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The Development of the Victorian Domestic Novel

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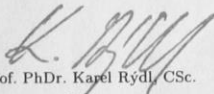
Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :


Autorka se ve své práci bude zabývat románovou tvorbou autorek Jane Austenové, Charlotte Brontëové a George Eliotové. V úvodní části práce vysvětlí pojem "rodinný román" a vymezí jeho základní rysy. Těžištěm výzkumu bude detailní analýza románů *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Jane Eyre* (1847) a *The Mill on the Floss* (1860). Autorka zmapuje způsoby, jakými vybraná díla odráží výše definované rysy rodinného románu a jak se od převládajících úzů žánru odklánějí. Obecným cílem analýzy a práce jako celku bude i vytyčení vývoje daného žánru v těchto románech. Práce bude založena na adekvátním množství relevantních a kvalitních zdrojů.

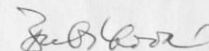
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- Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Radford, VA: Wilder Publications, 2009.
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- SECONDARY LITERATURE

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ANNOTATION

This bachelor thesis defines the term “domestic novel” and analyzes how the aspects of this genre are interpreted in the works of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot. The analysis shows how this genre evolved through time and what the chosen novels *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre* and *The Mill on the Floss* have in common, which aspects are shared and which ones are different. The special focus is given to the role of women in the Victorian Britain, how their position developed and how it changed. The role of the women is described, analyzed and examined using the examples and citations from the chosen novels.

KEY WORDS

domestic, novel, Victorian Britain, woman, family, marriage

ANOTACE

Tato bakalářská práce definuje pojem “román rodinného života” a analyzuje, jakým způsobem se známky tohoto žánru objevují v románové tvorbě autorek Jane Austenové, Charlotte Brontëové a George Eliotové. Analýza ukazuje, jak se žánr vyvíjel časem a co romány *Pýcha a Předsudek*, *Jana Eyrová* a *Mlýn na Řece Floss* mají společného, jaké aspekty jsou stejné a jaké se liší. Zvláštní pozornost je věnována roli Viktoriánských žen v Británii. Dále jak se jejich pozice vyvíjela a jak se změnila. Role žen je popsána, analyzována a prostudována za použití citací zvolených románů.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

domácí, román, Viktoriánská Británie, ženy, rodina, manželství

NÁZEV PRÁCE

Aspekty "rodinného románu" v díle Jane Austenové, Charlotte Brontëové a George Eliotové.

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INTRODUCTION

“It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.”¹

The role of women in the 19th century British literature was changing rapidly. From the independent domestic ideal as ‘Angel in the House’ to the governess who sought her home and made her own money. From the mother, daughter and wife to the independent woman who was responsible only for herself and wanted to have her own opinion. Roles women had in the 19th century Britain were given to them by the established values their society shared. Generally, the Victorian woman’s role was not an easy one to define. As Jenny Calder in her book *The Victorian House* suggests, a woman’s role was strictly given to them by the stereotype and clichés of the society. It was a role of a housewife and of a mother, and even: ²

It was the wife who made the home, who cared for her children within it, who brought her husband back to it when work was done, who provided the hot dinners and created the atmosphere of comfort and protection.³

They had to become the perfect mothers and wives, they were expected to get married as soon as possible. The sooner, the better, because the one who remained unmarried was not an attractive one, sometimes they may have seemed dangerous to the society, they may have been seen as a threat.⁴

One of the aspects the ideal Victorian woman would share is to be home, to spend most of the time home with her children, doing housework, taking care of husband and their servants, if they had any.

This bachelor paper will examine the differences of general aspects of the domestic novel, the similarities in the general overview of the domestic issues and its methods of sharing those aspects. The fundamental tools of the domestic matter will be analysed, shown and found in the chosen novels. Because the chosen novels are not from the same decade, the aspects of domesticity are not always the same. Therefore, some development may be seen and analysed.

¹ Jane Austen, James Kinsley, and Fiona J. Stafford, *Pride and Prejudice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.

² Jenni, Calder, *The Victorian Home*, London: Batsford, 1977, p. 27

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

The term domestic novel will be defined, this paper will describe how the similarities are shown with the definitions and introducing the other features of the domestic novel that are not the exactly central but are also important and connected with the domestic novel in general. Sometimes, one kind of a novel may go hand in hand with other types, for example governess novel may be considered as the subgenre of the domestic novel or vice versa. Sensible novel may appear at the same level with the domestic novel. Some aspects of the gothic novel may also be found in one of the chosen novels. Then one novel may show more genres and subgenres at the same level.

The first appearance of the aspects of domesticity in the 19th-century Britain was in the works of Jane Austen. Jane Austen's novels, for the first time showed strong aspects of domesticity; it was the first time of idealizing domesticity, domestic life and domestic characters. Other writers also wrote home-bound plots or idealized domestic life in some sense. The authors such as George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, Anne Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell may be examples of those who wrote about domestic life in their novels.⁵

This paper will also deal with the emergence of women literature in Victorian times, when women started not only reading literature, but also writing their own literature. Since women were those who stayed at home, new type of literature emerged. The reason, why women had more time to write is, as Ian Watt in his book *The Rise of the Novel* suggests, it was because they had more leisure time, therefore they filled their spare time with either reading or writing novels. That is why we have higher number of female writers. Booksellers and writers started to put special emphasis on books only for female audience.⁶

Women had a very important role in the literary world. They wrote the majority of the 18th century novels, furthermore, they are, in Watt's opinion gentle and tolerant in their sense for observing what is going on around. "[...] tendency of booksellers and writers to address special appeals to the feminine audience."⁷

⁵ Elizabeth Boyd Thompson, "Domestic Novel." In *Women's Studies Encyclopedia*, ed. Helen Tierney. Greenwood Press, 2002. 23/09/2016 <http://www.gem.greenwood.com>

⁶ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (United Kingdom: London Hogarth 1987, c1957, 1987), 151.

⁷ Ibid.

1 WOMEN IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN

Theodor Hoppen in his book *The Mid-Victorian generation* suggests that the family and family life was dominant in Victorian times. “For all but the poorest the notion of home was becoming increasingly associated with ideas of protection and defence.”⁸ What is considered to be mostly associated with the connotation of home and house is marriage, two people living together and in the future, establishing a family life. As Peter Berry suggests in his book *Beginning Theory - An introduction to literary and cultural theory*, men and women were seen as unequal in the nineteenth century literature. Moreover, a very few women had a job, because it was mainly up to men to take care of the family financially. Unless it was absolutely necessary, women did not work.⁹ Theodor Hoppen then adds that “Middle-class wives were praised for sheltering their husbands from the tedium of domestic affairs.”¹⁰ Both middle and also upper class husbands had a chance to live in both spheres, business on the one hand but also the domestic sphere on the other hand. Women were those left at home to take care of children and household. Moreover, Theodor Hoppen adds that women were mostly home doing chores.¹¹

1.1 ANGEL IN THE HOUSE

Elizabeth Langland in her article points out that in Victorian times, the ideology seen women as “Angels in the House”. “It shows that the wife, the presiding hearth angel of Victorian social myth, actually performed a more significant and extensive economic and political function than is usually perceived.”¹²

House itself was seen as a heaven, separated from public circle. Men usually earned money and women stayed at home taking care of the household.¹³ In addition, as Donna Campbell suggests, a Victorian woman represents two different women, angel and the practical woman.¹⁴

In addition, according to Kathryn Huges, who describes the gender roles in her article about gender and sexuality, it was typical for women (mothers and daughters) to be left at

⁸ Karl Theodore Hoppen, *The mid-Victorian generation: 1846-1886* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008), 316.

⁹ Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: an introduction to literary and cultural theory*, 3rd ed. (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2009), 117

¹⁰ Hoppen, *The mid-Victorian generation*, 316.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Elizabeth Langland, “Nobody’s Angels: Domestic Ideology and Middle-Class Women in the Victorian Novel” *PMLA* 107, no. 2 (1992): 290-291, doi:10.2307/462641.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Donna M. Campbell “Domestic or Sentimental Fiction, 1830-1860 - Washington State University.” Accessed February 26, 2015. <http://public.wsu.edu/~campbelld/amlit/domestic.htm>.

home and take care of the house and of the servants who helped the middle-class families to run their households.¹⁵

Kathryn Huges also explains the idea of 'Separate Spheres' that means that men and women were not equal, moreover they often only met with each other to have breakfast and then dinner. "Women were considered physically weaker yet morally superior to men, which meant that they were best suited to the domestic sphere."¹⁶ Women were idealized at home and they were called 'Angels in the House'.¹⁷

As families became more prosperous so the lives of married women became ever more private, some women positively lashing themselves to the domestic pillar and announcing proudly that 'they never go anywhere [...] and that they never speak to anyone'.¹⁸

1.2 MARRIAGE

Another important role of the middle and upper-class women in Victorian times is mentioned in Helen Nickson's article – to get married and take care of their households. Women were educated in a new way, they had to learn so called 'Accomplishments'.¹⁹ Those accomplishments, as Helen Nickson explains, were mainly "French, drawing, painting, singing, dancing."²⁰ They had to be educated and know all these accomplishments so that they could be considered suitable wives. Their daily typical tasks were cooking, making clothes and colouring them, knitting, sewing.²¹

The gentlewomen made sure that the home was a place of solace and comfort for the husband and children, free from all the hassles or burdens of outside work. They were supposed to be the sunbeam in the house by making others happy.²²

Moreover, "The young ladies were groomed thoroughly to get married and had to be innocent, virtuous, biddable, and dutiful."²³ According to Elizabeth Langland and her

¹⁵ Kathryn Huges, "Gender Roles in the 19th Century," The British Library, 2014, , accessed April 1, 2016, <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gender-roles-in-the-19th-century>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Janet McCalman, *Respectability and working-class politics in late Victorian London* (1980), 113. In Karl Theodore Hoppen, *The mid-Victorian generation: 1846-1886* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008), 331.

¹⁹ Huges, "Gender Roles in the 19th Century,"

²⁰ Helen Nickson, "Life of Women in the Victorian Era - EzineArticles," Ezine Articles, June 1, 2009, , accessed November 18, 2016, <http://ezinearticles.com/?Life-of-Women-in-the-Victorian-Era&id=2359711>.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

descriptions of Victorian novels, middle-class women usually ran the household, which included one servant at least. Moreover, she argues that Victorian husbands were dependent on their wives “[...] to perform the ideological work of managing the class question and displaying the signs of the family's status-duties to which he contributed a disposable income.”²⁴ For woman, the choice of partner was often the most important one, because it decided about woman's position in the society “[...] and exclusively determine her happiness and fulfilment in life, or her lack of these.”²⁵ As Elizabeth Langland suggests, some women from the middle class had troubles finding an appropriate husband because sometimes the men they wanted was outside their social rate.²⁶ Moreover, Theodor Hoppen in his chapter *Living and Spending* suggests, “Girls from the upper and central reaches of the middle class faced particular problems because severe retribution waited upon those who married outside their own social rank.”²⁷ In addition, Ian Watt claims that it was very difficult for a lady to find a husband, because very often, they had nothing to offer. They should have at least some dowry, otherwise it was difficult for them to get married.²⁸ Then Theodor Hoppen adds that the marriage would be acceptable under the certain conditions: “[...] attendance at public schools, membership of certain clubs, commissions in certain regiments.”²⁹ Then, another steps towards marriage followed, such as ‘introductions’, leaving of cards, ‘morning calls’, balls and they were mostly used to test the social temperature. In the most cases, prosperous father would buy a marriage to his daughter. “[...] a small group of women to control enormous separate estates after marriage, a large number to own substantial property of their own, and an even greater number to have a private incomes which their husbands could not touch.”³⁰ But overall, marriage was still considered to be the best option, but for the majority of women, marriage was seen as a chance to leave their parents. Marriage was the goal of every woman's life. “Marriage conferred status, sanctioned legitimate sex, and, with luck, provided companionship, children, perhaps even love.”³¹

²⁴ Langland, “Nobody's Angels”, 29.

²⁵ Barry, *Beginning Theory*, 117.

²⁶ Langland, “Nobody's Angels”, 291.

²⁷ Hoppen, *The mid-Victorian generation*, 319.

²⁸ Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 142.

²⁹ Ibid., 319.

³⁰ Ibid., 320.

³¹ Ibid., 318.

2 THE VICTORIAN DOMESTIC NOVEL

Elizabeth Boyd Thompson explains that the term domestic novel was mainly popular in the 19th century British literature. The earliest domestic novels were written by Maria Edgeworth (*Belinda* 1801, *Patronage* 1814), then Jane Austen (*Sense and Sensibility* 1811, *Pride and Prejudice* 1813), Charlotte Brontë (*Jane Eyre* 1847, *Villette* 1853), Anne Brontë (*Agnes Grey* 1847) Elizabeth Gaskell (*Wives and Daughters* 1864) and George Eliot (*The Mill on the Floss* 1860, *Middlemarch* 1871-1872). Elizabeth Boyd Thompson then mentions that novels by Maria Edgeworth are those which were written as the first ones, they idealized domesticity in a great detail. According to her opinion, although Austen's novels share a lot of conventions of the domestic novel as such, she did not idealize family life about which she wrote.³² On the other hand, according to the Britannica Encyclopaedia, Austen is the author of the comedy of manners (the domestic novel) and she created the idea of domesticity.³³

As Ian Watt suggests, middle class women had more time to read and write. They had more leisure time, therefore they filled their spare time with either reading or writing novels. That is why we have a high number of female writers. Booksellers and writers started to put special emphasis on books only for feminine audience. In addition, middle class women had a very important role in the literary world, because they wrote the majority of the 18th century novels. They are in Watt's his opinion gentle and tolerant in their sense for observing what is going on around and new domestic point was given for the feminine audience - The focus of everyday life, heroines, marriage, religion, and so on.³⁴

The feminine sensibility was in some ways better equipped to reveal the intricacies of personal relationships and was therefore at a real advantage in the realm of the novel... The education that women receive from society inculcates in them the feeling that the individuals connected with them are the only ones to whom they owe any duty.³⁵

³² Elizabeth Boyd Thompson, "Domestic Novel."

³³ Southam, Brian C. "Jane Austen (English Novelist)." Encyclopaedia Britannica Online. Last modified September 23, 2013. Accessed December 5, 2014. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/43558/Jane-Austen>.

³⁴ Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 151.

³⁵ Ibid., 298.

2.1 THE VICTORIAN NOVEL

Louis James in his book *The Victorian Novel* suggests that the Victorian novel is “[...] a narrative form opposed to romance, a work of fiction dealing with the affairs of everyday life.”³⁶ Louis James then comments on some topics which appeared mostly in the Victorian novel writings: children’s novels, colonial novels, historical novels, illustrated novels, Irish novels, ‘new woman’ novels (These novels represented a new aspect of female emancipation. “Applied to the novel, however, the term referred to a body of fiction whose sensational form drew new attention to women’s issues rather than to a specific social or political movement.”³⁷), religious novels, science, utopias and dystopias, sensation novels (these novels were written to shock the reader and also to surprise the reader. Some reactions to the strict rules or cultural stereotypes were mentioned and also some topics regarding women were mentioned: the rights of women in marriage, married woman’s property and for example feminine identity), social problem novels, the supernatural and working-class novels.³⁸

Some aspects or sub-genres also appeared in the nineteenth-century domestic novel. An example may be governess novel which was quite popular at that time. Governess novels are strongly associated with the Victorian Britain. A governess was a woman who was employed in a rich family, she lived with them, taught their children and looked after them. Governesses were mostly middle-class women who were employed in households of upper-class families. A large number of manuals and books were published not only for governesses but also for their employers mainly through the 19th century. As Cecilia Wadsö Lecaros suggests in her article about the Victorian governess novel:

[...] the governess lives and works within a domestic sphere, but living with strangers she is not altogether a part of it. [...] Her position as a wage-earning middle-class woman is always at the centre of attention. [...] the governess heroine differs from most other female characters in nineteenth-century fiction. [...] In her dependent and wage-earning position the governess resembles the domestic servant, but she also has some affinity with the mistress of the house because of her middle-class background.³⁹

³⁶ Louis James, *The Victorian Novel* (Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 2.

³⁷ Ibid., 204.

³⁸ Ibid., 189-223.

³⁹ Cecilia Wadsö Lecaros, "The Victorian Governess Novel: Characteristics of the Genre," THE VICTORIAN WEB, November 2, 2005, , accessed June 1, 2016, <http://www.victorianweb.org/genre/wadso1.html>.

In addition, Cecilia Lecaros adds that the woman heroine is usually an orphan who stands alone in the world. In general, if the woman had nobody to support her, she had to work on her own. What happened quite often was the case that even though some young lady lost her parents, she still had some other family left. This family supported her and took care of her. The heroine usually goes through some painful situations, she faces troubles in the relationships with her employers or pupils. The development of the heroine's character is done in a way that she is pushed from one situation to another. In regard to the social relationships and interactions, a governess was seen as a servant and not as an equal to the other people, specifically speaking – to her employers. A governess has usually 3 positions – the position of the mother, the nurse and the governess. Usually a governess has a friend who helps her through the difficult situations or troubles. Later in the novel or in the story, this friend might become either a future husband, a fellow governess or just a friend.⁴⁰

Another type of novel which was quite popular is a gothic novel. As Encyclopædia Britannica mentions, gothic novel is a type of novel which is having “a prevailing atmosphere of mystery and terror.”⁴¹ Typically, medieval buildings, ruins, monasteries and castles as well appear in the gothic novel. Those places are usually equipped with hidden planks, subterranean channels, trapdoors and dark battlements.⁴²

2.2 THE DOMESTIC NOVEL

Elizabeth Boyd Thompson explains in her article that the main features of the domestic novel are “the idealization of domesticity and the sanctification of middle-class, Christian, and family-centred values that dominate characterization, plots, and themes.”⁴³ Moreover, the domestic novel idealizes domesticity and classic female characters who are dominated by passivity, ignorance, purity and renunciation. The main character is a heroine, a female character.⁴⁴

Monica Cohen suggests that domestic female characters can be also described as house keepers who cannot abandon their children. For those women, their home is considered their work - this can be seen as a chosen vocation for female characters.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Cecilia Wadsö Lecaros, "The Victorian Governess Novel: Characteristics of the Genre,"

⁴¹ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, "Gothic novel," Encyclopædia Britannica, , accessed June 1, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/art/Gothic-novel>.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Elizabeth Boyd Thompson, "Domestic Novel."

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Monica Feinberg Cohen, *Professional domesticity in the Victorian novel: women, work and home* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3-7.

Another important issue of the domestic novel is, as Elizabeth Boyd Thompson suggests, love.⁴⁶ As Britannica encyclopaedia suggests, the characters are women who get married for love.⁴⁷ Elizabeth Boyd Thompson then proceeds that the woman character usually wants to feel some love and the love heroine wants to feel usually ends in a marriage, which is another typical issue of the domestic novel. The plot always shows the instability of the heroine's readiness to love and be loved. To get married is the only opportunity to actually fall in love and to be loved (and the only way for them to have a happy ending). The reward for them is happiness, but only if they fall in love in the right place and at the right time. It is the ideal image of love. Unfortunately, for some characters the idea of marriage means the end of happiness because the husband is chosen by their parents, and then they may suffer during the marriage. Not only did they have to get married but they also struggled between the physical idea of love and the material image of love.⁴⁸

According to Elizabeth Langland and her article, the issue of marriage can be seen in the majority of domestic novels, but it usually happens through different classes. In most cases, classes are not the same, the one of the bride and the one of the groom.⁴⁹ Moreover, it is all connected together – finding a husband is connected with the stereotypes pre-Victorian Britain had, and those stereotypes show the importance of the community people lived in. In addition, social class system could have been distinguished by all the dissimilarities between different social groups – with respect to influence, authority, abundance and working and living status as well. Since that time the usage of the labels “upper”, “middle” and “working” classes is considered to be commonplace.⁵⁰

In addition, Amy Robinson explains another issue which is connected with the interclass marriage – social climbing. The stereotype of marriage between different social classes is a typical example of one of the issues the domestic novel shows. Finding a husband is considered to be something all female characters had to achieve in order to fit in the social scale – men and women. Nonetheless, establishing a convenient marriage was considered to be a fundamental social value.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Elizabeth Boyd Thompson, "Domestic Novel."

⁴⁷ Encyclopaedia Britannica Online.

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Boyd Thompson, "Domestic Novel."

⁴⁹ Langland, "Nobody's Angels", 290.

⁵⁰ David Cody, "Social Class," Victorian Web, July 22, 2002, , accessed April 31, 2015, <http://www.victorianweb.org/victorian/history/Class.html>.

⁵¹ Amy, Robinson. "Class Mediation and Marriage in *Pride and Prejudice* and *North and South*". In *Salem Press*. Accessed December 23, 201, Retrieved from: http://salempress.com/store/pdfs/pride_critical_insights.pdf

Ian Watt adds that the marriage of the main character (mainly woman) usually makes the bride richer and gets her on the higher social and economic status, not the groom.⁵² As Charles Pragnell suggests, there are two possible descriptions of marriage – on the one hand getting married but on the other hand finding the prosperous (or in other words convenient) marriage was seen as the main goal to reach in the life of young ladies. On the other hand, in comparison with men, there was no such assumption that a man should be married because it was a male-dominated society. Generally speaking, women were considered to be property of their husbands.⁵³ On the other hand, Amy Robinson claims that from the position of the woman, finding a husband was not seen as becoming the husbands' servant, because when they got married, they could not defend their independence and marriage was also seen as financial safeness.⁵⁴

The term "domestic novel" is used sometimes as a synonym for the terms, such as: the domestic novel of manners, domestic fiction, domestic romance, social problem novels, governess novels, religious novels, and novels of manners.⁵⁵ Moreover, the domestic novel may be sometimes mistaken for some other types of the novel, which may share some similar aspects. Some authors may even claim that the domestic novel is in fact considered to be the novel of manners.⁵⁶ The novel of manners and the domestic novel are in some aspects similar, for example they are both popular among female readers and they both tell the story of a female character. But there are major differences. Firstly, the novel of manners tells a story which focuses more on the social background, while the domestic novel focuses on the detailed description of the social aspects of family life. The novel of manners describes characters who struggle with social skills and moral bravery, whereas in the domestic novel the female characters learn how to discipline themselves.⁵⁷ In addition, the domestic novel is

⁵² Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 153.

⁵³ Charles Pragnell, "Forward to the Past: A Return to Victoriana and Male Dominance," *The Therapeutic Care Journal* published by The International Centre for Therapeutic Care, February 1, 2010, , accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.childrenwebmag.com/articles/child-care-social-issues/forward-to-the-past-a-return-to-victoriana-and-male-dominance>.

⁵⁴ "Fascinating History.": *Marriage & Sex for the Victorian Middle Class Woman*. Last modified August 20, 2005. Accessed December 23, 2014. <http://fascinatinghistory.blogspot.cz/2005/08/marriage-sex-for-victorian-middle.html>.

⁵⁵ Elizabeth Boyd Thompson, "Domestic Novel."

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Winfried Fluck, "Novel of transition: From sentimental novel to domestic novel," in *The Construction and Contestation of American Cultures and Identities in the Early National Period*. ed. Udo J. Hebel (Heidelberg, 1999), 111.

different from the sentimental novel, in the domestic novel “[...] social learning replaces the exclusive focus on the cultivation of affect which is still typical of the sentimental novel.”⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Ibid.

3 INTERPRETATION OF THE ASPECTS OF THE DOMESTIC NOVEL FROM THE NOVELS OF Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot

3.1 ASPECTS

For the analysis the following novels were chosen: *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë and *The Mill on the Floss* by George Eliot.

3.1.1 FAMILY

The family togetherness and the domestic idealization are the most important aspects to define the domestic novel. All three chosen novels are perfect examples of the domestic novel but their interpretations are different and the aspects may be found in different ways. The family togetherness and the domestic ideal are often idealized through the family members being together and spending time together. Sometimes, this aspect is expressed through authors' descriptions but more often through conversations between family members.

3.1.1.1 FAMILY BEING TOGETHER

According to Thornley, the aspects of the family life were shown as the most perfect and important ones in the domestic novels.⁵⁹ He claims that Austen's novels are "[...] calm pictures of society life. She understood the importance of family in human affairs [...]."⁶⁰ In addition, he explains that Austen "[...] brought the novel of family life to its highest point of perfection. Her works were untouched by the ugliness of the outside world [...]."⁶¹ As Ian Watt suggests, Jane Austen was in fact the heir of Fanny Burney. "Both women novelists followed Richardson – the Richardson of the less intense domestic conflicts [...]."⁶² Moreover, he claims that Austen had a tendency to focus primarily on one, specifically a female character. This is a heroine and all the focus is put on her. Although we learn about other characters and their feelings and thoughts, the most space is given to the main character. The narrator works therefore as some kind of analyst, introducing and qualifying the other

⁵⁹ Thornley, G. C., and Gwyneth Roberts. "Nineteenth-century Novelists." In *An Outline of English Literature*, 117. New ed. Harlow: Longman, 1984. 117.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 115.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 296.

characters.⁶³ In *Pride and Prejudice*, the main character is Elizabeth. She is given the biggest space and we learn a lot about her. Ian Watt moreover comments that her novels are mostly based on “[...] marriage and especially on the proper feminine role in the matter; and her ultimate picture of the proper norms of the social system [...]”.⁶⁴

As already mentioned above, Elizabeth Boyd Thompson claims that the crucial aspect of the domestic novel is idealization of domesticity. This aspect can be seen also in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*. In addition, Louis James claims that Jane Austen wrote about “small virtually enclosed circle of provincial communities.”⁶⁵ This is also true for the novel *Pride and Prejudice* where there is one family which is the centre of all and its importance is perfectly shown in this novel. Aspects such as family being together, discussing, eating, enjoying time together, singing, arguing, and planning; are important to define the domestic novel.⁶⁶ Family togetherness is the aspect that Austen displays throughout the whole novel. There are conversations on several topics displayed a lot of times. An example might be Mrs. Bennet and her daughters coming back home after the ball and telling Mr. Bennet a lot of stories about the ball and how it was great, describing how many times Mr. Bingley danced with certain girls and pointing out that he danced twice with Jane. Another example is a situation when Mr. Collins comes to visit the Bennet family, they all sit around the table and talk. Later that evening Mr. Collins reads them from a book of sermons.

By tea-time however the dose had been enough, and Mr. Bennet was glad to take his guest into the drawing-room again, and when tea was over, glad to invite him to read aloud to the ladies. Mr. Mr. Collins readily assented, and a book was produced; but on beholding it, (for every thing [*sic*] announced it to be from a circulating library,) he started back, and begging pardon, protested that he never read novels.⁶⁷

The whole family spends evening together. Another example of descriptions of the family togetherness: “Elizabeth was sitting with her mother and sisters, reflecting on what she had heard, and doubting whether she were authorised to mention it [...]”.⁶⁸

The novel *The Mill on the Floss* by George Eliot also shows signs of the idealization of domesticity such as family members spending time together. This novel shows also one

⁶³ Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 297.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 298.

⁶⁵ James, *The Victorian Novel*, 96.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 51.

⁶⁸ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 97.

family which is the centre of all, as Luis James suggests.⁶⁹ Descriptions of a family being together are very crucial to the novel. Throughout the story they appear from the simplest situations to the very important ones (Christmas time together, being together when

Mr. Tulliver gets sick, and so on.) There are a lot of descriptions of family time right at the beginning of the novel, the discussion between Mr. and Mrs. Tulliver is shown dealing with their son's future and discussing whether they should send Tom for further education at the college.

‘What I want, you know,’ said Mr Tulliver – ‘what I want is to give Tom a good eddication [*sic*]; an eddication [*sic*] as’ll [*sic*] be a bread to him. That was what I was thinking of when I gave notice for him to leave the ‘cademy [*sic*] at Ladyday. [...]’⁷⁰

Another example may be when Mr. Tulliver is sick and Maggie and Tom take a good care of him, dealing with all his affairs, but they are careful not to discuss this information with him, because his amnesia is still a problem.

Tom obeyed, with some trembling: it was the first time his father had recognized him. But instead of saying anything more to him, his father continued to look with a growing distinctness of suspicion at Mr Glegg and the deeds.⁷¹

They talk a lot and need to cooperate with each other. For this novel there are a lot of conversations going on between the characters. Their communication with each other is important and by this characteristic the aspect of the domestic novel is perfectly met.

Mrs Tulliver gave a little scream as she saw her, and felt such a ‘turn’ that she dropt the large gravy-spoon into the dish with the most serious results to the table-cloth.... Mrs Tulliver’s scream made all eyes turn towards the same point as her own, and Maggie’s cheeks and ears began to burn [...].⁷²

There are a lot of dinners, lunches and family time, enjoying each other, talking and gossiping, descriptions of conversations, routines and family relations in this novel. Women characters are mostly preserved when at home or outside the house but mostly, they come back as they imagine their home as the perfect and pure place.

⁶⁹ James, *The Victorian Novel*, 96.

⁷⁰ George Eliot, Gordon Sherman Haight, and Juliette Atkinson, *The Mill on the Floss* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 9.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 64.

The description of the family being together is rather rare in the novel *Jane Eyre*, because Jane is an orphan and her aunt does not care about her and she treats her like a complete stranger. This is why there are rather cruel descriptions of family events at the beginning of the novel. Some descriptions of the family being together are mentioned, but Jane is bullied by her cousins most of the time and nobody listens to her because for others, she is like a complete stranger. Although the descriptions are cruel, they are crucial. The description of Jane as an orphan, who lives with her aunt Mrs. Reed and her children, shows that she knows upper-class behaviour and values, but she has no money so she is treated as a lower-class person.

John had not much affection for his mother and sisters, and an antipathy to me. He bullied and punished me: not two or three times in the week, nor once or twice in the day, but continually: every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh on my bones shrank when he came near.⁷³

When Jane is reading a book in the drawing-room and her cousins find her:

‘What were you doing behind the curtain?’ he asked.

‘I was reading.’

‘Shew the book.’

‘I returned to the window and fetched it thence.’

‘You have no business to take our books: you are a dependant, mama says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen’s children like us, and eat the same meals we do, and wear clothes at our mama’s expense.’⁷⁴

Some aspects of the desire for family may be found in the novel because Jane is an orphan. The quest for her is to find some place to belong to but on the other hand, it is complicated for her to fulfil this quest because of her desire for independence.

⁷³ Charlotte Brontë, Margaret Smith, and Sally Shuttleworth, *Jane Eyre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 10.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

How people feel when they are returning home from an absence, long or short, I did not know: I had never experienced the sensation. I had known what it was to come back to Gateshead when a child, after a long walk—to be scolded for looking cold or gloomy; and later, what it was to come back from church to Lowood—to long for a plenteous meal and a good fire, and to be unable to get either. Neither of these returnings were very pleasant or desirable: no magnet drew me to a given point, increasing in its strength of attraction the nearer I came. The return to Thornfield was yet to be tried.⁷⁵

All I had now to do was to obey him in silence: no need for me to colloquize further. I got over the stile without a word, and meant to leave him calmly. An impulse held me fast, - a force turned me round: I said - or something in me said for me, and in spite of me:-

‘Thank you, Mr. Rochester, for your great kindness. I am strangely glad to get back again to you; and wherever you are is my home,—my only home.’⁷⁶

In the early chapters Charlotte Brontë introduces elements of the gothic novel for the first time. She was strongly affected by this genre. When Jane is locked in the ‘red-room’ she experiences fear, strong emotions and the atmosphere itself is terrifying. Jane is locked inside only with her thoughts: “Why was I always suffering, always brow-beaten, always accused, for ever condemned? Why could I never please? Why was it useless to try to win any one’s favour?”⁷⁷ More gothic elements are represented through the whole novel just a couple of times. One time, when Jane saves Mr. Rochester from the fire or when Jane finds out that Mr. Rochester is married and that his mad wife lives in the attic.

Another aspect is introduced when Jane is leaving home to live at school, the aspect of the governess novel. A female character who is moving from place to place all alone to live somewhere else. The woman rebel, the icon for some women. It was not common at that time for a lady to leave her home and wander somewhere all alone. Later on, although Jane spends some time as a teacher at the Lowood School, Jane is prepared to change her life. She decides to become a governess because she is ready for a change, so she leaves the Lowood School and starts her career as the governess at the manor called Thornfield.

Mary Poovey in her essay argues that “[...] the figure who epitomized the Victorian domestic ideal was also the figure who threatened to destroy it,[...]”⁷⁸ In Poovey’s opinion,

⁷⁵ Ibid., 242.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 246.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 15.

⁷⁸ Mary Poovey, *The Anathematized Race: The Governess and Jane Eyre* (1989), in Stephen Regan, ed., *The Nineteenth-Century Novel: a critical reader* (London: Routledge, 2001), 193-194.

governesses may have been threatening to the middle class family stability.⁷⁹ This shows why governesses were mostly seen as outcasts, fallen woman or women rebels.

If the governess was meant to provide an image of moral propriety within the home, she was also treated with suspicion as a sexually available single woman; and while she resembled the middle-class mother in the work she performed, she was like a working-class woman in terms of the wages she received.⁸⁰

Some aspects of domesticity are shown as Jane starts teaching Adèle. Here, the aspect is different, as Jane is not the part of the family but, in fact, an employee. The aspect can be modified in saying that members of the household meet each other and spend some time together, which is true. Moreover, Jane's desire for family can be found here although Jane is happy there, she does not consider the Thornfield manor her home, which is obvious from her discussion with Mr. Rochester:

'Well,' resumed Mr. Rochester, 'if you disown parents, you must have some sort of kinsfolk: uncles and aunts?'
'No; none that I ever saw.'
'And your home?'
'I have none.'
'Where do your brothers and sisters live?'
'I have no brothers or sisters.'⁸¹

The aspect of the domesticity as such is met when Jane realizes that Thornfield manor is her home. Because the domestic novel describes home-bound plots, it is crucial when Jane realizes that she has a home. For the first time in her life she feels safe and she feels the importance of home, of having somewhere to belong. At this point, Jane is no longer a governess and her desire for home, family, love and sense of belonging is by this time fulfilled.

I have now been married ten years. I know what it is to live entirely for and with what I love best on earth. I hold myself supremely blest-blest beyond what language can express; because I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine. No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.⁸²

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 122.

⁸² Ibid., 459.

3.1.1.2 SIBLINGS

As the description of family being together is crucial to define the domestic novel, the siblings and their description is also very important and sometimes one of the main features. As siblings spend time together and their relations are perfectly shown and described in the great detail, the aspect of domesticity is idealized in another, more complex way.

Maggie and Tom (two characters from the novel *The Mill on the Floss*) love each other in the purest way. George Eliot named the first chapter Boy and Girl so it is obvious that she put a huge importance on their relationship. Their relationship as brother and sister is important as they learn from each other, they help each other and they are best friends. As their relationship is very close, Maggie and Tom spend a lot of time together, especially in their childhood. Tom and Maggie's free time is described as fishing together, talking together, sometimes arguing with each other but mostly enjoying time together. They promise to be always happy together. Those two are inseparable and their love is cherished, until Maggie destroys her brother's trust. She makes a mistake and Tom gets really angry.

Tom stopped immediately in his walk and turned round towards Maggie. 'You forgot to feed 'em [*sic*], then, and Harry forgot?' he said, his colour heightening for a moment, but soon subsiding. 'I'll pitch into Harry-I'll have him turned away. And I don't love you, Maggie. You shan't go fishing with me tomorrow. I told you to go and see the rabbits every day.' He walked on again.⁸³

Fortunately, he forgives her after all. This argument they have affects them through the entire novel. But it is obvious that they simply love each other very much. Their relationship as brother and sister is important as they learn from each other, they help each other and they are best friends.

Pride and prejudice is a novel full of relationships among siblings. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet have got five daughters and they share a lot together. They are each other's best friends, but on the other hand there is also a lot of rivalry. The five sisters are dependent on each other and these activities and occasions are mostly interpreted as talking together, getting dressed, doing housework, they even write each other letters when they are apart.

⁸³ George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, 34.

When Jane and Elizabeth were alone, the former, who had been cautious in her praise of mister Bingley before, expressed to her sister how very much she admired him. 'He is just what a young man want to be,' said she, 'sensible, good humoured, lively; and I never saw such happy manners! – so much ease, with such perfect good breeding.

'He is also handsome,' replied Elizabeth, 'which a young man odd likewise to be, if he possibly can. His character is thereby complete.'⁸⁴

What was quite common for young ladies was to leave their home and live somewhere else for some time. They left their home to find husbands or to be introduced to the society by living with their relatives who may know different circles of people. But even when sisters were apart, they still tried to communicate with one another by writing letters to each other.

Jane Eyre is an orphan, therefore no signs of sibling rivalry, love or care can be found, but some cousin relationship is shown right at the beginning. It is more like cousin rivalry and hatred than a relationship. As mentioned above, there are several cruel, mean, horrible and rude descriptions of Jane's cousins' tyranny towards her. It is a symbol of domestic novel, although a cruel one.

When Jane is about to be send to school away from her aunt, she is ready to accept all her feelings and tell Mrs. Reed how she feels about her, her children and the whole residence she lives in:

'I am not deceitful: if I were, I should say I loved *you*; but I declare, I do not love you: I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world except John Reed; and this book about the liar, you may give to your girl, Georgiana, for it is she who tells lies, and not I.' [...] 'I am glad you are no relation of mine: I will never call you aunt again as long as I live. I will never come to see you when I am grown up; and if any one [*sic*] asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty.'⁸⁵

When Jane lives at school she spends a lot of time not only with her mates but also with teachers. As already mentioned above, the aspect of the domestic novel is mainly about the family members spending time together, Jane has no family, so the aspect can be again at least modified in saying that people who may be closest to the main character should spend some time with the main character. But it may be rather difficult to choose these people, as for Jane, as she gets older, every time she is close to another person/people.

⁸⁴ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 9.

⁸⁵ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 36.

3.1.1.3 WOMEN AND THEIR ROLE IN MARRIAGE

Marriage is usually seen as the basic aspect of the domestic novel. It is the only thing a Victorian women were supposed to accomplish in their lives, the only aim (except for being home and tidy-up). Marriage is not always seen as the positive thing, but sometimes it can be understood as the only way to get away from woman's parents was to get married. This aspect is seen in all three novels, but in different ways.

As Ian Watt suggests, it was very difficult for a lady to find a husband, because very often, they had nothing to offer. They should have at least some dowry, otherwise it was difficult for them to get married. The marriage of the main character (mainly woman) usually makes the bride richer and increases her social and economic status, not the groom.⁸⁶

As Theodore Hoppen suggest in his novel *The Mid-Victorian Generation* - chapter Living and Spending, Victorian women were mostly at home doing chores. This aspect is seen mainly in the novel *The Mill on the Floss*, as Mrs. Tulliver is very devoted woman and does almost all the housework by herself.⁸⁷ As far as the *Pride and Prejudice* goes, the Bennet family has got a maid and therefore, there is no further need for the ladies to take care of the whole household. On the other hand, women were mostly occupied by other important things which may also be considered to be chores. Women were sewing, making things or reading a lot.

As mentioned above, women in Victorian Britain were educated mainly through so called accomplishments. An example how these women were perceived may be a discussion between Elizabeth, Miss Bingley and Mr. Darcy:

‘[...] A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved.’⁸⁸

As the fundamental aspect of the domestic novel suggests, women are the crucial symbol of the domestic novel as such. They are mostly perceived as the ‘angels in the house’ and they are not likely to leave their home, take care of the household and in future, they should stay at home with kids. Sometimes women characters search for love and happiness but mostly, their husbands are about to be chosen by their parents. The issue of marriage is

⁸⁶ Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 151.

⁸⁷ Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*. 316

⁸⁸ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 29.

therefore quite important. Marriage happened in all three chosen novels but for different reasons. Considering all the reasons for marriage, the novel *Pride and Prejudice* seems to be based on the need for marriage. The novel starts with the sentence “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.”⁸⁹ All stereotypes such as different aspects of marriage, different social classes, social climbing and women staying home can be seen and found in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*. As the novel suggests, to remain alone was not proper for young ladies. Unmarried women were often considered to be without a future, without money and without life in general. That is why the aspects of marriage are strongly commented on and shown as well. In some cases it shows that for the female character to get married was the only way not to remain alone and without anybody to talk to. It is obvious that marriage was the only thing they could do to find some kind of “love” and life. Marriage was seen as the perfect, right and necessary thing to do.

Right at the beginning of the novel, Mrs. Bennet explains the incredible importance of Mr. Bingley who came to stay at the Netherfield Park. She assumes that every man of a fortune should have a wife. She immediately starts making plans to get married one of her daughters to Mr. Bingley, not paying much attention to which one. In order to reach her goals she starts making plans to do that. She sees Mr. Bingley as an image of a wealthy, prosperous life and she express her hopes he might marry one of her daughters by saying to her husband Mr. Bennet:

‘Is he married or single?’

‘Oh! single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!’

‘How so? how can it affect them?’

‘My dear Mr. Bennet,’ replied his wife, ‘how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them.’⁹⁰

Not only is it of a great importance to marry well, but that the decision surrounding a suitable husband should be (or at least was) made by the parents. The aspect of the female characters having no chance to tell whether they want or do not want to get married or would like or would not like to marry this particular man is perfectly expressed in this situation. Parents taking care of the future of their children and finding husbands was typical at that time. It had everything to do with the established values. Young ladies should just behave

⁸⁹ Ibid., 1.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

properly, smile when appropriate, dress well and the parents would take care of everything else.

The perfect example might be Lady Catherine de Bourgh who wants Mr. Darcy to marry her daughter. Lady Catherine de Bourgh might represent the voice of the society – by criticising Elizabeth and her lower social status (belonging to the middle class) she wants to reach her goal and that is the marriage of Mr. Darcy and her daughter.

The character of Elizabeth might be seen as the opposite of those established values of marriage. She refuses two possible proposals of marriage which other female characters would accept and, of course, which her mother, Mrs. Bennet would like her to accept. She is described as independent and intelligent and also expected to get married one day - as the other women. In terms of marriage proposals, she will not marry only for money. An example may be when she refuses to marry Mr. Collins. By doing that, she breaks one of the rules of the domestic novel. Refusing marriage was not an ordinary thing to do. Women were waiting for somebody to marry them for a long time.

‘I [Elizabeth] do assure you [Mr. Collins], Sir, that I have no pretension whatever to that kind of elegance which consists in tormenting a respectable man. I would rather be paid the compliment of being believed sincere. I thank you again and again for the honour you have done me in your proposals, but to accept them is absolutely impossible. My feelings in every respect forbid it. Can I speak plainer? Do not consider me now as an elegant female intending to plague you, but as a rational creature speaking the truth from the heart.’⁹¹

According to the values and social standards Elizabeth was not a good girl with good manners, she should have simply said yes to get praised from her mother and from her father but she refused the marriage proposal. Elizabeth’s friend Charlotte Lucas accepted the proposal from Mr. Collins despite Elizabeth’s disagreement. This shows another aspect of marriage. Charlotte Lucas does not have any other possibility to get married in the future, she is older than Elizabeth, she was not given much beauty, she does not have any property and she does not want to reach the status in the society of being an old maid. She defends her decision by arguing that she absolutely needs husband. She spoke about her future husband as the best possibility than she ever hoped for. The part of her dialogue with Elizabeth:

⁹¹ Ibid., 83.

‘I [Charlotte] see what you [Elizabeth] are feeling,’ replied Charlotte, - ‘you must be surprised, very much surprised, - so lately as Mr. Collins was wishing to marry you. But when you have had time to think it all over, I hope you will be satisfied with what I have done. I am not romantic you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins’s character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state.’⁹²

When Mr. Darcy proposed to Elizabeth for the first time, Elizabeth just learnt that he saved one of his friends from an imperfect marriage, she immediately assumed that his friend is Mr. Bingley and that poor marriage might be the marriage to Jane (her sister). She refused him in a very cruel and angry way. Again, she should have said yes to his proposal because that is what was expected from young ladies of a lower social status. Mr. Darcy’s proposal: “‘In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you.’”⁹³

For men, marriage might be also seen as a convenience. An example might be Mr. Wickham who wanted to marry Miss King who just inherited a lot of money. Another example is his marriage to Lydia. At first they ran away together, which might have been considered as a scandal for the whole Bennet family, because if they would not marry each other it would really destroy the name of the Bennet family. Then they got married only under the condition that the Bennet family would promise a small income. Later on it is revealed is that Mr. Darcy found the couple and paid for the wedding. At this point the importance of what other people might think is perfectly shown. If they had not get married, it would have destroyed the name of the Bennet family.

Mr. Bingley will finally propose to marry Jane. He confesses that his sisters were trying to keep him in London. They were trying to make him not marry Jane because of her small fortune and no property. The intrigue and gossiping of his sisters almost made him believe that marrying a lady of a lower social status would hurt him or will not be a convenient marriage for him. At this stage the class differences are perfectly shown – with respect to the lower social status and the possible marriage with somebody from the upper class.

Jane Eyre is a nice example of a women character who is independent and makes her own money. She is different and unusual, as it was not common at all for a young lady to wonder on her own. She is educated, considered to be an aristocrat as she comes from an

⁹² Ibid., 96.

⁹³ Ibid.,145.

upper-class family. Another aspect is found in the novel, similar to those found in the novel *Pride and Prejudice* – so called cross-class marriage – for a lady from the lower-class family, to fall in love with a man from the upper class. This, as mentioned above, is quite typical for the domestic novel characters. On the one hand, at the point of Jane's manners (being the manners and behaviour of aristocrat because she is educated and came from upper-class family) she is equal to Mr. Rochester, but on the other hand, at the point of the social scale, she is not.

Novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre* share one aspect together and that is the refusal of the marriage proposal. Jane, as well as Elizabeth gets the marriage proposal but refuses for her own personal reasons.

Jane assumes that Mr. Rochester is going to marry Blanche (one of the guests). As she assumes, Mr. Rochester is going to marry her because of her beauty and social position and Blanche is going to marry him because of his wealth. Another aspect of marriage, as one of the aspects of domestic novel, is perfectly shown at this point. Those two people are perfect for each other because of their social position, so it is considered as the suitable marriage by the society. Later on, Mr. Rochester and Jane sit on a bench and talk a lot, in the meanwhile, Jane confesses her love to Mr. Rochester and is surprise, when he asks her to marry him and she accepts his offer.

‘You Jane. I must have you for my own – entirely my own. Will you be mine? Say yes, quickly.’ [...]

‘Are you in earnest? – Do you truly love me? Do you sincerely wish me to be your wife?’

‘I do; and if an oath is necessary to satisfy you, I swear it.’

‘Then, sir, I will marry you.’⁹⁴

Later on, Jane decides that she wants to feel more equal to Mr. Rochester. In order to do that, she decides to write a letter to accept the inheritance from her uncle. It would make her more valuable and comfortable with the situation to feel more equal to her future husband.

In the novel *The Mill on the Floss*, the aspect of marriage is usually introduced in what other people think or may be thinking in the particular situation. When Maggie goes out with other man alone, it is considered to be a social disaster and it is a great problem. Other people

⁹⁴ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 255.

judge her and she is the centre of all gossip for a long time. Example of Tom disapproval of Maggie's relationship with Philip:

Tom and Maggie walked on in silence for some yards. He was still holding her wrist tightly, as if he were compelling a culprit from the scene of action. At last Maggie, with a violent snatch, drew her hand away, and her pent-up, long-gathered irritation burst into utterance.

Mrs. Tulliver's role in marriage is the perfect example how women were seen in their marriage.

Mrs. Tulliver, as we have seen, was not without influence over her husband. No woman is; she can always incline him to do either what she wishes, or the reverse; and on the composite impulses that were threatening to hurry Mr Tulliver into 'law,' Mrs Tulliver's monotonous pleading had doubtless its share of force; it might even be comparable to that [...]"⁹⁵

When Mr. Tulliver is sick, Mrs. Tulliver is distressed, wandering around the house with no particular purpose. This aspect of a woman being at home is another important aspect of the domestic novel. She has nothing else to do except being at home and take care of the house. Maggie becomes attached to her mother.

Maggie has decided to leave to work as a governess and to spend some time alone. By this time, an aspect of the governess novel is introduced. A female character who wants to be alone for some time and take care only for herself.

3.1.2 SOCIETY

For all three novels, the importance of neighbourhood and social interaction with others is quite crucial. Being in touch with others is one of the main reasons and purposes of getting married. Social values are being perfectly shown in the terms of what other people might be thinking, getting together, showing up at the ball and showing the best of yourself.

Furthermore, the importance of social interaction may not always be seen positively, sometimes it can also develop, create and involve some characteristics of main characters. As basic characteristics of the domestic novel suggest, characters are often affected by other people, more importantly by gossips and lies.

⁹⁵ George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, 148.

As mentioned above, women were educated through so called ‘accomplishments’ and one part of them and of doing everything possible to find a husband is also going on the ball, being introduced to the society and so on. In the novel *Pride and Prejudice* - going to the ball, dancing and showing up in the prettiest dress is one of the opportunities for people to meet with others and converse. Being admired or condemned, both of these possibilities were convenient because both of them suggested that people were talking about others and spreading rumours. The main attention was given to marriages that were about to happen. But attention was also given to the young ladies who were not married yet. It was all about what others thought and what others said about each other behind their back.

The ladies of Longbourn soon waited on those of Netherfield. The visit was returned in due form. Miss Bennet’s pleasing manners grew on the good will of Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley; and though the mother was found to be intolerable and the younger sisters not worth speaking to, a wish of being better acquainted with them, was expressed towards the two eldest.⁹⁶

In connection with the established social values, social classes and interaction with others, we might see Mr. Charles Bingley’s sister – Miss Bingley as, on one hand, a rival of Elizabeth but on the other hand as the right opportunity for Mr. Darcy to get married. She feels threatened by Elizabeth despite Elizabeth’s behaviour, but she does not make any attempts to impress Mr. Darcy. Not only is Miss Bingley fascinated by him and she also knows about his fascination with Elizabeth, but she wants him only for herself. In this case the social differences are perfectly shown. Miss Bingley might be considered as the right match for Mr. Darcy to get married to.

Lady Catherine wants to speak with Elizabeth about a ridiculous rumour about Mr. Darcy planning to marry Elizabeth. Lady Catherine assumes that it is ridiculous because Mr. Darcy and Lady Catherine’s daughter are engaged since their childhood. Lady Catherine leaves angry and frustrated because Elizabeth defends her family and tells her that she is in no possible way engaged to Mr. Darcy. Later on, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy get engaged. At this point it is shown how parents not only can but do control their children’s future, their marriage and future life. Marriage at this point has been planned since the childhood of little children when they could not make any decision whether they would like to get married or not.

⁹⁶ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 14.

‘[...] that you, that Miss Elizabeth Bennet, would, in all likelihood, be soon afterwards united to my nephew, my own nephew, Mr. Darcy. Though I know it must be a scandalous falsehood; though I would not injure him so much to suppose the truth of it possible, I instantly resolved on setting off for this place, that I might make my sentiments known to you.’⁹⁷

In *The Mill on the Floss*, a lot is said about other people, but a lot of mentions are also about what others think about the main characters. It is clear that a lot is shaped by the society and its established values. On the other hand, what was controversial may not be any more or is not for other people (mainly the main characters). Social life may not seem to be that important in the novel *The Mill on the Floss*, but it is very crucial. Furthermore, it can also develop, create and involve some characteristics of main characters. As basic characteristics of the domestic novel suggest, characters are often affected by other people, more importantly by gossips and lies. When Mrs. Tulliver sisters are about to arrive, all family is looking forward to meeting them. They are considered to be a well-known and important family.

The hate between Mr. Tulliver and Lawyer Wakem is crucial to the plot, this is because Maggie is secretly meeting Lawyer Wakem’s son Philip. Thus this conflict is important of creating some tension in St. Ogg’s society. Maggie’s affection for Philip is strong. They cannot show their relationship, because his father brought her father into bankruptcy. But by the end, Philip is doing his best to resolve the situation.

[...] ‘I [Philip Wakem] don’t care about the mill,’ he said at last, with a sort of angry compliance, ‘I’ve had an infernal deal of bother lately about the mill. Let them pay me for my improvements, that’s all. But there’s one thing you [his father] needn’t ask me. I shall have no direct transactions with you Tulliver. If you like to swallow him, for his sister’s sake, you may; but I’ve no sauce that will make him go down.’⁹⁸

At this point, an important struggle is shown. On one hand, Maggie feels love for Philip, but on the other hand she feels a moral obligation for her family. Tom finds out about her relationship with Philip and makes her swear on the Bible not to see Philip again. Later on another important struggle is shown, as Philip is from another place from the social scale. He is a son of a lawyer and Maggie is a daughter of a miller. As mentioned above, in the domestic novel, the struggle of a social class is often introduced. Philip explains to his father that he wants to help Tom to buy the Mill and he confesses his love for Maggie. His father complains that she is of a lower social status and that she is not one of the best matches.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 270.

⁹⁸ George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, 396.

When Maggie returns from a trip with Stephen, she returns unmarried. Stephen asked Maggie to marry him and she refused. At this point she is judged. However, Stephen is not judged at all, the attitude of society towards single woman is nicely interpreted in this case.

‘I cannot marry you: I cannot take a good for myself that has been wrung out of their misery. It is not the force that ought to rule us – this that we feel for each other; it would rend me away from all that my past life has made dear and holy to me.’
[...] How can you go back without marrying me? You don’t know what will be said, dearest. You see nothing as it really is.’⁹⁹

3.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE VICTORIAN DOMESTIC NOVEL

All three novels show aspects of domesticity as such but in different contexts and situations. Novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Mill on the Floss* show the domestic characters in the domestic environments, characters have often a lot of conversations, they spend time together, they talk, they have dinner or lunch together, they listen to each other, they plan together and also they stand by each other as a family. The novel *Jane Eyre* also shows aspects of the domestic novel but in different situations. The main character Jane is mostly searching for her home and for some place to belong. The descriptions of family events are often those when she is not the part of the family yet but a servant. These descriptions are crucial because although she is not the part of the family it gives her life purpose.

The novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre* share the similar aspect of domesticity which is mainly described in families sharing time together, while the novel *Jane Eyre* shows a character who is a woman rebel and undergoes several obstacles in her search for love and family. As *Pride and Prejudice* is the novel published as the first one from the three chosen novels, the idea of woman is kept strictly as the woman who is at home, taking care of household, not leaving her home unless necessary, ladies often get married to chosen husbands by their parents and all these issues are discussed and gossiped about. Although the woman may travel or does some travelling, it is usually to introduce the lady to the society or to visit somebody. When the character is away from her family, it may also be to be introduced to different society circles or to find a husband. On the other hand, the novel *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847, as the second novel from the three chosen novels for this analysis. The main character Jane is searching for her home. She is a woman rebel who travels on her own and makes money on her own. This was not usual for a lady in the

⁹⁹ Ibid., 443.

Victorian Britain. By this development in the novel, the huge transition from what was common and what was unusual may be found. Moreover, in the third novel chosen for this analysis is *The Mill on the Floss*, which main character Maggie is also kind of a woman rebel, as she often follows her own desires often without the approval of her own family. She also decides to become a governess to find some independence and travel outside her own family for a while.

From the perspective of the women, the huge transition may be seen. At first, the woman is considered to be the 'angel of the house', never leaving her house, searching for love or letting her parents taking care of such matters. Men were usually those who took care of the money, who travelled sometimes even long distances to support their families and women were those who stayed home and did housework. As the time evolves, some transition of these stereotypes may be seen. The character of Jane wonders on her own and searches for her identity, for the sense of belonging. She is not dependent on anybody and she takes care of herself. The step from the woman being considered the 'angel in the house' and for example the governess who takes care of herself is rather big. For the society which has strict rules and is conducted by following traditions and cultural stereotypes, this character may be considered forbidden and evil. This is, in fact how most of the governess ladies were perceived by the society, as an outcast who is here to destroy the established values. As it was a male-dominated society, women were dependent on men or to somebody to take care of them, if they did not make money on their own.

As far as the marriage conventions go, it may be said that the stereotypes and issues evolved through time. The woman rebel Elizabeth refuses two marriage proposals because of her own personal beliefs and understandings of the world. Her sister Jane may be seen as the romantic and love-devoted character who is a total opposite of Elizabeth. She is the perfect example of a woman character who desperately wants to fall in love and be happy in her life. Kitty is, unlike Jane, willing to do anything to get married. She is even willing to put a disaster on her own family just to find herself a husband.

To summarize, the analysis shows that the idea of the Victorian domestic ideal can be changed and interpreted in another ways. The lady, who was perceived as the 'angel in the house' is changing through time. Women are still associated with house and the domestic sphere, but in other ways. Women are freer and they may decide on their own. Women also do not have to spend all days and nights home and they may leave their house and go and see the world. Some of them may work or travel to see their relatives. The step from the classic

Victorian middle class woman who is only associated with the ideal of the home is the one of women getting more freedom.

CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this bachelor thesis is to define the term domestic novel, to show its primary and the most important aspects and also to analyse chosen novels and find how the genre is evolved through time.

For the analysis the following novels were selected: *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, *The Mill on the Floss* by George Eliot and *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. The main aim of this thesis is to analyse how the genre domestic novel is developed across the chosen novels published in the 19th century Britain.

The analysis shows that authors of chosen novels focus primary on one, particularly a woman character who is then the protagonist and is given the most of the space. Woman is considered to be ‘the angel in the house’ and is therefore one of the main aspects of the domestic novel. Women were those who stayed at home and took care of the household, children, domestic affairs and themselves. Another crucial feature of the domestic novel is ‘home’ or ‘house’ itself. As women were those who stayed at home, these two aspects correspond with one another. As the Victorian Britain was mostly male-dominated society, people often claimed that it was not common for a lady to have a job and to work on their own. Every woman should find a husband or somebody to live with. But for those who did not have anybody to share a house or a household with, they had to work and make their own money.

When the woman left her home and went away, it was usually for some other reason. Balls, introductions (to the society), visits of the family members were activities quite popular in Victorian Britain. For other ladies was typical to work in another peoples’ house. An example is Jane Eyre who is a governess. Although some women perceived this idea as completely flawless and ordinary, it was not typical according to the society and established social values. A woman who would wonder on her own around cities, having no home or no family and making money on her own was seen as an outcast and people often judged her for that. An ideal woman was the one who stayed at home with kids and domestic affairs.

Women characters are usually somehow different from their peers. They have to undergo several obstacles in their search for love and the sense of belonging. The characters are often described as clever, witty, intelligent, wise and strong. They spend a lot of time at home, where they feel secure and they consider themselves to belong there. Jane Eyre is searching for her home, as it is considered to be the safest place, her life is fulfilled at the end of the novel, where she finally finds her home, the sense of belonging and love.

Women were not at all in charge of choosing whether they liked or do not liked the man they were supposed to marry. Both Elizabeth and Jane refused (not once) the marriage proposal, therefore they are considered to be the women rebels because they would break conventions and established social values. Unfortunately, not all couples who fell in love got married in the end. Sometimes there is some higher power which has something to do with the end of the relationship. Somebody from the upper-class position (as in the case of Catherine de Bourgh) or parents may be those to blame. Jane, on the other hand, gets married for love as she had wished and hoped for a long time. This wish as a part of the much bigger wish – to find home and a sense of belonging. Which she finally fulfils. After the wedding, Jane is considered to be a housekeeper who cannot abandon her children, which demonstrates another aspect of domesticity. Marriage became a compulsory vocation for Jane. And that is the most important change Jane made through all her actions.

Some genres may go hand in hand with the genre of domestic novel. Some novels may show also other aspects of sub-genres. One particular novel does not have to be interpreted as strictly only one type of the novel. An example may be the novel *Jane Eyre*. Although *Jane Eyre* represents strong aspects of the governess novel as well as the gothic novel, it is strongly considered to be the domestic novel because of the home-bound plot.

Another important feature is the close relationship between Maggie and Tom. As suggested previously in the paper, this issue nicely supports the aspect of a domestic novel. Siblings are still a family and one of the most important aspects of the domestic novel is family being together. Although their relationship is so close, they both together struggle through the whole novel in order to find some balance, to forgive each other for their mistakes (mostly, Tom needs to forgive Maggie for her accidental errors). But all in all, they manage to get on well with each other and they both show a great need to be with each other and to stand by each other. As their promise from their childhood suggests, they want to be with each other forever. Their bond is so strong that they are able to overlook all their faults and they love each other.

The development of the Victorian domestic novel in the chosen novels is interpreted mostly in terms of how woman's position changed across time. At first, women would be considered to be those at home, not going anywhere and take care of the house. Later on, the situation and the established social values are changing just a little bit. Women do not stay at home all the time, they can leave for a visit, and they can come to live somewhere else for some time. Moreover, in Jane's or Maggie's case, they could leave and make their own money. Although such woman may be seen as an outcast, these women still managed to take

care of themselves. The typical middle-class Victorian woman was dependent on her husband, stayed at home and took care of the household. This idea did not changed but evolved in some ways. Women still perceived their home as the ideal one, they thought about it in a way that they still have some place to come back to.

RESUMÉ

Centrem zájmu této bakalářské práce je románová tvorba autorek Jane Austenové, George Eliotové a Charlotte Brontëové. Konkrétně jejich romány *Pýcha a Předsudek*, *Mlýn na Řece Floss* a *Jana Eyrová*. Cílem práce je analýza vybraných děl a jak je v nich vyobrazena tematika domácího románu se speciálním záměrem na vývoj žánru.

První kapitola se soustředí zejména na definici, kdo jsou ženy Viktoriánské doby a jaké bylo jejich postavení v kontrastu s muži. Dále tato kapitola hovoří o tom, že rodinný život dominoval Viktoriánské době. Co se týče rozdílů mezi pohlavími, muži a ženy si ve Viktoriánské době nebyli rovni, především proto že jen malé množství žen mělo nějakou práci, byla to především povinnost mužů, finančně zabezpečit rodinu. Dále je zde popsáno, že muži a ženy se v mnohých případech setkávali pouze na snídani a poté na večeři.

V prvé řadě je podaná definice Viktoriánské ženy v kontextu „anděl v domácnosti“, což znamená, že místo ženy je především doma. Viktoriánská ideologie sama o sobě zobrazuje ženy jako tak zvané „anděle v domácnosti“. Ženy byly v mnohých případech samy doma, kde se staraly o chod domácnosti a o své zaměstnance. Vysvětleno je zde také, že ženy o sobě v mnohých případech tvrdily, že jsou doma a že nikdy nikam nejdou a z domu nevychází.

V další podkapitole je vysvětleno, jak důležitou roli hrálo manželství v roli Viktoriánských žen střední a vyšší třídy. To aby se ženy vdaly, byl považováno za tu nejdůležitější věc, kterou ženy mohly udělat. Dále je zde vysvětleno, jak byly ženy vzdělávány, ženy musely velice dobře ovládat francouzský jazyk, kresbu, malbu, zpěv a tanec. Pouze s těmito všemi vlastnostmi by mohly být považovány za vzdělané a jako vhodné kandidátky na vdávání. Do jejich dalších každodenních aktivit patřilo vaření, praní, výroba oblečení a jejich barvení, sešívání a pletení.

Dále je vysvětleno, že pro ženu bylo obvykle její rozhodnutí, co se budoucího partnera týče to nejdůležitější, protože rozhodlo o jejím budoucím postavení v životě a ve společnosti, ale ne vždy měla právo toto rozhodnutí udělat ona. Dále se také stávalo, že muž, po kterém ona žena toužila, byl mimo jejich třídu, tedy mimo jejich sociální postavení. Kapitola dále zmiňuje, že pro velkou většinu žen bylo manželství vítaným východiskem ze soužití s jejich rodiči. Většina žen to brala jako jednu jedinou možnost jak odejít od rodičů. Manželství jako takové bylo jediným cílem, který měla většina Viktoriánských žen.

Další kapitola se zabývá románem rodinného života. Je zde vysvětleno, že román rodinného života byl populární především v Britské literatuře, a sice v devatenáctém století.

Mezi hlavní autory, kteří psali románovou tvorbu domácího románu byli například Maria Edgeworthová, Jane Austenová, Charlotte Brontëová, Anne Brontëová, Elizabeth Gaskellová and George Eliotová. V této kapitole je dále zmíněno, že romány které psala Maria Edgeworthová byly ty, které idealizovaly román rodinného života jako první, ale Jane Austenová byla autorkou románu rodinného života a přišla s tímto žánrem. V této kapitole jsou dále zmíněna fakta týkající se žen jako autorek a žen jako čtenářek nejen románu rodinného života. Protože měli Viktoriánské ženy střední třídy více volného času, obvykle tento čas trávily čtením, nebo v mnohých případech i psaním románů. Ženy se ve svém psaném projevu uchýlily tak, aby jejich čtenářky byly opět ženy. Psaly o manželství, o lásce a o každodenním životě.

Další podkapitola se zabývá viktoriánským románem, který byl typický tím, že se zabýval především našim každodenním děním. Co bylo typické pro viktoriánský román je dále zmíněno v této podkapitole, romány jako například: dětské romány, koloniální romány, historické romány, ilustrované romány, aj.. V této podkapitole se také nabízí pár slov o tom, že na stejné rovině jako román rodinného života se objevují i další románové rysy, jako například gotický román či vychovatelský román (governess novel). Vychovatelský román vypovídá o ženě, která je zaměstnaná, obvykle u bohaté rodiny doma, kde vychovává jejich dítě/děti a také je vyučuje. Gotický román vykazuje rysy tajemná, strachu a samoty.

Další podkapitola se zabývá románem rodinného života jako takového. V kapitole je zmíněno, že román rodinného života vykazuje silné aspekty idealizace rodinného života jako takového, kde důležitou roli hraje žena, která je obvykle hlavní postavou a dominuje tak celému románu. Ženy jsou obvykle popsány jako ženy v domácnosti, které nemohou opustit své děti. Podkapitola pokračuje zněním, že dalším velice důležitým jevem a rysem románu rodinného života je láska, s čímž úzce souvisí sňatek, který byl obvykle viděn jako jediná šance pro ženy střední třídy, jak dosáhnout štěstí v životě, jak se zamilovat a najít lásku a smysl života. Obvykle se ale stávalo, že manželé byli ženám vybíráni jejich rodiči. Co bylo ale nedílnou součástí každého uzavřeného manželství bylo to, že velká většina z nich byla uzavřená mezi dvěma lidmi, ale každý z nich patřil do jiné sociální třídy. Žena byla obvykle ta, co patřila do té nižší a brala si muže z vyšší třídy. Dále se v této kapitole objevuje i pár slov o tom, že román rodinného života může být někde dokonce odkazován jako román mravů/obyčejů, sociální román, náboženský román, apod.

Další kapitola je analýza a interpretace románu Pýcha a předsudek, Jane Eyrová a Mlýn na řece Floss. Kapitola začíná zněním, že znaky, které nejpřesněji definují román rodinného života, jsou rodinná soudržnost a pospolitost. Všechny tři romány vybrané pro

analýzu vykazují známky typické pro román rodinného života, ale některé mohou být nalezeny v jiném slova smyslu a v jiných situacích. Rodinná pospolitost a ideál rodinného života je v mnohých příkladech idealizován skrze rodinné příslušníky, kteří spolu tráví hodně času. Obvykle jsou tyto známky popsány skrze konverzace jednotlivých členů rodiny a v méně případech skrze autorův popis děje.

První podkapitola se zabývá tím, jak je znak rodinné pospolitosti odrážen ve vybraných dílech. Co se týká románu Jane Austenové – *Pýcha a předsudek*, tento aspekt je obvykle zobrazen skrze rodinné události, kdy rodina tráví společný čas, plánuje, diskutuje a argumentuje. Dále román *Mlýn na řece Floss* také poukazuje na známky rodinné pospolitosti ve stejném smyslu jako *Pýcha a předsudek*. I tento román vykazuje interpretace jako rodinná pospolitost, diskutování, obědvání, večeření a tak podobně. V posledním vybraném románu pro tuto analýzu je Jana Eyrová. V tomto díle se mnohem častěji objevuje touha po domově a po pocitu, že někam patří. Na začátku románu jsou popsány spíše negativní jevy, kdy Janiny příbuzní Janu šikanují a chovají se k ní nemile. V tomto románu jsou dále vyobrazeny znaky gotického a vychovatelského románu.

V další podkapitole je analyzováno, jak vybrané romány odráží znaky rodinného románu, avšak z pohledu trávení času se sourozenci. Romány *Pýcha a předsudek* a *Mlýn na řece Floss* odrážejí perfektní znaky z pohledu sourozenců a jejich společného času, kdežto román Jana Eyrová tyto známky nevykazuje, protože se jedná o jedináčka.

Další z podkapitol pojednává o roli a o významu manželství v životě ženy. Viktoriánská žena mohla čelit mnohým překážkám v cestě za jejím štěstím, co se výběru manžela týče. Žena obvykle neměla mužům co nabídnout, krom věna. A ne každá Viktoriánská žena střední třídy měla věno. Muž, kterého žena chtěla, byl obvykle z vyšší třídy a tak bylo pro ženu obtížné až výzvou takového muže získat. Takové manželství bylo obvykle skrze třídy, ale nejčastěji vylepšil postavení ženy, ne muže. Ženy se obvykle vzdělávaly, aby se staly vhodnými kandidátkami na případné budoucí uzavření manželství. V těchto kapitolách analýza odhalila, že postavy románů jsou ženské postavy, které jsou nějakým způsobem rebelové jejich doby. Ženy obvykle nesouhlasí se způsobem, jakým společnost funguje či rozhoduje o určitých věcech a v určitých případech se chovají v rozporu s již zažitými normami, které společnost považuje za striktní. Příkladem může být postava Elizabeth z románu *Pýcha a předsudek*. Elizabeth odmítne celkem dvě nabídky k sňatku, které by pro ni mohly být východiskem, aby dosáhla svého cíle jako postavy ženy a sice role manželky a případně také matky. Tyto dvě manželství Elizabeth odmítla z důvodu pro ni osobním. Nebylo zvykem, aby si žena diktovala manželství a už vůbec, aby odmítla nabídku

k sňatku. Tuto zkušenost mají všechny tři hlavní hrdinky ve vybraných románech. Také postava Jane Eyre odmítne nabídku k sňatku, stejně jako postava Maggie z románu Mlýn na řece Floss. Maggie odmítne nabídku k sňatku z důvodu, že její srdce patří jinému. Manželství je tedy vyobrazováno jako jediné možné východisko a životní cíl. Jane Eyre je ale důkazem, že žena se může postarat i sama o sebe a být nezávislá na mužích, což velká většina žen střední třídy Viktoriánské doby byla.

Závěrečná podkapitola nabízí vysvětlení, jak sociální život a společnost sama o sobě ovlivňovala životy Viktoriánských žen střední třídy. Postavení ženy ve společnosti bylo určováno jejím narozením, avšak spousta žen se přivdala do třídy vyšší.

Komunikace s ostatními byla jedním z dalších důležitých atributů románu rodinného života protože právě společnost mohla určit pro ženu případný sňatek. Jak byla žena chápána, akceptováno či neakceptováno ostatními členy společnosti mohlo jak pozitivně tak i negativně ovlivnit budoucnost ženy. Mezi nejčastější aktivity, jak se ženy snažily oslovit muže byly plesy, uvítání do společnosti, zanechávání karet nebo dvoření.

Závěrečná kapitola popisuje, jak se žánr vyvíjel časem ve vybraných dílech pro analýzu. Všechny tři romány obsahují znaky románu rodinného života, ale samozřejmě se mohou, ale nemusí lišit. Určité vývoje jsou zřejmé, v porovnání hlavních postav, Elizabeth, která je konvenční už jen svým diplomatickým odmítnutím nabídky k sňatku, Jana, která se stane vychovatelkou a osamostatní se a poruší tak zásady, které představovala její doba, jako že žena má být závislá na muži a nechat ho o sebe pečovat, Maggie, která neposlouchá své rodiče a i přes jejich zákaz a nesouhlas se stýká s mužem, který pro její rodinu představuje konec, nakonec stráví noc a odjede s mužem, aniž by byla za něho vdaná nebo plánovala svatbu s ním a poté se také stane vychovatelkou a na nějaký čas opustí svou rodinu.

Postava Jany se hlavně zabývá tím, že hledá svůj domov, její touha po domově je velice silná, protože je sirotek. Vychovatelky (governesses) byly ve většině případů vnímány společností ne velice dobře, většinou jako ženy, které nějakým způsobem společnost ohrožovaly a byly hrozbou již zavedeným zvyklostem a mravům. Vychovatelky byly ženy soběstačné a to se společnosti nelíbilo, protože žena by měla být doma a nechat o sebe pečovat mužem, protože ženy byly závislé na mužích, nebo to byl alespoň ideál představován společností.

Z pozice ženy či dívky, velký vývoj je zřejmý. Na počátku byla žena spatřovaná jak „anděl v domácnosti“, nikdy neodcházela z domu, pokud to tedy nebylo skutečně nezbytné, muži byli obvykle ti, kteří vydělávali peníze a finančně zabezpečovali rodinu.

Ačkoliv vývoj naznačuje, že se pozice ženy mění a že již netráví tolik času doma, nebo není vnímána jako „anděl v domácnosti“, žena stále vnímá domov jako útočiště a jako perfektní místo, místo, kde se cítí dobře a vždy se na toto místo vrací. Ačkoliv žena domov může opustit, pro aspekt rodinného románu je nejdůležitější to, že se domů žena vždy vrátí. Obecně řečeno, ženy měly více volnosti a nemuseli trávit celé dny doma.

Poslední kapitolou je závěr, který sumarizuje celou práci. Poukazuje na to, že analýza odhalila, že autoři vybraných děl se soustředí vždy primárně na jednu postavu, která je hlavní postavou a je jí dán největší prostor v románu. Tato postava je ženské postavy a idealizuje představení ženy jako „anděl v domácnosti“. Ženy byly tedy ty, které zůstávaly doma. Tato závěrečná kapitola poukazuje na to, že hrdinky románů byly vždy nějakým způsobem odlišné od svých vrstevníků. Byly to ženy rebelky, nějakým způsobem nectily již zaběhlé tradice a konvence společnosti.

Celá kapitola končí vysvětlením, že jak již bylo zmíněno výše, pozice Viktoriánské ženy střední třídy se ve vybraných románech změnila především z pozice toho, jak byla žena interpretována jako žena, která tráví čas doma a nikdy nikam nechodí. Tento aspekt se mění časem a žena již není pouze doma, ale může odjet za příbuzenstvem, stát se vychovatelkou, odcestovat. Žena se také stává více svobodnou a není vázaná na muže tak moc jako dřív.

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