that domesticity was all-important to the Victorians, and logically, without marriage the picture of domesticity would be impossible to create. Although not giving equal rights to both spouses and being far from ideal, within Victorian society, there was nothing valued more than the institution of marriage, as it provided people with certainty in a period of great changes. Writing about how marriage was perceived by the Victorians, Ronald Pearsall states that for them it represented “the stable feature in the sea of change” (7-8). The chapter focuses on what the institution of marriage represented especially in women’s life, as well as on certain social conventions that had to be followed in order not to destroy prospects of marriage.

For Victorian women, finding a husband and getting married was considered the ultimate goal. Common practice was that since early childhood, girls were brought up and trained to succeed on the marriage market. F. M. L. Thompson writes that “middle-class daughters were brought up to regard marriage [...] as their main purpose in life” (59). Flanders supports Thompson and adds:

It was entirely accepted by the vast majority of the population that the central event in any woman’s life was marriage. Women who remained unmarried had failed to fulfil their destiny, both biologically and psychologically. It was right for a woman to marry; it was what she was for (177).

In another place, Flanders further summarises, “[m]arriage was success, spinsterhood was failure: it was that stark” (177).

It is true, as Beales writes, that there were a few women who voluntarily chose not to get married as for instance Florence Nightingale, but these were considered true exceptions (346). Because of the generally held opinion that spinsterhood was failure, and it did not matter whether women chose to remain unmarried or simply failed on the marriage market, the life of spinsters was not easy, as they were often exposed to public disparage of their usefulness (Calder, 125). As a result, for the majority of women remaining a spinster was close to a nightmare, which resulted in that “[t]here was a great anxiety amongst most women to get married, and a tendency to believe that those who were lucky enough to marry should not complain if marriage turned out to be less than they had hoped” (Calder, 125).

3.1. Woman's Inferior Position

Within marriage, women's position was rather inferior. When married, as Mary Shanley writes, "[women were] subjected to restrictions that did not apply to unmarried women or to any man" (10). Crow, also writing on the topic of Victorian marriage, further explains that most restrictions resulted from the simple fact that "[woman's] legal existence was suspended and became incorporated into that of her husband" and therefore, "[s]he was, in fact, civilly dead" (147). This in practise meant that "[p]roperty, liberty, earnings, even a wife's conscience, all belonged to her husband, as did the children she might bear" (Crow, 147). Commenting on the absurdity of being "civilly dead" only because of getting married, Shanley adds the following:

The only other persons who suffered anything like "civil death" of married women were children, whose legal dependency ended when they reached their majority, idiots, who were incapable of fully rational activity and criminals, who forfeited their rights through their own actions (10).

However absurd this may sound, it was reality. Such absurdity, as further Pearsall adds, had only one slightly positive aspect, which was the fact that being "civilly dead" also meant that "any bills she [a married woman] ran up were the responsibility of the husband" (55). However, this fact could never outweigh all the restrictions to which a married woman was subjected.

Even if some unhappily married women found the courage to want to legally leave their husbands, they sadly could not. It was not possible until the year 1857 when divorce became legally possible through the newly established Divorce Court (Beales, 345). But even after 1857, for women, it was difficult to get divorced, and it took a period of time before progress was made. Providing the readers with some figures, Beales states that "[t]here were less than two hundred cases a year before 1870, and fewer than four hundred a year in the 'nineties" (345). It was mainly due to the fact that divorce was extremely expensive and also, divorced women had extremely difficult position within society. Further, as Hoppen states, there was generally a double standard held for reasons for which women could divorce their husbands. For example, men could divorce their wives on the grounds of adultery, but women could not. In order to be allowed to legally leave, women would need "more serious" reasons, as for instance cruelty, bigamy, bestiality or incest from their husband's side (320). Fortunately, as

Pearsall comments on the overall position of married women, “[all the] unfairnesses were gradually done away with as the nineteenth century moved towards its close [...]” (8).

In order to explain where the man’s legal superiority originated, it is important to understand widely accepted idea of man’s natural superiority. The readers can see hints of it in Charles’s thoughts of Ernestina: “After all, she was only a woman. There were so many things she must never understand [...]” (Fowles, 114), or in another place: “Ernestina had neither sex nor experience to understand [...] his motives” (Fowles, 144). In the first place, the claims for natural superiority were found in the Christian religion, which still was considered a central point of Victorian middle-class life. It was believed, as Crow writes, that “woman’s subordinate place was a punishment for the original sin of Eve” (148). Further, as Reader points out, the Victorians were also able to make great use of the texts of the apostle Paul about “the man being the head of the woman” (22). The Victorians turned their own interpretation of the Biblical texts into what was convenient for them, although it needs to be said that many of them truly believed that their perception was right. In the second place, as Crow writes, the naturally inferior position of women was supported by the claim that they are both mentally and physically inferior, as they are weaker and their brain’s capacity is smaller and therefore, they are unable to think as well as men can (146). As regards to the brain’s capacity, Cynthia Eagle Russett explains that the connection between the ability to think and the size of one’s brain has its roots in the doctrines of phrenology, which was a popular discipline from the 1820’s onward. However, phrenology was never fully accepted and considered a real science because of the lack of its credibility (16-24).

3.2. Situation on the Marriage Market

It has been already stated that marriage was considered the main purpose in women’s life and that spinsterhood was viewed as failure. Nevertheless, although some women might voluntarily choose spinsterhood, for many it was not a choice. Finding a husband was not always easy because of the simple fact that Victorian women outnumbered men. Commenting on the situation of the mid-nineteenth century, Crow

states that “[e]ven had every marriageable man chosen a wife, there would still have been spinsters, for there were about half-a-million surplus women [...]” (66). Nelson, also writing about the situation, presents the ratio by stating that “there were 104 females for every 100 males” (15). Such a situation worried the Victorians greatly and therefore, emigration societies were even started to encourage single women to go to the British colonies in order to find somebody whom they could marry, as in the colonies their chances of getting married were considerably higher. Crow writes that in the colonies “they [single women] were in short supply” (66).

After what has been written, the situation could be supposed to be more than ideal for men as the ratio on the marriage market was in favour of them and therefore, they had the privilege of choice. However, for men the situation was not easy either, because as Flanders writes, “[m]en without an income compatible with their social background could not find wives” (180). Before considering marriage, men needed to have a good income, as a woman’s future status was dependent on her husband’s. Calder points out that for men it was considered to be almost immoral to marry without a suitable income, and therefore, in case they finally got married, most middle and upper-middle class men married relatively late (29). Speaking about the age, A. N. Wilson states that between 1840 and 1870 the average age of marriageable men was twenty-nine (260).

However, getting back to women, it has to be said that although the situation was difficult for men on the marriage market as well, for women it was doubly complicated due to the fact that firstly, they outnumbered men and secondly, not every single man was considered to be socially acceptable to marry. Speaking of social acceptability, Flanders states that women were even recommended “to reject a proposed connection that was not absolutely right” (182). This meant that women would reject somebody who probably loved them, but was not socially acceptable, and risk that they might not find anyone else to marry. The social background as well as income were really important especially for the middle classes, where marriage represented a union between “social equals” (Thompson, 99). Therefore, those women who ignored recommendation and married down got into an unenviable position, as “[s]pecial scorn was reserved for daughters who formed attachments, or actually married, beneath themselves [...]” (Thompson, 99). However, if women were lucky enough, as Flanders

further adds, it was entirely acceptable, within limits of course, to marry up for status (185). This was the way the social conventions and class system worked in Victorian England.

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Sarah represents a woman longing to get married but is a victim of the class system and boundaries of what was socially acceptable. As some facts related to Sarah's past and family background are revealed, the readers learn that she has already refused several proposals, as she herself comments that "her hand has been several times asked in marriage" (Fowles, 148). She was a sad example of a woman who was forced out of her own social class, but unfortunately unable to successfully reach above it (Fowles, 50).

It was Mr. Woodruff, Sarah's father, who forced her to get married above her own class, as he was obsessed with their family ancestry. Although being a farmer, Mr. Woodruff was unable to abandon the idea that several generations back there were some traces of gentility among his ancestors. Since being proud of it, he did not want to come to terms with his current social status of a farmer (Fowles, 50-51). Therefore, because of her father's ambitions, Sarah was sent to boarding-school in order to gain education and "the veneer of a lady" (Fowles, 50), which was supposed to enable her to marry somebody above her own social class and thus be provided for. Unfortunately, the result was that on the one hand, she remained "too banal" (Fowles, 51) to the single men from the class she aspired to, and on the other hand, she also became "too select to marry" (Fowles, 50) to the single men from her own class. Therefore, when Mr. Woodruff died, Sarah found herself unprotected, having no husband to provide for her needs.

3.2.1. Matrimonial Traps

Based on what has been said about marriageable men, it was therefore common that if a potential husband appeared on the scene, the news spread fast and single young ladies, or single women in general, tried to do their best in order to gain his attention and win his heart. Further, it was not only them, but also other family members who, being aware of the opportunity for their daughters, granddaughters or other single female relatives to get engaged and marry, flattered the potential husbands. It is true that

before Ernestina appeared on the scene, Charles had experienced many similar situations, as he was considered to be “an interesting young man” (Fowles, 19). He of course had some flaws, but “he never entered society without being ogled by the mamas, clapped on the back by the papas and simpered at by the girls” (Fowles, 20). Although Charles liked pretty girls, the fact that he was viewed by many primarily as a potential husband, a prey to be hunted down, bothered him. He was aware of the matrimonial traps of flattering girls and ambitious parents, and therefore he never let the situation become too serious for him, as he always withdrew in good time. (Fowles, 20).

Speaking of the parents who wanted their daughters to marry, it should be pointed out that behind scenes of the marriage market their roles were not the same. As Thompson writes, the roles were divided along gender lines: on the one hand, it was the fathers’ role to be concerned with a potential husband’s financial situation and further prospects, as well as to officially give the final consent for the marriage; on the other hand, it was the mothers, who in practise determined and enforced the marrying standards for their daughters (103). Thompson continues:

It was womenfolk [...] who devised and organized the whole apparatus of chaperoning, which was designed to channel their daughters’ social contacts and marrying opportunities into clearly defined acceptable circles, and to control their behaviour and premarital conduct within them. It was womenfolk who composed the invitation lists for social events [...] [a]nd it was womenfolk who developed the appropriate classificatory vocabulary to indicate where to draw the line [...] (103).

Therefore, although the fathers were expected to be formally asked to give the final consent for the marriage, it was especially the mothers who from the background influenced whom their daughters could marry, as they created the whole network of channels to find and determine the best single men for their daughters to meet. To conclude, although being different, the parents’ roles had the same goal, which was to ensure that their daughters will choose a husband only from those single men who were viewed as “acceptable” (Thompson, 103).

As it has been stated, the matrimonial traps were numerous and actually it was right when another of these traps was being slowly set upon Charles when he first met Ernestina. Nevertheless, it needs to be said that it was not Ernestina’s trap, as these two young people met in a drawing room of one further unspecified lady who “had her eye

on [Charles] for one of her own covey of simperers” (Fowles, 72). The reason why Charles found Ernestina interesting was, besides the fact that her beauty was “irresistible” (Fowles, 27), that she was different from the rest of the single girls present. What differed and made her exceptional that evening was her approach to Charles. While other girls, together with their parents, flattered Charles and tried to pretend how interested they were in palaeontology, only because of the fact that it was commonly known to be Charles’s main area of interest, Ernestina “showed a gently acid little determination not to take him very seriously” (Fowles, 72). It was Ernestina’s slightly sarcastic remarks and indifference that made her interesting in Charles’s eyes. In her approach, Charles encountered something new, something that he was not used to (Fowles, 72).

The reason why Ernestina decided to choose a different approach was that she was well aware of the mistakes of her rivals. She knew that “no wife thrown at Charles’s head would ever touch his heart” (Fowles, 73) and therefore, she decided to behave the way she did. After Ernestina’s private announcement that she had found Charles to be “an agreeable change from the dull crop of [other single men] [...] presented for her examination that season” (Fowles, 72), her father, as expected, made discrete enquiries in order to be sure that Charles was “an acceptable” suitor for his only daughter. However, when he “passed with flying colours” (Fowles, 73) and started to frequent the Freeman’s house, the parents were further instructed not to make the mistake to flatter strikingly and pretend that everything connected to Charles absorbed them, as well as mention how sweet and talented their Ernestina was. As the behaviour of both Ernestina and her parents was not quite common and therefore provided Charles with “an unusual experience” (Fowles, 73), Charles felt relaxed and not repelled as in the previous cases (Fowles, 72-73).

At this point it should be emphasized that in Victorian England daughters were allowed to freely choose whom to marry. Of course, there were those already stated conventions, as daughters were supposed to only choose from the group of the single men approved of by their parents. However, daughters were not forced into arranged marriages that would contradict their private feelings. Writing on the topic, Thompson comments as follows:

[T]he arranged marriage in which the parents carried out all the negotiations and the bride and groom had never seen each other before the wedding day had no place in any level of British society since the Tudors if not before [...] (110).

Therefore, Ernestina did not have to be worried that she would be forced to marry somebody she did not really love or worse, had never met before her wedding day.

3.2.2. Importance of Good Reputation

For single women good reputation was extremely important, as losing it would dramatically endanger, if not ruin, their prospects of getting married. In Victorian England the good reputation could have been lost due to behaviour, which would nowadays be viewed as completely innocent, as for instance presenting herself in public unaccompanied (Pearsall, 10). Commenting on Victorian social conventions, Crow writes that “great care was needed not to make oneself ‘cheap’” (39), and further illustrates it on the story of certain Adeline de Horsey, who damaged her reputation as a young lady by choosing to ride in public unaccompanied (39).

In Victorian England, the social conventions of middle and upper-middle classes seemed to be quite strict. To further depict them, Crow notes the striking difference between the United States and England of that time, and quotes passages from the letter of certain Mrs. Stevenson writing from London to her niece in Virginia. From the letter it is clear that as opposed to the conventions in America, in London it would be unthinkable for young ladies to appear in public without their mother or chaperon (63-64). Crow further states that in the United States, there were actually no chaperons used and that “English visitors, especially lady visitors, were amazed at the degree of freedom thus allowed to American young ladies” (64), and then continues that social behaviour that American ladies were accustomed to “would have been social crime in England” (64).

Living in England and being aware of what breaking the social conventions might result in, Ernestina would never appear alone in public. During her stay in Lyme, whenever being in public places, she was accompanied by her aunt together with Charles or by Charles only. However, as the readers of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* discover, there was another young woman whose approach to the social conventions

was quite different, if not considered scandalous. It was right during one of Charles's regular walks with Ernestina when he first met her. The young woman who caught his attention was Sarah, who on the contrary, standing alone on the mole and being absorbed by watching the sea seemed to make little of appearing in public unaccompanied (Fowles, 12-14).

For her independent spirit revolting against the conventions, Sarah was scorned by many people in Lyme. It was not only her walks on the mole, but especially her delight in solitude leading her steps, however innocently, to the woods of Ware Commons, which was considered scandalous (Fowles, 80-83). "You are a public scandal" (Fowles, 212). This was one of the last sentences Sarah was told by Mrs. Poulteney for whom she worked. Mrs. Poulteney had absolutely no understanding for Sarah's walks, as especially Ware Commons evoked Sodom and Gomorrah in her old face (Fowles, 80). At this point, it is important to say that the area of Ware Commons was not simply the woods, which by itself would be scandalous to visit, but it was the area with a rather obscure history. As it is explained to the readers, the area was considered to be a favoured destination especially for lovers who did not want to be spied on (Fowles, 80) and therefore, among the more respectable people in Lyme "one had only to speak of a boy or a girl as 'one of the Ware Commons kind' to tar them for life" (Fowles, 81). Therefore, when Mrs. Poulteney discovered that Sarah was not willing to change her behaviour and abandon her walks to Ware Commons even after the scandalous facts about this place had been revealed to her (Fowles, 87), the tension between these two women gradually intensified up to the point when Sarah was dismissed (Fowles, 211-213).

During her rather short stay in Lyme, Sarah learned to be more or less immune to being scorned by the majority of local people. Once labelled a "public scandal", her long walks to the woods, she believed, could not further tarnish her already bad reputation. At this point, it should be explained that Sarah's reputation had already been destroyed prior to her coming to Lyme. It was the story of her and Varguennes, the French shipwrecked lieutenant whom she met and fell in love with when working as a governess for the Talbots (Fowles, 33-36), which earned her labels much worse than the one used by Mrs. Poulteney. By many, she was called the French Lieutenant's Woman or even worse, the French Lieutenant's Whore, and Sarah well knew that

(Fowles, 77, 153). Therefore, due to the social conventions, her chances on the marriage market were already ruined, as there was no second chance for those with such a tarnished reputation.

Based on what has been stated about Sarah, there is no doubt that she found herself in an unenviable position. Although trying to be immune to all the gossips and the way she was treated, there were moments when Sarah, being alone and overwhelmed by her feelings, starts to silently cry (Fowles, 84). However, all the gossips paradoxically gave her the freedom that other respectable girls, like Ernestina, could never possess. Sharing her life-story with Charles, Sarah herself comments: "Sometimes I almost pity them [other girls]. I think I have a freedom they cannot understand. No [further] insult, no blame, can touch me" (Fowles, 153). Because Sarah felt she had already nothing to lose, as she was sure that due to her tarnished reputation she would never have a husband and children (Fowles, 153), she found courage to revolt against society and its conventions.

Now getting back to Ernestina, it has been already stated that her life situation was diametrically different, as her life was still limited, if not chained down, by the social conventions. Ernestina was a young lady of spotless reputation and was determined to keep it so, as nothing should endanger her chances on the marriage market. Therefore, she agreed to follow the conventions no matter how strict or illogical they might appear. However, there was a situation which shook her world. Although it was not Ernestina's fault, her reputation suffered when Charles announced the unexpected decision to break their engagement. It is true that on the one hand, the position into which Ernestina was suddenly put had nothing to do with "being cheap" as it has been previously outlined, on the other hand, the new position would bring public shame and she could never be sure about how the society around her would react. Therefore, logically, the public shame to which she was going to be exposed was the very first thing on Ernestina's mind after she overcame the initial shock. She was convicted that the shame would kill her (Fowles, 329).

To prevent possible gossips from spreading and Ernestina's spotless reputation from being endangered, her father had to take necessary steps and pass the whole matter over to the family solicitor. It needed to be made sure that none, especially none from the rest of marriageable men would doubt Ernestina's innocence and the good name of

the Freeman family. As a result, Charles was strongly recommended to sign a special document claiming that above all “[he] was given no cause whatsoever by the innocent party [Ernestina] to break [his] solemn contract [...]” (Fowles, 354). It was obvious that the document was designed not only to save Ernestina’s reputation, but also to punish Charles for what he did. The punishment was hidden in the clause that gave Ernestina the right to make of the document “whatsoever use she desire[d]” (Fowles, 355). In other words, the latter clause meant that if needed, Ernestina could have it inserted in the newspaper in order to publicly defend her reputation, as well as to take revenge and destroy Charles’s social status (Fowles, 355). Despite the fact that the document was rather humiliating, Charles signed it because refusing would have meant much worse consequences for him. Therefore, Ernestina’s reputation was saved as much as it could have been in the given situation.

3.2.3. Destiny of Surplus Women

It has been already stated that the number of surplus women worried the Victorians and therefore it was common practice to even encourage women to emigrate to find somebody whom they could marry. The Victorians were worried, it was true, but nobody was probably more worried than single Victorian women themselves. With the exception of those having similar views as Florence Nightingale, women were scared to even think of the possibility that there would be no marriage for them. As they were continually told that marriage was their main purpose in life and that spinsterhood meant failure, it is logical that none of them wanted to be the one who failed. Further, besides the humiliating feeling of being a “failure”, there was also a practical part of not being married. Having no husband usually meant that there was nobody who would provide for their material needs. Victorian women needed husbands who could financially support them, because the choice of activities that women could do in order to earn some money and provide for themselves was rather limited. In fact, single women were hard to incorporate into the Victorian society. Therefore, it was not only their number, but especially their destiny that concerned the Victorians. Flanders comments that “[t]he question of ‘redundant’ women came to loom large among the middle classes” (178).

The reason why it was complicated for women to provide for themselves is not difficult to find. Crow explains: “They [single women] failed because they were totally untrained for any kind of work” (67). It is true, as Crow further writes, that they were able to play the piano, do the embroidery or knit stockings, but that was all they knew. However, they could not have been blamed for it as the situation was mainly the effect of the boarding-school education which middle-class daughters received. As the ambitious middle classes tried to copy behaviour of the upper classes and achieve gentility, the daughters were taught to pass their time in a lady-like manner, which expected them to shun any kind of work. Then, in case that a disaster happened in the form that there was no marriage for them, many of them had to face hardships. There were quite limited options of what they could do to earn their own living. In case they tried to lead a virtuous life and not slip to the bottom of society, they were given a mere Hobson’s choice, which was to become a governess (46-47, 67-68).

The life of a governess was probably not what a single woman would voluntarily choose. Instead of living for her own husband and children, it had to be painful to take care of her employers’ children. It had to be painful to live in a family that was not truly hers, to share borrowed moments of happiness together with knowing that at any moment she could be dismissed and replaced by another governess. Commenting on the hardships of being a governess, Crow mentions Hippolyte Taine, according to whom lots of governesses, due to the life they had to live, became unpleasant, unemotional and “turned their faces into wooden masks” (69). According to Taine, most of them were similar to those depicted in the novels by Charlotte Brontë, which indeed is not a very favourable picture. Although Crow further mentions that Taine was contradicted by certain Lady Cardigan, who argued that she had never met a governess similar to those in the novels by the Brontës (69), it can be expected that lives of governesses were somehow stigmatized due to the nature of their profession and the disappointing fact that there was no marriage for them.

Sarah’s life was stigmatized. She was given lady-like education at boarding-school, she aspired to get married above her own class and then unexpected hardships came. After her father was completely unable to provide for her, as he was sent to Dorchester Asylum, Sarah found herself destitute. Her life circumstances forced her to start working as a governess. At first, she worked for a family in Dorchester so that she

could be close to her father and then when her father died, she went to work for the Talbot family (Fowles, 50-51). As it has been previously mentioned in the chapter on domesticity, although Sarah was treated nicely by the Talbots, she had pain inside as the children were not her own, and nor was the family. Then when she left the Talbots at her own request, after the episode with the French lieutenant, she faced the same problem, which was how to earn some money and provide for herself.

After her arrival at Lyme, Sarah did a little needlework for kind-hearted Mrs. Tranter, but it is true to say that she had to live mostly on her poor savings from her previous period of life (Fowles, 35). Although trying to look strong, inside, Sarah was desperate and was grateful to accept the position of a companion to Mrs. Poulteney. The offer came in good time as “[s]he [Sarah] had exactly sevenpence in the world” (Fowles, 37). Having been offered the position and not being so desperate, Sarah would have probably refused it, as Mrs. Poulteney was rather mean. Fowles himself comments that “[t]here would have been a place in the Gestapo for [this] lady [...] In her fashion she was an epitome of all the most crassly arrogant traits of the ascendant British Empire” (23). Commenting on Mrs. Poulteney’s character, it has to be said that she would have never employed Sarah if she had not needed to do some good deeds. Mrs. Poulteney believed in hell and was scared of it. She needed good deeds to make sure that she would go to heaven, as she believed this was the way God’s justice worked. Further, she wanted her good deeds to be visible so that everybody would know what a gracious heart she had, and offering a position to a young desperate woman served the purpose (Fowles, 23-26). Therefore, Sarah was offered the new position only thanks to Mrs. Poulteney’s hypocritical attitude and fear of hell.

Sarah’s story shows that the position was hard to find. Although it is never disclosed whether Sarah would have found a new family to work for as a governess if she had not accepted Mrs. Poulteney’s offer, the level of distress was probably high. To illustrate the level of distress and how much the position was wanted, Crow presents that to an advertisement for a governess in *The Times* there were around 140 replies (68). As Crow continues, the situation became serious and the amount of distress was charted by the Governesses Benevolent Institution, which had its beginning in 1841. One of its several functions was to financially help the ladies facing temporary distress. Besides this, the Governesses Benevolent Institution also founded annuities for aged

governesses. This was also needed, as Crow comments: “One of the terrible penalties of the profession was destitution in old age. A governess would work for perhaps twenty-five years at the most, at a salary which would perhaps start at £25 a year and seldom rise beyond £80” (68). Therefore, in case that a governess became ill or if something else happened, she was unable to save up any money for her old age when it would become impossible for her to work. Further, besides paying the annuities, the G.B.I. also started homes to lodge governesses who were out of work and an asylum for those who were too old to work (Crow, 69). So this was the destiny of surplus women – being a governess, which was a position often hard to find and a position which they would probably never voluntarily choose.

4. SEXUAL ATTITUDES

To illustrate the attitude generally held by Victorian society, Sheila Rowbotham presents the observation of a radical Victorian writer, lecturer and social activist Edward Carpenter who viewed the Victorian Age as “a period in which [...] the denial of the human body and its needs, huddling concealment of the body in clothes, the ‘impure hush’ in matters of sex [...] were carried to an extremity of folly difficult for [...] [people] to realize” (244). Carpenter’s personal observation was probably irritating to many of his contemporaries. However, when looking retrospectively at the Victorians after one hundred years and analyzing their attitudes, many people would now agree that Carpenter was right. They would agree that Victorian attitudes towards sex were full of prudery inevitably leading to hypocrisy and would therefore despise them.

The attitudes originated among the leading middle classes, which striving for chastity, modesty and decency tried to publically ban sex from every aspect of life. Sex was banned from speech, sight, from respectable households, from people’s minds. It was a part of grand middle-class strategy for civilizing society. “The attitude of ‘civilizing by ignoring’, the attitude which said, ‘if you don’t look at it, it will go away [...]’” (Crow, 24). However, it is not so simple to despise Victorian prudery and hypocrisy when realizing, as Crow writes, that:

[...] this blinkered attitude was adopted to hide the proximity of the abyss in which seethed the primitive society the Victorians were struggling away from. [...] [When realizing that] possibly they felt that if they spoke the talisman words of hypocrisy and prudery often enough it would help to make those words come true – at least it would disguise the fact of how tenuous was their hold on the pleasanter life. [...] [When realizing that] their only defence against slipping back into the slime was, it seemed, to ignore the immorality [...] that surrounded them, and to adopt the canons of ultra-propriety (23).

The Victorians experienced progress and great social changes giving chances of pleasanter life and therefore did not want to slip back into former harsh conditions. The Victorians were afraid as the harsh conditions were much to close. Even in 1837 “Britain was a land of violence, its coasts in the hands of smugglers, its roads under the rule of highwaymen, [and] its towns subject to the mob” (Crow, 22). Therefore to protect themselves, the Victorians chose to be chained down by often too ridiculous rules which people tried to follow. Pearsall summarised the whole situation as follows:

“People tried to live an impossible life according to rules imposed by people who if they knew the facts of life tried to hide them for the good of society” (10).

Millions of Victorian men and women merely wanted to live their lives according the imposed rules. They believed they should do so. When they failed, they felt shame and guilt. Nevertheless, there were also those on whom the rules introduced by the middle classes had almost no impact, those who ignored the guilt and shame. Commenting on this, Pearsall writes: “These were mostly at the top and the bottom of society; the aristocracy ignored the rules, the lower classes did not know about them” (10). That was the situation in which the Victorians found themselves, too afraid to slip back, chained down by the rules impossible to keep and therefore covering everything in hypocrisy.

4.1. Banning Sex from Life

4.1.1. Crinolines and Bathing Machines

Victorian effort to ban sexual images was driven to extremes as it, in a ridiculous way, influenced even fashion. It has to be said, however, that it was especially women’s fashion that was influenced. As Mary Cathcart Borer writes, in the 1860’s when Victorian prudery was at its most rigid, it is true that men’s trousers were looser so that their legs were less obvious, but “[...] women were not supposed to possess them at all, nor in fact any part of the anatomy between the neck and the feet” (34). Crow states that since the 1830’s when women’s skirts reached even to mid-calf, the skirts went on hiding more and more until they became huge, heavy domes reaching to the ground. “They [skirts] reached right to the ground and concealed everything except the toe so that walking became like a perpetual struggle through shallow water” (120). Therefore a new supporting structure had to be introduced, otherwise women were to collapse to the ground. As Borer writes, the new supportive structure was the crinoline which turned women into ridiculous bell-shaped creatures and became the outstanding characteristic of the 1860’s. Describing the typical Victorian crinolined dress, Borer continues:

[W]omen were enveloped in skirts which reached monstrous widths, held over wire cages, and underneath they wore six or seven petticoats [...] The slimness of their corseted waists was hardly noticeable because of their wide sleeves and full cloaks (35).

Besides the fact that Victorian crinolined dresses were the result of a prudish attitude, there is, however, another attitude which also influenced this fashion and therefore, should be mentioned. Commenting on it, Pearsall states: “[M]iddle- and upper-class women dressed in a manner that would show that they were not expected to work – a manner in which they could not work” (65). It is true that it was impossible to perform any kind of work in the above described crinolined dresses and therefore, the attitude of rejecting work was obvious.

The wire construction of crinolines supporting the skirts was really monstrous. It is an interesting fact that the crinoline fashion was one of few fashions which even had a permanent result on architecture. For instance the wide staircases of mid-Victorian houses were built to serve the demands of the crinoline (Pearsall, 65). For their monstrosity, although the fact that crinolines helped to ban sexual images from sight and mind was viewed positively, there were only disadvantages connected to wearing them. Often, women in crinolines were simply annoying. Pearsall writes: “Three or four women filled a drawing room, keeping the men penned up against the door or the wall, and an omnibus designed to take ‘eight inside’ would have its work cut out to accommodate four of these pyramidic structures” (66).

Further, to wear crinolines was sometimes risky as “[t]he newspapers were rarely without an account of some poor girl who was [accidentally] burned to death [as when the crinoline caught fire, it was immediately in a blaze]” (Pearsall, 66). This really was not a fiction. Writing in accordance with Pearsall and illustrating how quick it sometimes was for such an accident to happen, Crow presents the case of a certain Lady Dorothy Nevill, whose crinolined dress caught fire when she happened to stand too close to a drawing-room fireplace. She saved her life by being present-minded and rolling herself in the hearthrug. Despite the fact that when the accident happened, Lady Dorothy Nevill was not alone, there was paradoxically nobody to help her. In the drawing-room there were only other ladies who, unfortunately, for their own monstrous crinolined dresses were unable to do anything as their dresses would also have caught fire if they had come too close to Lady Nevill (125).

Despite all the disadvantages that crinolined dresses had, they served their prudish function, for a woman's anatomy was almost impossible to be recognized. Men walking down the street could accidentally take a glimpse of a woman's ankle, but that was all they were allowed to see. However, as Pearsall adds, it is true that when lucky enough, men could see "a good deal more" (69). To manage wearing crinolines with decorum was truly a skilled art. Therefore, it sometimes happened that a woman tripped over her monstrous crinolined skirt. The problems then involved may be better imagined than described as during much of the Victorian period, respectable women did not wear drawers or knickers. Pearsall explains that drawers were considered masculine and therefore, respectable women scorned them. He also points out an interesting paradox that drawers were not worn by respectable women who were supposed to take pride in decency and modesty, but were initially worn only by Victorian prostitutes. However, the era of crinolines changed this and drawers slowly became popular even among respectable women (69-70).

Fortunately, Ernestina was no longer required to stumble in monstrous skirts as she happened to experience a decade in which the fashion of crinolines was slowly disappearing. Popularity of crinolines began to decline in 1866 (Pearsall, 68), which consequently brought less prudent fashion on the scene. Although the readers of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* meet Ernestina in 1867, when many Victorian women were still wearing crinolines, they would not find any in Ernestina's wardrobe. She was among the first ones to abandon wearing crinolines as she, a young lady from London, was always dressed according to the latest fashion. For 1867 it meant to wear "a [...] skirt of almost daring narrowness – and shortness, since two white ankles could be seen beneath the rich green coat and above the black boots [...]" (Fowles, 8). In the 1860's, a skirt revealing a woman's ankles would have been considered indecent. However, in 1867 the temper of Victorian society, although still prudent, was more tolerant.

Speaking of how Victorian prudery influenced fashion, bathing costumes and bathing machines should be also mentioned. Typical, rather ridiculously looking, bathing costumes for women were "high-necked and long-sleeved, with skirts which concealed baggy, calf-length trousers" (Cathcart Borer, 40). Further to ensure that women bathers would not evoke any sexual thoughts even in bathing costumes concealing the whole body, special bathing machines were introduced. Cathcart Borer

explains that they were pulled usually by horses from the shore into the sea, where women emerged from them directly into water (39).

It might be a rather surprising fact to find out that before the bathing machines and all-concealing bathing costumes were introduced, mixed bathing in the nude was no exception. Pearsall states that the environment of the public bath or later seaside resort was considered shame-proof and therefore, it was natural for both sexes to bathe without any clothes on (49). Alison Smith adds that public bathing in the nude was common even for the early Victorians. The change, initiated by the respectable middle-classes, came in the 1850's when, supported by by-laws, segregated bathing, bathing machines and costumes for both sexes were introduced. However, it is true to say that men were reluctant to totally abandon bathing in the nude till the end of the nineteenth century (15).

4.1.2. Trousered Piano Legs

It is true that the Victorians in England were used to prudery, however, even they were astonished when visiting their contemporaries in the United States, whose repressiveness towards sexual images seemed to be over-affected. Some of the observations are interesting to mention. Crow presents experiences of Captain Frederick Marryat, an English novelist, who described his journeys in *A Diary in America*, among which the most astonishing experience was probably Marryat's encounter with trousered piano legs. At a seminary for young ladies, Marryat once saw a square piano-forte which had its all four legs dressed in modest little trousers to preserve pure ideas of the young ladies present. Marryat was astonished. Commenting on Marryat's experience, Crow furthers states that there is no documentary evidence that anyone else ever saw piano legs clothed in the similar way. Nevertheless these trousered piano legs, probably first and unique of its kind, started a whole tradition of trousered furniture (28-29). Such over-affected decency was counter-productive as covering the legs actually sexualized the furniture. Further, from the covering, and covering only, originated the hypocrisy.

Also Mrs. Trollope, mother of Anthony Trollope, was astonished when touring the United States. Crow presents that she also saw and heard many cases of over-affected modesty, which actually aroused her scorn. For instance, nude antique statues in galleries were considered obscene, and in Philadelphia men and women visited the gallery in alternate groups, so that the opposite sex could not be present when observing the statues (27-28). Such manifestation of prudery that Mrs. Trollope and Captain Marryat experienced may now be considered truly ridiculous. However, it illustrates the Victorian hypocritical attitude that by concealing, sex would be banned from immediate sight and therefore, it would disappear.

4.1.3. Indecent Shakespeare and Bible

Besides dresses and certain objects, as for instance statues or furniture legs, which were believed to evoke sexual images, the Victorians were also strongly concerned about indecencies which could be found in books. Therefore, any words or passages of text that were considered to be “morally harmful” were excised. Commenting on the mania for expurgation, D. C. Somervell states that “[t]he Victorian Age [was], in literary history, the Age of Expurgation, even though the most famous of the expurgators, Thomas Bowdler, had died as early as 1825” (86).

The above-mentioned Thomas Bowdler and his family were famous for expurgating Shakespeare, whose literary work was not spared, for even the great classics were expurgated. Commenting on Bowdler expurgating Shakespeare, Pearsall writes that the expurgated canon of work of Shakespeare, where sixteen of the thirty-six plays were excised in their entirety, first appeared in 1807. The canon was known as the *Family Shakespeare* and remained in print for more than eighty years (98-99).

Although some of them were hypocrites, many expurgators believed that they were a true blessing as they helped to morally protect Victorian readers. It is true that they might have had good intentions, but again, as with the already mentioned trousered furniture legs, they sometimes led the situation to the extreme. Pearsall illustrates the whole situation of Victorian literary history as follows:

The expurgators considered that they [...] were a boon and a blessing to men; the anti-expurgators thought that they were squeamish prudes, and that there was something ludicrous about omitting dubious passages, forcing the reader to think that they were worse than they were and make feverish guesses (97).

Speaking of the feverish guesses, it is true that expurgated Shakespeare, as well as other classics, arouse curiosity especially among young readers. Blank lines or asterisks in the texts were tempting for the readers wanted to discover what forbidden words were in the original text. Surprisingly, the easiest way to find out was to simply consult a concordance “indexing the prohibited words without repugnance” (Pearsall, 101). It may seem rather ridiculous to find out that, as Pearsall continues, several very good concordances to Shakespeare were published right in the nineteenth century when expurgation flourished (101). On the one hand, the Victorians tried to protect morality by expurgating; on the other hand, they provided readers with concordances, where everything could be found.

It was not only the highly-valued classics, as for instance Shakespeare, who were not spared from expurgation, but the whole situation reached a point where even the Bible was not spared. Therefore it happened that expurgated copies of the Bible circulated among the Victorians. The book which was supposed to be viewed as sacred, untouchable was censored for its eroticism. As Pearsall states, an early example of the expurgated Bible was the *Sacred History* by Sarah Trimmer. Despite the fact that the *Sacred History* was designed for the young, the adults started to use it as well. Other truncated versions by John Bellamy, Benjamin Boothroyd of William Alexander followed (101-102). Pearsall writes about some of the versions as of a “divine muddle” (102). Fortunately, as Pearsall continues, after Boothroyd and Alexander, expurgations of the Bible ceased. Eventually, the Victorians took to heart that the Bible was a sacred book and therefore, it should be followed as near as possible. This brought return to the authorised version from 1611, which meant that for once the middle classes were powerless in a way. Although the middle classes thought that because of the stories of Amnon and Tamar, Lot and his daughters, Potiphar’s wife and Joseph, etc., which in a way gave information about sex, the Bible should be expurgated, they could not enforce it (103).

There is no wonder that an expurgated version of the Bible was also found in Mrs. Poulteney's household. At first sight it was a normally-looking large family Bible from which Sarah usually read to Mrs. Poulteney in the evenings. However, if opened, it was clear that some parts were missing as "certain inexplicable errors of taste in the Holy Writ (such as the Song of Solomon) had been piously excised [...]" (Fowles, 81-82). There is no surprise that Mrs. Poulteney, prudish as she was, had to be persuaded that the Song of Solomon, which is considered to be beautiful love poetry, was something obscene and therefore, morally harmful.

4.1.4. Conspiracy of Silence and Great Lies

It has been stated that the leading middle classes wanted to publically ban sex from every aspect of life. The effort sometimes brought strange results, as for instance the crinoline, trousered furniture legs or truncated versions of the Bible. However, this was not enough. The middle classes imposed complete embargo on sex as, among the respectable, there was generally held attitude that sex should be viewed as something dirty and obscene which cannot be discussed even between husband and wife, parents and children, much less in general public. The conspiracy of silence was omnipresent, and from the silence hypocrisy flourished. The attitude of adults was further transferred on the upcoming generations, as the adults "engendered more hypocrites" (Pearsall, 8). Victorian daughters and sons could not be given information about the real facts of sexual life, and they had to discover for themselves. Silence and Victorian view that among the respectable sexual desires did not exist brought anxiety and confusion as those who happened to feel them thought they were weak, vicious and evil. All this was not necessary and could have been prevented if the attitude towards sex had been different. Commenting on the silence, Pearsall writes:

It was a gigantic failure of communication at a time when communication had reached a sophistication that would have been undreamt of a century before. One could find out everything about anything – provided that it did not concern the relation of the sexes, or sex itself (8-9).

Speaking of upcoming Victorian generations, it is true that there were some information books available on the topic of sex and the relation of the sexes. However, in order not to be considered obscene, the books prevaricated and provided their readers

with rather vague information. Pearsall states that a typical book of that period addressed to Victorian girls was *Talk with Girls* written by E. B. Kirk. It was assumed that the book would be vetted by parents before given to the girl. Therefore, in the book there was a special page addressed to parents telling them that when it comes to the topic dealing with the relation of the sexes, there were two versions of the information which the girl could be given. There was a page with explicit information followed by another page with less detailed information. As the pages were both perforated, one of them could have been easily torn out, so that the girl would never discover about the two versions of the text. However, it has to be said that even the page providing the “explicit information” was rather vague as all that the readers could learn was that, Pearsall quotes, “[n]ature has made the man’s sex organ to fit exactly into that of the woman in the most marvellous and beautiful way” (35). Similar sentence might have provoked curiosity, but otherwise did not help much.

The fact that Victorian parents were silent about the real facts of sexual life caused that girls even did not know what exactly was happening to their bodies when menstruation appeared. Hoppen comments as follows: “Most young girls [...] found themselves quite unprepared for menstruation, for which a dictionary of euphemisms was employed: the ‘curse’, the ‘poorly time’ [...]” (324). On the topic of menstruation it should be add that among the Victorians, menstruation was considered to really be a curse, a biblical punishment for the original sin of Eve. This fact was further used as an argument supporting the generally believed ideal of women’s inferiority. Actually, as Pearsall states, this was believed until the late nineteenth century when it was discovered that menstruation served its purpose (50).

Considered the information available, there is no surprise that after their first encounter with menstruation, girls instinctively believed that there had to be something dirty about sexual matters, although they probably did not know what sexual matters meant in their entirety. As regards ignorance and myths about sexual matters, especially the relation of the sexes, Pearsall writes:

Sexual ignorance ranged from complete unawareness that any bodily relationship occurred, to utter confusion. Some girls thought that the wife and husband lay side by side without doing anything, others that somehow the navel was the centre of sex life, while others were under the misapprehension, shared by writers of pornography, that the act occupied the whole night (35).

Such thoughts may sound ridiculous, but the truth is that the conspiracy of silence about sexual matters, together with hypocritical approach of those who knew better, caused harm to many young women, future wives-to-be. Pearsall continues that “[...] they [women] found their wedding night a frightening experience, an experience that some of them never forgot or forgave” (8). Similar situations were unnecessary and could have been prevented if sexual matters had not been considered obscene by the Victorians. Pearsall states that sometimes it happened that there was no wedding night, as there was no wedding at all. He presents a case of a young woman of twenty-seven who, spending her entire life in complete sexual ignorance, was lent a copy of Ellis Ethelmer’s pamphlet *The Human Flower* before her wedding. From the pamphlet she learned how “men desired the body of a woman”, which horrified her so much that it made her ill. Consequently, the young woman refused to even get married as she thought that her fiancé was lustful and obscene (35).

It is true to say that also Ernestina was uninformed about the relation of the sexes and therefore, was rather anxious. She loved Charles, wanted to get married and have children, but the anxiety and confusion about what was going to happen after the wedding was high. The readers learn that she had spent her life in “profound ignorance of the reality of copulation” (Fowles, 30). Besides the fact that Ernestina once or twice saw animals mate, which she found brutal, she was given no information and therefore, she could only speculate of what was going to happen between her and Charles once they married. She tried not to think of it, but it was impossible. The level of anxiety was too high (Fowles, 30).

Sometimes even young men did not know much about the relation of the sexes. Doctor Grogan, one of the great characters of Lyme, knew something about it. During one evening when Charles comes to discuss his worries concerning Sarah’s destiny, Grogan recalls certain cases from his medical career. “I have something private and very personal to discuss. I need your advice” (Fowles, 190). These are Charles’s first sentences and before Charles makes himself clear that the discussion is not going to be about him, Grogan thinks that Charles, as many other young men before him, needs advice on some sexual matters. In this connection, Grogan recalls his encounter with a young childless and desperate husband who for his total ignorance of sexual matters

had to be explained that “new life is neither begotten nor born through the navel” (Fowles, 190).

There were moments when the conspiracy of silence was publically broken by certain pieces of information. However, the information was mainly false threads behind which stood clergymen and doctors. “[D]octors provided a service, and as the middle classes were those who took greatest advantage of them it was to the doctors’ interest not to alienate them” (Pearsall, 14). As the middle classes strived to ban sex from people’s minds, they needed doctors to support them, which they did by arousing anxiety among those who would happen to transgress the rules against sex. For instance, great lies were spread about dangers of masturbation, so that people would not dare to even think of possible sexual pleasures. Pearsall states that young men and women were threatened that they would get red noses or warts, would go blind, deaf or insane, in case they did not stop practising it. Spreading such threads resulted in thousands of anxious and hysterical men and women. Sometimes the situation went so far as those unable to drop the habit were driven to committing suicide (24).

Again, shame and guilt struck only those capable of feeling them – those respectable, who trapped themselves in Victorian prudery bringing its lies and ridiculous rules. One of those sensitive people who confessed guilt was even Florence Nightingale. Pearsall states that in her diary, Florence confessed her perpetual struggle with the habit of practising masturbation. For her, it was an endless battle. She managed to conquer the habit, but then she relapsed. She was desperate as she tried everything, but “[her] enemy was too strong” (24). Therefore, as Pearsall continues, “Florence Nightingale suffered throughout her life from hypochondria and suppressed hysteria, [as she was] one of many thinking people whose lives were made wretched by listening to those who did not know what they were talking about” (22).

4.2. Standards of Premarital Chastity

The respectable middle classes were shocked by the sexual behaviour of the poor living in slums where, as Pearsall points out, premarital intercourse was commonplace as high percentage of slum girls had sexual experience from the age of twelve or thirteen (159). Conditions in slums encouraged sexual activities because of

the absolute lack of privacy. Also commenting on slum conditions, Thompson writes that in places “[w]here an entire family, husband, wife, and children of all ages and both sexes, lived in one room any notions of modesty and decency were grotesque [...]” (88). He adds that the premarital sexual relationships were often perverted as girls had babies with their fathers and brothers (88). Besides slums, there were also rural areas with their own notion of premarital chastity. Crow writes that it was common that “pregnancy had to precede marriage”, and explains the reason why. The reason was really practical one. In rural areas, children were primarily wage-earners and therefore brides had to give evidence of fertility, so that men could hope in having enough children. Marrying a girl who did not prove her fertility was considered to be unthrifty (201).

Based on what has been just stated, there was no surprise that the respectable middle classes were shocked, as no such easy-going sexual attitudes were acceptable for them. They were known for their over-affected prudery and claims that any sexual activities outside marriage were sinful (Pearsall, 13). Therefore, it may be a surprising fact to find out that although the middle classes were prudish, they gave tacit consent to a double standard of pre-marital chastity for themselves. Commenting on this, Hoppen writes that “[...] the middle classes demanded a high degree of premarital chastity from women, an altogether lower one from men” (323). Supporting Hoppen, Thompson also states that “[t]he double standard, of strict chastity for the girls and condonation of wild-oat sowing by the young men, never more than obliquely mentioned, was a tacit acknowledgement of [the period] [...]” (89). The double standard of premarital chastity is just another example of Victorian middle-class hypocrisy.

4.2.1. Virgin Brides

The middle-class image of a Victorian woman was that of “the virgin in the drawing-room” (Crow, 26) and therefore in order not to spoil the image, premarital chastity, which meant especially physical virginity, was strictly required. Commenting on this, Pearsall states that “they [respectable men] wanted the package entire, without the seals broken” (34). He continues that as middle-class daughters were not wax flowers which could be put under glass domes, they were watched and strictly prohibited to go out alone. Further, books for them were censored, theatre performances in case of a ballet vetted and other ridiculous rules concerning Victorian etiquette

enforced. All this was done so that even in their minds, not only physically, they would remain virgin (10).

Besides the fact that premarital sex was generally viewed as sinful, according to Pearsall, there was also another reason why Victorian daughters were required to remain virgin until their wedding night. Pearsall is persuaded that many Victorian men wanted their brides to be virgin for simply selfish reasons which had nothing to do with showing admiration and respect for the chastity. If a woman was virgin, there was the assumption that she would not know what was going to happen on the wedding night, and that made her an appealing love object. Virginity as such attracted and therefore many men were for instance delighted in watching young girls. One of those men was for instance a writer Lewis Carroll, who found delight in photographing young girls in nude. When the girls reached puberty, he lost interest in them. Some men, those respectable not excluded, did not only watch and went further as they were obsessed with virgin-taking (34-35).

Logically, if a respectable man happened to get married, he got married only once or twice in his life and therefore, in the ordinary course of events, there were not many virgins that he could violate. The obsession with virgin-taking went so far as it actually became a minor industry in the Victorian underworld. Pearsall states:

Of all the hypocrisy associated with Victorian sex matters, nothing was so blatant as the attitude towards the procurement of virgins, made less heinous by being included under the heading of child prostitution. The appalling thing was that it was not a crime; the common law of England made the age of consent twelve (38).

This may sound shocking, but such was the reality of the Victorian period having its hypocritical standards. On the one hand the Victorians created the virgin-in-the-drawing-room image; on the other hand, they pretended not to see prostitution of twelve-year-old girls, who were considered women capable of deciding for themselves. The situation did not legally improve until 1885, when the age of consent was raised to the age of sixteen (Pearsall, 39). On the topic of virgin child prostitutes Pearsall continues that, logically, those girls were virgins only once. They however found ways to simulate their virginity, as for instance using broken glass in their vagina, leeches or blood-soaked sponges. Virgin prostitutes were wanted. Besides the men's obsession with virginity and virgin-taking, it was also because of that it was believed that raping

a virgin would cure syphilis, although it was not known how exactly (39-41). The perverted practises of Victorian underworld were, however, too far from the world of the respectable virgin brides and their drawing rooms.

4.2.2. Not so Virgin Bridegrooms

No doubt, there were respectable middle-class men, some of them even similar to the previously mentioned young husband whom doctor Grogan encountered, who abstained and remained virgin until their wedding night. However, many of them probably were not virgin due to the fact that, as it has been written, premarital chastity for men was tolerated to be lower. The fact that young men were sexually active before their wedding is also clear from another experience of doctor Grogan, as many “well-bred young men [came] to him shortly before their marriage [to discuss private problems]. Sometimes it was gonorrhoea, less often syphilis [...]” (Fowles, 190). The reason for their premarital sexual activity was not only the fact that they knew that society gave tacit consent to it. It can be assumed that lives of many well-bred men were negatively influenced by their sexual school experience when growing up.

Pearsall writes that men belonging to the middle and upper reaches of society were as boys sent to boarding schools where it was difficult, if not impossible, to remain innocent and avoid certain level of sexual experience because “[a] year or two at a boarding school could twist their natures in a disturbing manner” (169). The school life was full of filth and for boys it was hard to escape. Pearsall states that “[a] gently brought up boy found himself in a hell on earth, with no one to tell him how to cope” (170). He continues that there was really nobody to help because parents had absolutely no understanding for their sons in case they decided to run back home. Therefore, they had to stay at a school full of filth and suffer. What was an integral part of such school life is illustrated on several cases originally recorded in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* by a Victorian sexologist Havelock Ellis. Through them Pearsall uncovers filthy practises of mutual masturbation, group masturbation and homosexual intercourses between boys, which were commonplace at boarding schools (171-175). Such school life might have brought guilt and shame, but also desire not to stop, which might have led to other sexual activity. None of these two alternatives was good for the boys

because even if they felt guilty and stopped in their adulthood, inside, they were changed as the perverted practises stuck to them, hidden in their memories. Subsequent university life, for those from the upper reaches of society, where “traits [...] acquired at public school often blossomed” (Pearsall, 178) was not much different. Universities were closed societies, often corrupted, having their own standards of sexual mores as well as of anything else. Universities were places where no gentleman was required to show hard work in order to gain his university degree and therefore could indulge in the licentious way of life (Pearsall, 179-181).

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, different standards of premarital chastity are well observed in the engaged couple Ernestina and Charles. It has been previously written that Ernestina lived in profound ignorance of what was going to happen on the wedding night. Her innocence was both physical and mental as she, a respectable upper-middle class daughter, was protected from anything that could be considered indecent. On the contrary, Charles, a respectable young gentleman, was not virgin. The readers soon discover that his virginity was tarnished during his studies at Cambridge where he “[...] in his second year there [...] had drifted into a bad set and ended up, one foggy night in London, in carnal possession of a naked girl” (Fowles, 17). This sexual experience was followed by some time spent in Paris where “his tarnished virginity was soon blackened out of recognition” (Fowles, 18). It can only be assumed how many Parisian girls he met there during those six months of his stay. When Charles recalls one of his sexual experiences, he finds out that he cannot even remember the name of that Parisian girl and concludes that he probably even had never known it (Fowles, 64-65). Therefore, it can be assumed that there were many girls and that they were only one-night stands.

No matter how innocent and naive Ernestina might have been, she anticipated that there were women recorded in Charles's past. “She knew he had lived in Paris, in Lisbon, and travelled much; she knew he was eleven years older than herself; she knew he was attractive to women” (Fowles, 67). She tried to discreetly discover some facts, but Charles never gave her clear answers as “[h]is answers to her discreetly playful interrogations about his past conquests were always discreetly playful in return” (Fowles, 67). However, although Ernestina desired to know whether Charles had really slept with other women, she was not worried as much as a modern girl would be

(Fowles, 68). She somehow accepted the Victorian double standard of premarital chastity. What she wanted was Charles's heart and if this was hers, the lack of physical virginity was somehow accepted.

Besides Ernestina and Charles, Fowles's novel presents another couple, servants Mary and Sam. These two young people came from a completely different social set and therefore had their own notion of premarital chastity. As Sam was a young Cockney man, there was no surprise to find out that he had already been sexually involved. Charles, for whom he worked, was well aware of Sam's "past relations with the fair sex" (Fowles, 97). They were probably shallow, purely sexually oriented relations, as when Charles hears Sam claim to be in love with Mary, he does not really trust him. Therefore, he has a serious talk to Sam to make sure that his intentions with Mary are honest and is not only playing with her. The talk is actually initiated by Ernestina's aunt Mrs. Tranter for whom Mary worked and who wanted to guard Mary, an innocent peasant girl (Fowles, 97-98).

It is true that before her coming to Lyme, Mary was innocent. Actually, her innocence was what attracted Sam. Fowles writes that Sam "found himself like some boy who flashes a mirror" (116). With Mary, Sam experienced something he had never felt before. She was "a summer's day after the drab dollymops and gays who had constituted his past sexual experience" (Fowles, 115-116). However, if Mary happened to be innocent at the beginning, she definitely was not innocent after some time spent in the relationship with Sam. Although never openly mentioned, their walks to the woods seemed to have a very specific purpose, the same purpose as on that day when they accidentally came across Charles and Sarah at the deserted barn (Fowles, 222).

It has been previously written that the rules enforced by the middle classes were actually followed only by the middle classes themselves. Therefore, taken into consideration that Mary was a peasant girl and Sam a young Cockney man, it is not difficult to understand the reason why Mary and Sam were heading to the barn on the day they came across Charles and Sarah. The servants were young lovers. It should be however stated that Charles's suspicion did not confirm this time as Sam was not playing with Mary. No, he was truly in love with her and was determined to marry her, which he eventually did (Fowles, 360). It was only the fact that due to their commonly shared notion of premarital chastity, they did not scruple to have sexual intercourse

before the marriage. Logically, this was something that Charles, due to their different social set, would have never dared to ask from Ernestina.

4.4. Conception of Marital Sex

It has been written that the middle-class notion of premarital chastity required that sexual experience should be contained wholly within marriage; however, society gave tacit consent to men to have premarital sexual relationships. It has to be said that even within marriage, the middle-class conception of sexual relationships was distorted and contained double standards favouring men against women. One of them was that the Victorians claimed that respectable married women should not show passion or pleasure. Therefore, in case they happened to have any sexual desires, they should conceal them. Writing on the topic of marital sex, Crow comments:

For a lady to derive pleasure from copulation was unthinkable; indeed medical books told her categorically that to do so showed a disturbing abnormality. A lady's duty was to shut her eyes, grit her teeth [...] [and] prepare for yet another pregnancy (52).

In accordance with Crow, Calder writes as follows: “[S]ex was generally thought of as part of what a woman had dutifully to give rather than pleurably receive. [...] The bedroom was not a centre of married life – in spite of the high birth rate. It was often cold and functional” (140-141).

The reason why married women were told that showing passion and pleasure from having sex with their husbands would show disturbing abnormality was, as Hoppen further adds, that it was generally believed that “normal” respectable women did not have strong sexual drives, as opposed to men, and therefore they were not troubled with sexual desires. Those with sexual desires were considered abnormal (322-323). Therefore, married middle-class women kept the pose and were cold, prudish, showing no pleasure from having sex. It may sound ridiculous, but some of them even took pride in the fact that their husbands had never seen them fully naked (Pearsall, 134). Such ill-understood conception of marital sex brought confusion and tension as women had sexual desires. They tried to persuade themselves that they did not have any until they actually started to believe it. Further, the ill-understood conception of marital sex was used as justification for the fact that married men happened to be clients of

prostitutes – women who were believed to be naturally passionate, having strong sexual drives. Surprisingly, respectable Victorian society gave tacit consent to prostitution, which resulted in another double standard concerning sexual relationships. It has been previously stated in the chapter on marriage that the double standard allowed husbands to commit adultery and their wives could do nothing about it, whereas wives could be divorced by their husbands for the same transgression. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the experienced doctor Grogan had no doubts that there were many married men who benefited from double standards of marital sex. During one of many conversations with Charles, Grogan shares about prostitutes he had met as patients during his medical career and comments: “And I wish I had a guinea for every one I have heard gloat over the fact that a majority of their victims are husbands and fathers” (Fowles, 194).

4.5. The Great Social Evil: Prostitutes

Prostitution has been already mentioned in connection with respectable middle-class men who happened to have problems to find passion in their wives, and also in connection with child prostitutes who represented a minor industry in the Victorian underworld. Speaking about Victorian prostitutes, it is true to say that there were many groups of their clients found throughout the entire spectrum of society and that during Victorian period, prostitution, for which a euphemism “The Great Social Evil” was often used, flourished (Pearsall, 72). Nobody in their right mind could pretend that prostitution did not exist and that Victorian middle-class prudery helped to banish prostitution from the land.

There were prostitutes in Victorian Britain and there were many of them, although their precise numbers will never be known. Within Britain the worst situation was in London. Crow writes: “London was the worst city for vice in Britain” (212). Commenting on the situation in Victorian London, Pearsall states as follows: “No one will ever know how many prostitutes there were in London, whether there were 8,000 – as police maintained, or 80,000 – the estimate of the Bishop of Exeter” (72). Similarly as Pearsall, Crow also mentions the estimate of 80,000 prostitutes, which used to be widely accepted figure. However, Crow also points out that this widely accepted

estimate had to be exaggerated simply because of the fact that the prostitutes would not have sufficient clientele. To support the statement, Crow mentions an article in *The Lancet* (1857) providing its readers with the first “scientific” calculation of the number of prostitutes and states:

[O]ne house in every sixty in London was a brothel and one female in every sixteen of all ages was a whore – 6,000 brothels, 80,000 prostitutes. In mid-Victorian times the male population of London of all ages was about 1,300,000. Simple division shows the unlikelihood of 80,000 prostitutes even allowing for a large number of male visitors to the city (212).

Despite the fact that the estimates may differ, it can be said that even the lower estimate showed that the numbers of prostitutes were rather high. It is interesting to find out where the Victorian prostitutes actually came from because to become a prostitute, women needed a reason. According to Pearsall, there were almost as many reasons for prostitution as there were prostitutes; however, the three main ones were seduction, poverty and inclination (74).

To explain the background of those who decided for prostitution, Pearsall continues and presents an interesting statistics of Millbank Prison, which used to stand in Victorian London, according to which out of 14,000 prostitutes who passed through the prison, no more than 8,000 were born in London. Those not born in London came to the city from towns such as Devonport and Colchester. They were nice town girls seduced by soldiers or sailors and therefore were forced to leave their homes. Many girls also came from the country in the time of agricultural depression. Both groups came to London in order to search for work and failed. They could either starve or sin, and they chose the latter (75-76).

As the readers of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* discover, of similar fate was the young prostitute paid by Charles during his wild night in London. She was a girl of twenty, seduced by a soldier and consequently abandoned together with her little baby-girl. Considering her unenviable position, the prostitute did the best she knew as it was difficult for her to earn wages when poor and taking care of a little baby. Being a prostitute enabled her to be with her daughter as well as to financially afford humble accommodation (Fowles, 267-271). She shared the life of many young women, who in order to escape starvation decided to become prostitutes. Charles was somehow moved

when he learned the girl's history. When leaving, he left the young prostitute some money and told her that she was "a brave, kind girl" (Fowles, 279).

Becoming a prostitute in London was something that even Sarah feared. The fact is revealed during one of Sarah's encounters with Charles when she openly talks about her future worries and her past, as Charles seems to be the only person in Lyme she fully trusts. Charles tries to help Sarah by suggesting she should leave her past behind, leave Lyme and go to London. Sarah responds: "If I went to London, I know what I should become. I should become what so many women who have lost their honour become in great cities [...]" (Fowles, 123). It is true that Sarah was an enigma too hard to be comprehended. It is not known whether she really feared of what she might have become in London or whether she only tried to emotionally draw Charles into her life so that he would protect her and felt responsible for her future. It is never discovered why she lied about her relationship with the French lieutenant and made Charles believe that she gave herself to him, which was not true. Sarah can be accused of being calculating, however, there are reasons to believe that in her fear of becoming a prostitute Sarah was honest. She was alone, had nobody to turn to and therefore she did not know whether the circumstances after her arrival in London would not make her become a prostitute to escape starvation.

To escape starvation was one reason why women decided to become prostitutes. Such a reason could be understood and justified. However, as Pearsall continues, there were other reasons for prostitution. There were women who had jobs, however, they left them to become prostitutes as they found such life better in terms of variety and money. Pearsall presents that it was found out that around sixty percent of prostitutes had been for instance previously servants, dressmakers or laundresses. Those girls did not confirm generally held belief that they would soon regret the fact that they had left their respectable positions for prostitution. Instead, they were often heard to be glad they had made the change as they were taken out for dinners, could enjoy amusement and for money do things they would do for pleasure anyway (74).

The reasons for prostitution varied as well as varied groups of prostitutes. As Pearsall writes, according to the police classification there were found three groups of prostitutes – girls in brothels, street-walkers and those operating in rough neighbourhoods, representing absolutely the lowest group. Life of the prostitutes from

the lowest group was harsh. Many of them were filthy, diseased and therefore cheap. Men could buy them for sixpence or even less. As a contrast, the street-walkers were well-dressed and glamorous, so that nobody could often recognise their profession. At certain point it was difficult to decide where to draw a line between prostitutes and mistresses. The prostitutes who had their clients among the upper-class members lived paradoxically far better than respectable middle-class women. They were given very expensive presents and invited to various social events. The famous names of that time were Catherine (Skittles) Walters and Laura Bell. Instead of being disregarded for their profession these two stars, prestigious prostitutes who were publically admired, knew people in power and had various privileges. Skittles was for instance a family friend even of the Gladstones (78-88).

To conclude, it can be said that the field of prostitution was where Victorian hypocrisy ran riot. Respectable Victorians knew that prostitutes were present within society, but often tried to pretend that they did not see them. They tried to enforce their prudish rules and banish prostitution and anything connected to sexual desires from the land, yet, there was high demand for prostitutes and their clients were not only the drunks and the perverted as many would love to assume. Many of their clients were respectable men – either single or married indulging in double standards of sexual morality to which society gave tacit consent.

5. RELIGION AND VICTORIAN SCIENCE

The chapter briefly deals with the Victorian conception of religion and its place in people's lives. Further, it presents the tension between natural science and religion, as science seemed to prove that the facts as described in the Bible might not be true. This was something revolutionary and therefore, it should also be mentioned here. Speaking about religion, it has to be said that it was important especially for the middle classes. Reader states that “[r]eligion lay [...] at the heart of middle-class life [...]” (172). It is true to say that religion permeated the lives of the Victorians; however, as Crow further explains, for many it only represented a set of rigid principles by which the middle classes decided to guide their lives and expected the rest of society to do the same. “Conduct, not belief, was the all-important point. For many Victorians, religion was not an expression of real spiritual faith” (56). Therefore, going to church became only a part of a weekend ritual as it was important to be seen at church so that everybody would know who was respectable and who was not. To this, Crow adds: “To ignore the ritual was to court disaster. Promotion in one's profession and the good-will on one's customers depended materially on whether or not one went to church on Sunday” (56).

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman* the Victorian conception of religion is best seen in the character of Mrs. Poulteney. For her, religion meant a set of rigid principles by which she tried to guide her life as well as lives of her servants and anybody who happened to live in Marlborough House. Describing Mrs. Poulteney's requirements, Fowles writes: “There was the mandatory double visit to church on Sundays; and there was also a daily morning service – a hymn, a lesson and prayers – over which the old lady pompously presided” (53). Going to church meant to show how moral she was and therefore to be viewed as respectable before other people. As it has been previously stated, when Mrs. Poulteney employed Sarah, it was because she wanted her charity and great moral standards to be seen. The most important thing was what other people would think of her. The conception of God that she believed in was rather distorted. Fowles comments that “Mrs. Poulteney believed in God who had never existed” (54). It is Sarah who gives a true picture of the Victorian religious people when she says: “I live among people the world tells me are kind, pious, Christian people. And they seem to me crueller than the cruellest heathens, stupider than the stupidest animals” (124).

Whether or not her conception of God was distorted, Mrs. Poulteney had to be alarmed when facing the fact that the Bible on which she built her life might not be a God-dictated book and therefore, she would suddenly find herself in complete uncertainty of what would happen after death. The uncertainty was caused especially by advances in the field of biology, supported by evidence of geology, which caused most of the Victorians to start asking themselves alarming questions. As Noel Annan writes, the questions concerned God's creation, trustworthiness of the Bible and Christianity in general, and anxiety about what would happen to civilized society if the people discovered that everything they believed about God was not true and therefore lost their moral sense (150).

As Wilson states, despite the fact that evolutionary ideas had been discussed in scientific circles at least a hundred years earlier, for the general public everything started in 1844 with the controversial *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* by Robert Chambers. "It was a book which 'everybody' read" (95). Wilson continues that despite the fact that *Vestiges* was scientifically unsound and contained many blunders as Chambers was not a scientist but an enthusiastic amateur, it startled many people as it gave a completely different view of the creation from that found in the Bible. The book influenced also literature, especially writings of Alfred Tennyson, Ralph Waldo Emerson and George Eliot. *Vestiges* first made publically known the idea that man descended from monkeys, or that both descended from some common ancestor. Religious Victorians were profoundly shaken by this idea and many of them, especially religious representatives were vehemently against the book. Therefore, there is a presumption that fear of the people's reactions was the main reason why *Vestiges* was first published anonymously (95-100).

Consequently, when in 1859 *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin was published, a new epoch dawned. The book attracted so much attention that, as Wilson states, in one day the whole edition of 1,250 copies was sold (226). As Darwin openly cast doubt whether life had ever been created, the book generated numberless debates and quarrels. It should be said that it took Darwin twenty years to decide to publish it, as he was aware of what *The Origin of Species* might cause, including the religious distress caused to his beloved wife Emma (Wilson, 225, 227).

Besides the works of Chambers and Darwin, which were based on the simple observation of nature, it seemed that speculations concerning the creation could be easily supported by other sciences such as geology, archaeology and palaeontology. As opposed to the situation today when groups of scientists are formed by professionals, the Victorians were enthusiastic amateurs ready to discover. F. Sherwood Taylor comments: “They [the Victorians] peered down microscopes, pointed their telescopes to the heavens, and sallied forth with their geological hammers” (191). Their findings seemed to prove the new, revolutionary ideas. Geology, of which a famous figure was Charles Lyell, claimed that the Earth existed aeons before the mankind, which caused that the Bible was suddenly viewed as a fallible record of human history (Wilson, 97-98). Wide-spread acceptance of the findings in geology enabled the growth of another popular science – archaeology. Speaking on the topic of archaeology, Glyn E. Daniel states that archaeology, as it is known today, is the creation of the Victorians (197).

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman* the enthusiasm to discover combined with the necessity to cope with the new scientific findings is found in the character of Charles Smithson. Charles himself comments that people should not forget that he is a scientist (Fowles, 11). Although Charles did not fully comprehend Darwin, he considered himself a passionate Darwinian and often led little disputes with Mr. Freeman, Ernestina's father, who thought that “Mr. Darwin should be exhibited in a cage in the zoological gardens. In the monkey-house” (Fowles, 11). Therefore, when Charles finds out that doctor Grogan possesses a copy of *The Origin of Species* and also considers himself a Darwinian, he is unspeakably pleased (Fowles, 140-141). He knows he has found a kindred soul.

Further, the readers learn that Charles's field was palaeontology, in which he had been interested for last three years. His uncle could have often seen him “marching out of Winsyatt [the family mansion] armed with his wedge hammers and his collecting-sack [...]” (Fowles, 19). During his stay in Lyme, Charles also often sets out fully equipped to search for new fossils. Actually, there was no better place where he, an eager palaeontologist, could be as Lyme symbolized Mecca for palaeontologists. As it is explained, Lyme is situated right in the area containing one of the rare outcrops of a stone called blue lias, which is a stone of highly fossiliferous nature. Right in Lyme there was also the Old Fossil Shop, the most famous local shop of that time. It was

founded by Mary Anning who, as it is explained, was a remarkable fossil collector and dealer coming right from Lyme Regis. Charles himself bought there various fossils which filled cabinets in his study in London (Fowles, 44).

It should be added that although Charles highly celebrated Darwin and Lyell, there were moments when he felt anxiety deep in his soul. It was the same anxiety that had been felt many other Victorians who found themselves standing at the threshold of a new epoch. For most of his life, Charles was an agnostic living without the need of a religion. After Darwin and Lyell had presented their theories, everything seemed to confirm that it was right to do without Christian dogma. However, there is a moment when Charles feels he needs Christ in his life. When he finds out that Sarah, before giving herself to him, was still a virgin, he is shocked and feels guilt. The readers find him wandering through the Exeter streets in the pouring rain before he eventually enters an empty church. In silence, Charles kneels down and tries to pray. However, he is found weeping because he knows that “the wires [are] down”, talking to God is not possible for him (Fowles, 312). The situation depicts a spiritual discomfort of the Victorian era in which God who inspired the Bible suddenly seemed not to exist. Science was ready to offer a new history of mankind – history which contradicted to what was found in the Bible.

6. CONCLUSION

The Victorian age will be remembered as the age of great transformation and social changes. When Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837, England was a feudal and agricultural society. When the Queen died in 1901, there was a completely new industrial country. During those sixty-four years of her reign, people's lives were changed in every possible aspect. The Victorian age was full of heroic achievement, which was so significant that it led the Queen's subjects to even borrow her name to call themselves the Victorians. The Victorians had their values and attitudes for which they are known and sometimes even rather despised.

Above all, the Victorians valued domesticity as it represented something stable in the world that was so rapidly transforming. For many people the world was suddenly incomprehensible and therefore, they were in search for some stable values, for assurance that their world would not fall apart. It was the middle-class concept of domesticity that dominated Victorian England. They desired to mentally separate work from home, as they wanted to separate themselves from the dirty industrial world outside. Victorian homes were sanctuaries, places of refuge operated by Victorian women. It was women's duty to create such a place. In order to fully concentrate on homemaking, women were expected not to have any activities besides those performed at home. There was a generally held belief that other activities would only distract them. Besides that it was also widely believed that keeping women locked at their homes would help to morally protect them from the ugly world outside. Their position was often symbolized by "the caged bird", which was also both imprisoned and sheltered. However, it has to be said that within certain limits home represented a place, where women could fulfil themselves. Further, speaking of the middle-class concept of domesticity, Victorian servants have to be mentioned. They were "passports" into the middle-class society. However, the privilege of having servants had its price because the employers could not have as much privacy as they would desire to have.

Without marriage the picture of Victorian domesticity would be impossible to create and therefore, marriage was also highly valued. Although highly valued, Victorian marriage was far from ideal as it did not offer equal rights to both spouses. Within marriage, women's position was rather inferior. Married women were "civilly

death". Their property, liberty or children – everything legally belonged to their husbands. Women had to face various double standards and it was also almost impossible for them to divorce their husbands. However, women were eager to get married as for many of them marriage represented escape from their parental home. Further, since early childhood, they were trained to succeed on the marriage market. The situation on the marriage market was not always easy as there were more single women than marriageable men. Also, there were strict Victorian conventions concerning courting that had to be followed. Some women did not get married although the majority of them wanted to. Women who remained spinsters were viewed as those who failed. Life of spinsters was not easy because they usually had to provide for themselves. There were not many positions they could take and therefore, they were hard to incorporate into the Victorian society. Usually, they could take a position of a governess, but it was not always easy to find it.

Another typically Victorian thing was the middle-class attitudes towards sex, which are widely believed to be full of hypocrisy and prudery. It is true to say that the attitudes were strange and distorted; however, it has to be understood why the attitudes were adopted. The Victorians suddenly experienced unthinkable progress and great social changes which gave them chances of better life. Therefore, they did not want slip back into the primitive society, and they strove for modesty, decency and chastity as they believed that it would prevent them from slipping back. The intention was good, but the rules were impossible to follow, which consequently led towards hypocrisy and various double standards.

For the middle classes, religion was also extremely important. However, their concept of religion contained only a set of rigid principles by which the middle classes tried to guide their lives. Therefore, often, religion was not an expression of real spiritual faith. Sudden outburst of natural sciences such as geology and palaeontology seemed to endanger everything as it brought uncertainty whether the Bible, the God-dictated book, could be trusted. People started to ask themselves alarming questions, which brought sudden anxiety about what would happen if the people discovered that everything they believed about God and built their lives on was not true. So this was the Victorian age – age of unthinkable progress and transformation, but also age of anxiety, various double standards, hypocrisy and prudery.

7. RESUMÉ

Viktoriánská doba byla obdobím velikého sebevědomí, pokroku, přeměny společnosti, a také kontrastů. Zdá se být téměř neuvěřitelné, jakým způsobem se Viktoriánská společnost proměnila během vlády královny Viktorie, která trvala celých šedesát čtyři let. Když Viktorie nastoupila na trůn v roce 1837, Anglie byla feudální společností zaměřenou především na zemědělství. Na konci Viktoriiny vlády v roce 1901 byla Anglie plně rozvinutou průmyslovou velmocí. Když se královna Viktorie ujala vlády, život v Anglii byl ve znamení stavby železnice. Do roku 1848 bylo položeno přes pět tisíc mil tratě, což byl neuvěřitelný výkon. V roce 1851 během Světové výstavy pořádané v Crystal Palace, Anglie ukázala, že je opravdu světovou velmocí nemající v té době konkurence. Neuvěřitelný pokrok, jehož bylo dosaženo inspiroval k tomu, aby se jméno královny stalo označením pro celou společnost a dobu, ve které žila. Viktoriáni překypovali energií a se stejnou horlivostí s jakou stavěli železnici se pustili i do výstavby měst. Krajina se velmi rychle měnila a společnost v mnoha směrech narazila na problémy, jež průmyslový rozvoj přinesl. Co se týče rozvoje, nebyla žádná oblast lidského života, která by jím nebyla ovlivněna a změněna. O každé z nich by se toho dalo napsat velmi mnoho. Toto však není cílem této diplomové práce.

Cílem práce je analyzovat hodnoty specifické pro život lidí ve středo-Viktoriánské Anglii, vysvětlit důvody, které vedly ke vzniku těchto hodnot a dále popsat způsob, jímž tyto hodnoty ovlivnily život Viktoriánů, především těch patřících ke středním vrstvám společnosti. Diplomová práce dále ukazuje, jakým způsobem se tyto hodnoty odrážejí v životech postav románu *Francouzova milenka (The French Lieutenant's Woman)* od Johna Fowlese, románu napsaném ve dvacátém století, jehož děj je zasazen do středo-Viktoriánské Anglie. Diplomová práce je rozdělena na šest částí.

Stručný úvod popisuje život a dílo Johna Fowlese a zároveň v hrubých rysech nastiňuje prostředí Viktoriánské Anglie. První kapitola po úvodu se zabývá Viktoriánským chápáním domova. Domov byl pro Viktoriány nanejvýš důležitý, často jeho vnímání hraničilo téměř se zbožností. Důvodem pro takové chápání domova byla skutečnost, že v době, kdy se Viktoriánský svět tak závrtně měnil a pro mnoho lidí se

stal nepochopitelným, domov představoval jedinou stálou hodnotu, o kterou se společnost mohla opřít. Domov byl chápán jako útočiště před vnějším průmyslovým světem. Bylo úkolem ženy se o toto útočiště starat a poskytnout živiteli rodiny prostředí plné harmonie a klidu. Bylo proto obecně chápáno, že žena nepotřebuje a nemá mít zájem o jakékoliv aktivity mimo domov, jež by narušovaly její koncentraci, a utváření rodinného zázemí by tak mohlo být ohroženo. Jako záminka pro tvrzení, že žena má být doma bylo také to, že je potřeba ženu ochránit před vlivy drsného venkovního světa. Nutno říci, že ženy tuto skutečnost přijímaly většinou s pokorou, protože v rámci jistých hranic jim péče o domácí atmosféru dávala prostor k seberealizaci, jež před svatbou v otcovském domě neměly. V souvislosti s pochopením koncepce Viktoriánského domova je nezbytné zmínit také služebnictvo, jež bylo považováno za vstupenku do střední třídy společnosti. Domácí život bez služebnictva byl pro střední třídu naprosto nemyslitelný. Komfort, který služebnictvo v domě přinášelo stál na druhou stranu Viktoriánskou střední třídu notnou dávkou soukromí. Toto je vidět ve *Francouzově milence* na postavách Charlese Smithsona a Ernestiny Freemanové. Služebnictvo je přítomno i ve velmi delikátních momentech, a Charlesovi jeho sluha a společník Sam Farrow dokonce ovlivní výrazným způsobem budoucnost.

Následující kapitola práce se zaměřuje na Viktoriánské manželství, jež mělo také svoje specifika, a obraz domova, tak jak ho chápali Viktoriáni, by byl bez něj nemyslitelný. Různé aspekty Viktoriánského manželství jsou popsány především z pozice, ze které bylo manželství vnímáno ženami, a to ať již manželství samotné nebo hledání snoubence, či osud těch žen, jež se neprovdaly. Co se týče hledání snoubence, je nutno říci, že dívky a mladé ženy ve Viktoriánské Anglii byly od malička vedeny k tomu, že uzavření manželství je ten nevyšší cíl, kterého mohou ve svém životě dosáhnout. Jinými slovy: uzavření manželství byl úspěch, být svobodnou ženou (starou pannou) bylo považováno za selhání. Situace při hledání mužů schopných vstoupit do manželství nebyla často jednoduchá, jelikož ženy měly ve Viktoriánské Anglii početní převahu. Vedle této početní převahy, ne každý muž byl navíc ucházejícím nápadníkem. Nápadník musel být finančně zabezpečen a pocházet z příslušné společenské třídy. Dívky a mladé ženy měly sice svobodu se mezi nápadníky rozhodnout, mohly si však vybírat pouze z těch, jež formálně schválil jejich otec. Ty šťastnější z dívek manželství uzavřely, řada žen se ale nikdy nevdala. Jejich osud byl často neveselý, protože se

musely samy o sebe postarat. To bylo těžké, protože výběr pracovních pozic o které se mohly ucházet byl poměrně omezen. Dívčím se dostalo vzdělání, uměly vyšívát, hrát na hudební nástroj či malovat, ale to k uživení nestačilo. Když pak přišly těžké chvíle a dívky se musely postarat samy o sebe, většinou se ucházely o místo guvernanky.

Dívky které se vdaly se často ocitly jakoby v kleci, ze které nebylo úniku. Svatbou přestala jejich osoba víceméně po právní stránce existovat. Jejich majetek, případné výděly, právo na děti – vše patřilo jejich manželovi. Pozice ženy ve Viktoriánském manželství byla značně podřadná. Od roku 1857 bylo sice pro ženy možné se nechat rozvést, rozvody byly ale nesmírně drahé a byly přesně vymezeny důvody, kvůli kterým bylo možné o rozvod požádat. Nutno podotknout, že tyto důvody jednoznačně stranily mužům. Mnohým ženám se manželství nevyvedlo a stalo se pro ně tichým vězením, ze kterého nebylo úniku. I navzdory této skutečnosti byly mnohé z nich za manželství vděčné, jelikož byly finančně zabezpečeny a nemusely se potýkat se situací, ve které se ocitly mnohé neprovdané ženy. Byly také vděčné za to, že společností nebyly vnímány jako ty, které selhaly a nebyly schopné se provdat. Snaha provdat se je vidět v životě Ernestiny Freemanové, jež se striktně drží společenských konvencí a nedovolí, aby cokoliv ohrozilo její naději na manželství. Ernestina působí jako naprostý protiklad vůči Sáře Woodruffové.

Další, a zároveň nejobsáhlejší kapitola práce pojednává o Viktoriánských postojích vůči sexu. Tyto postoje jsou často vnímány jako velice pokrytecké a plně přehnané pruderie. Tato kapitola postoje nikterak neomlouvá, poukazuje však na skutečnost, ze které většina z nich pramenila. Během vlády královny Viktorie se společnost ocitla v čase velikých změn dávajících šanci na lepší život. Viktoriáni pamatující si poměry v době před nástupem královny na trůn se rozhodně nechtěli společensky vrátit tam, odkud vyšli. Tato představa sklouznutí zpátky je děsila. Za tímto účelem vytvořili systém pravidel usilujících o mravnost, zdrženlivost a slušné vystupování. Mnohé z těchto někdy až přehnaně striktních pravidel však bylo naprosto nemožné dodržet, a tak společnost vehnala sama sebe do pasti a vytvořila živnou půdu přetvářce a pokrytectví. U Viktoriánských postojů vůči sexu šlo především o snahu dostat toto téma z veřejného života lidí. Téma sexu bylo zahaleno naprostým mlčením. Nemluvalo se o něm ani mezi manželi, mezi rodiči a dospívajícími dětmi, natož na veřejnosti. Situace došla tak daleko, že tyto postoje ovlivnily i módu a obsah knih

přístupných k četbě. Knihy, včetně Bible a klasiků jako Shakespeare, byly cenzurovány někdy až neuvěřitelným způsobem. Móda pro ženy představila krinolínu, která se stala symbolem Viktoriánské pruderie. Dokonce i nohy od nábytku byly zahalovány, aby jakákoliv podobnost s lidskou anatomí nevyvolávala nepatřičné myšlenky. Viktoriánské embargo na veškeré záležitosti ohledně sexu mělo i své oběti. Naprostá neinformovanost způsobila, že především řada dívek prožila o svatební noci šok, jelikož mnohé z nich si nebyly vůbec vědomy, že tato fyzická stránka vztahu mezi mužem a ženou existuje.

Toto nicméně platilo pouze pro střední třídy společnosti, které se touto pruderií vyznačovaly. Život ostatních vrstev společnosti byl diametrálně odlišný. Nejvyšší třídy Viktoriánské společnosti se pravidly středních tříd neřídily a ty nejnižší o nich nevěděly. Sex nevyřadil z myšlenek lidí. Ve Viktoriánské Anglii, kde mnoho vážených mladých dívek nevědělo o sexu před svatbou vůbec nic, bylo možné mít za peníze sex s dvanáctiletou dívkou. Prostituce obecně ve Viktoriánské době proslulá svou pruderií vzkvétala. Tato doba byla také dobou tichého souhlasu pro dvojí normy týkající se sexu – jiná pro muže a jiná pro ženy. Střední třídy vyžadovaly po neprovdaných dívkách naprostou sexuální zdrženlivost, zároveň však daly tichý souhlas k předmanželské sexuální aktivitě u mužů. Také v rámci manželství se na sexualitu muže a ženy pohlíželo jinak. Společnost byla přesvědčena, že ženy necítí žádné sexuální touhy, a proto jakýkoliv projev vášně a potěchy dokonce i z manželského sexu byl považován za nepatřičný a zvrácený. Na druhou stranu, u mužů se mělo za to, že mají silné sexuální touhy a proto sex s prostitutkou býval tiše schvalován, jelikož ona mohla poskytnout na rozdíl od manželky to, co muž žádal. Ve *Francouzově milence* jsou dvojí normy a pojetí sexu různými společenskými třídami vidět na dvou párech: Charlesovi s Ernestinou, a Samovi s Mary.

Poslední kapitola diplomové práce předcházející závěr se ve stručnosti zabývá Viktoriánským vnímáním náboženství a dále tím, jak toto vnímání bylo ovlivněno náhlým rozmachem přírodních věd, které způsobily, že si společnost začala klást znepokojující otázky týkající se důvěryhodnosti Bible, Božího charakteru a stvoření světa. Myšlenky souvisejí s evolucí byly ve vědeckých kruzích diskutovány přibližně sto let před Viktoriány, nicméně právě v době vlády královny Viktorie byly vydány dvě zásadní knihy, které ovlivnily širokou veřejnost. Jednalo se o publikace Charlese

Chamberse and Charlese Darwina, jež představily veřejnosti nové revoluční myšlenky, které způsobily nadšení, zároveň ale i úzkost řady lidí. Poznatky těchto dvou mužů se navíc zdály být podpořeny věrohodnými důkazy především z oblasti geologie a paleontologie. Nadšení z nových revolučních myšlenek je dobře vyobrazeno na postavě Charlese Smithsona, zastávce Darwina a nadšeného paleontologa. Zároveň jeho postava prožívá tíseň se své neschopnosti mluvit k Bohu, na které je vidět potřeba víry v životech lidí a strach z toho, že Bůh jež inspiroval sepsání Bible možná neexistuje.

Stručný závěr diplomové práce pak shrnuje veškeré poznatky získané o Viktoriánské Anglii, jež jsou obsaženy v textu práce.

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