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Women and Silence: Elizabeth Bennet and Eliza Doolittle as the changing ideals  
of women

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## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

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### Zásady pro vypracování:

Bakalářská práce se věnuje rozdílnému pojetí ženských postav v románu Pýcha a předsudek Jane Austenové a v divadelní hře Pygmalion G. B. Shawa. Vzhledem k tomu, že obě díla dělí zhruba celé 19. století, je tato práce zároveň i analýzou vývoje společenských norem aplikovaných na ženy a rozdílného chápání ženských ideálů a ambicí dané doby. Práce bude obsahovat kulturně-historickou charakteristiku obou období tj. počátku 19. a počátku 20. století. Bude zde kladen důraz na měnící se postavení ženy s ohledem na její sociální příslušnost a také celkovou ekonomickou a společenskou situaci. Analýza obou ženských postav a jejich vzájemné srovnání budou vycházet z kulturně-historického kontextu.

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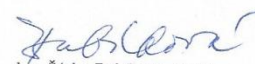
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## **ANNOTATION**

The bachelor thesis focuses on the comparison of two main female characters of literary works “Pride and Prejudice” by Jane Austen and “Pygmalion” by George Bernard Shaw. The theoretical part consists of four chapters. Two of them describe the historical and cultural context from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain. This context is presented in connection to the lives of both authors. Subsequent chapters then contain the descriptions of each character – Elizabeth Bennet and Eliza Doolittle. The practical part examines the differences between the characters and the eras which they represented. It also considers the writers’ intentions behind their creation. The conclusion proves the changing ideals of women represented by the two characters in question.

## **KEYWORDS**

Jane Austen, 19th century, Elizabeth Bennet, G. B. Shaw, 20th century, Eliza Doolittle

## **NÁZEV**

Ženy a ticho: Elizabeth Bennetová a Eliza Doolittleová jako měnící se ženské ideály

## **ANOTACE**

Bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na porovnání dvou hlavních ženských postav literárních děl „Pýcha a předsudek“ od Jane Austenové a „Pygmalion“ od George Bernarda Shawa. Teoretická část se skládá ze čtyř kapitol. Dvě z nich popisují historický a kulturní kontext Británie od konce 18. to začátku 20. století. Tento kontext je představen v souvislosti s životy obou autorů. Navazující kapitoly obsahují popis obou postav – Elizabeth Bennetové a Lízy Doolittleové. Praktická část zkoumá rozdíly mezi postavami a obdobími, které představují. Též bere v úvahu spisovatelovi a spisovatelčiny záměry vzniku postavy. Závěr dokazuje měnící se ideály žen, které jsou symbolizovány zmíněnými postavami.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

Jane Austenová, 19. století, Elizabeth Bennetová, G. B. Shaw, 20. století, Líza Doolittleová

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## INTRODUCTION

The novel 'Pride and Prejudice' and the play 'Pygmalion' are both popular and prominent works of British literature even in the modern-day era. Their main female characters – Elizabeth Bennet and Eliza Doolittle, are to this day depicted as fierce and bold women with their own sense of mind, and oftentimes even as feminist icons. The aim of this thesis is to present and compare the social and historical context surrounding the creation and life of both characters and to apply the gained knowledge to the characters' behaviour and choices. Since both characters were written roughly one hundred years apart, it is supposed that there will be a natural progression of their portrayals of women characters in general. Elizabeth Bennet represents the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, whilst Liza Doolittle represents the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The task is to see if the characters' behaviour aligns with the general attitude towards females and if there is any progression between the way they are depicted.

The cultural and historical aspects of both eras are represented in connection to the lives of both writers and the presented information is always relevant to the characters or the story in question. This was an intentional choice for both characters were possibly influenced not only by the times they lived in but also by their writers' lives and beliefs. In Jane Austen's case, the influence on her character stems from a romanticized version of her own life in which she provides an introspective look at the British society and uses Elizabeth as an extension of herself and what she experiences or wishes to experience. In Pygmalion, George Bernard Shaw draws inspiration from his own love of phonetics and the problematics connected with the division of social classes. Although Eliza is likewise a female character, Shaw often uses her more as a vessel for his own political propaganda and through her identifies various problems of British society at the time. The cultural aspects of Britain's history always focus on the parts which relate to the characters and topics included within the works.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Two chapters contain biographical information related to the lives of the two writers in question, and the related historical and cultural context. The biography of each writer is mentioned solely for the purpose of accurate description of the stated period of time and is used only with information which relates to the characters and stories or which could be related. Jane Austen is used as a study of a woman in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. The focus of G. B. Shaw's chapter lays mostly in his ideology and contemporary politics. The historical and cultural context often includes mentions of the position of women, the political

situation and related problematics. Each author's chapter is followed by a chapter about their respective character. The characters are introduced and presented with regards to their life choices and characteristics, as well as their surrounding environment. Their stories are explained as well and some of the other important characters, which are relevant to the research, are mentioned and examined.

The last chapter represents the practical part of the thesis. It considers the information which was previously stated in the theoretical part and applies it to connect the characters with their writer's intentions and the context of the eras. The characters are compared in their various distinctions in personalities, the time they represented and the intentions of their writers. The conclusion states the differences and similarities which can be found between them and consequently identifies the progression female characters went through during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The author of the thesis wishes to state that she does not agree with Shaw's political beliefs yet finds the connection to his work fascinating to research.

# 1 JANE AUSTEN'S LIFE AND THE CULTURAL ASPECTS OF 19TH CENTURY BRITAIN

The first chapter is dedicated to Jane Austen's biography and the historical and cultural aspects which surrounded her life. The reasoning behind the choice to include this information is that some parts of the author's life are crucial to the way she wrote her characters and stories. In this chapter, she also represents a case study of a woman living in Britain at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although to truly intertwine Austen's life with historical references can be quite challenging as Austen herself never truly paid attention to the main historical events of her time and focused primarily on the life in the country – drawing inspiration from her own life and from what she was familiar with. Hence why, this chapter focuses mostly on the problematics related to the lives of women living in the English countryside and Austen herself, and less so on the political and military issues of the era. Another reason for the concentration on Austen's personality is to later draw comparisons between her and the character in question – Elizabeth Bennet.

The time frame is given by Jane Austen's birth and the official publishing of the respective book. Austen was born in the year 1775. Thornley et al. claims that she started writing the novel in question in the year 1796.<sup>1</sup> The book was originally called "First Impressions" and was published as "Pride and Prejudice" on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January in 1813. Thus, why this chapter examines the cultural and historical aspects of the life of British society – primarily women, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This period was the age of multiple changes – from wars to revolutions. The Anglo-French colonial wars, which ended before Austen was even born – in 1763, helped the growth of the British empire. This growth resulted in the first phases of industrialization and later in The Industrial revolution. The aforementioned wars then concluded in the Napoleonic Wars at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which lasted 12 years. Yet Austen rarely mentions such events in her writing. Stříbrný claims that the writer was able to recognise her strong and weak sides in writing and thrived when focusing on topics which were familiar to her.<sup>2</sup> This could be one of the reasons why her work was so heavily focused on the problems of gentry. Still, the fact that

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<sup>1</sup> G. C. Thornley, Gwyneth Roberts, *An Outline of English Literature* 2nd ed (Essex: Longman Group Ltd, 1984), 115.

<sup>2</sup> Zdeněk Stříbrný, *Dějiny anglické literatury* (Praha: Academia, 1987), 489.

she did not or about conflicts and dilemmas surrounding her is startling especially considering two of her brothers both served in the Royal Navy during the time of the Napoleonic wars, as claimed by Briggs,<sup>3</sup> and one of her relatives was even executed by guillotine, as is mentioned in a letter Frederick Harrison wrote to Thomas Hardy.<sup>4</sup> Given this information, her life was most probably affected by the terrors of war. For this reason, Harrison calls Austen a ‘cold-hearted critic’<sup>5</sup> who satirizes and uses her own life heavily yet never mentions the atrocities which were happening around her.

Although her work is undoubtedly connected to the life of the British in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and is very much a product of her time, her books focus primarily on the life of the British gentry and on the troubles connected with the lives of young women. G. C. Thornley et al. acknowledges this sentiment and claims that the life of her novels is more introspective than general<sup>6</sup> - the reasoning for that again being her possible lack of awareness and obvious lack of attention paid to war conflict and its impact on the British citizens. Oliveriusová et al. agrees with this statement and also points out that Austen overlooks not only some of the central issues of the time but also other social classes.<sup>7</sup> She rather chooses to highlight the importance of family life and familiarity of her own experiences to political propaganda or to making heavyweight statements about the state of her country at the time. This might be because, as Prescott states, the lives of the Bennet family during the years of the conflict were „generally comfortable.“<sup>8</sup> Thus, her life was affected only partially and so she did not feel the need to write about unrelated issues.

According to Briggs most land in the countryside at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century belonged to families which were to pass it onto their descendants, and all the decisions made about the land’s ownership were a serious matter of family issues.<sup>9</sup> To own a land properly was possible exclusively for men, hence why problems usually arose for families with female descendants only. The Austen family did not have to deal with a similar situation since Jane was the second

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<sup>3</sup> Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement 1783-1867* (New York: Longman Group UK Limited, 1979), 167.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Miles, *Jane Austen* (Horndon: Northcote House in association with the British Council, 2003), 143.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> G. C. Thornley, Gwyneth Roberts, *An Outline of English Literature*, 2nd ed. (Essex: Longman Group Ltd., 1984), 115.

<sup>7</sup> Eva Oliveriusová, Josef Grmela, Martin Hilský, and Jiří Marek, *Dějiny anglické literatury* (Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1988), 109.

<sup>8</sup> Lindsay Prescott, "Voices in Britain during the Napoleonic Wars: Jane Austen." *Jane Austen Studies Center* no. 1 (2009): 2.

<https://commons.pacificu.edu/jasc/1>

<sup>9</sup> Briggs, *The Age of Improvement*, 9.

eldest out of eight siblings – and, according to Robert Miles, six of them were brothers.<sup>10</sup> The families of children of female gender were in such situations forced to focus on finding favourable suitors for their daughters and marrying them off.

All seven of Austen's novels mainly revolve around marriage and rightly so, as marriage was a central part of life during this period. Unfortunately, it was often disadvantageous to women as it did not give them much freedom. That is described in Sir William Blackstone's 1765 Commentaries on the Laws of England: "By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being, or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband..."<sup>11</sup> Yet marriage settlements were progressively gaining more popularity during the time and were sought after by women whose main goals varied – some were searching for love, others for financial security. The first half of the century saw an increase in England's population and decrease of ages in married couples. Evans states that they were "27,5 years for men and 26,2 years for women".<sup>12</sup> Marriages were ruled by social status and some were completely arranged by the parents without the bride-to-be meeting her future spouse. Lower class women had more opportunities to marry out of love, however women who came from a wealthier background were usually restrained in their possible choices by their parents, who were mostly interested in gaining or attaining their property. Evans states that couples married for reasons both "strategic and emotional"<sup>13</sup> and also mentions the trust they usually had in the related advice of their friends and family.

Jane Austen never got married and although it was quite extraordinary at the time for common folk, Clark claims that "about a third of a group of eighty-seven better-known English women authors born before 1800 remained single".<sup>14</sup> Being single was generally frowned upon and Evans even states that unmarried women were labelled as "deviants".<sup>15</sup> Jane's letters to her close sister Cassandra give the clear idea of her romantic advances. One that she did not mind was of Thomas Langlois Lefroy, whom Austen called „very gentlemanlike, good-looking, pleasant young man“, and „a friend“. Their first encounter was at a ball – an interesting parallel

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Miles, *Jane Austen* (Horndon: Northcote House in association with the British Council, 2003), 7.

<sup>11</sup> Tanya Evans, "Women, marriage and the family," in *Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850*, ed. Hannah Barker, Elaine Chalus (London: Routledge, 2005), 58.

<sup>12</sup> Evans, "Women, marriage and the family," 59.

<sup>13</sup> Evans, "Women, marriage and the family," 62.

<sup>14</sup> Linda L. Clark, *Women and achievement in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 47.

<sup>15</sup> Evans, "Women, marriage and the family," 57.

to Elizabeth's first meeting of her future husband Mr Darcy. Yet Austen's romances were not as successful as those of her characters. A marriage between her and Lefroy never occurred, for it would be financially impractical (as previously mentioned, a common practice at the time). Austen encountered another proposal at the age of twenty-seven, when a wealthy gentleman Harris Bigg-Wither proposed. She accepted but changed her mind the next morning. Although Austen never married and died a spinster, the emphasis of courtship and marriage in her novels demonstrates the impact that these experiences had on her. Her writing is the proof of the great interest in getting married properly, which was common for young women at the time.

Before and after marriage women's lives revolved predominantly around their families – their position changing from daughters, to wives and then to mothers. Married women took care of their household and obeyed their husbands, whilst the head of the families provided them with financial security. Through marriage women and their possessions were supposed to become their husbands' property. Thus, struggles in marriage usually concerned the control in the relationship. In the lower classes these conflicts sometimes even developed into domestic violence towards disobedient women. Yet, the laws of the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century demanded the equal treatment of married women and violence was seen as “unmanly.”<sup>16</sup> Still, most couples were striving to achieve a harmonious relationship. Divorces were very rare since women would not be able to take care of themselves without the financial support of their husbands. Later, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were middle-class women starting to criticize marriage. This conviction was brought by the political changes of the time (such as the anti-slavery movement), which helped women realise the small amount of dominance in their own relationships. To conclude, the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century bared many issues for married women but also created a base for later interventions and social changes. Many marriages at the time thrived and most women did not have any issues with their marital situation, no matter how suppressing it may had been.

Related to the domestic lives of women is the increase of comfort and luxurious items that were beginning to be more present in their homes. Berry sees this period as the rise of consumerism as women were acquiring needs for new utility and decorative items, these needs consequently created a demand.<sup>17</sup> This was caused by the Industrial revolution which started approximately during the 1750s and continued till the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this period production

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<sup>16</sup> Evans, “Women, marriage and the family,” 65.

<sup>17</sup> Helen Berry, “Women, consumption and taste,” in *Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850*, ed. Hannah Barker, Elaine Chalus (London: Routledge, 2005), 194-195.

shifted to factories and the households were from 1750s onwards gradually exchanging self-sufficiency for buying and consuming. This was also caused by the opportunity for easier transportation to the city markets and new trends which aimed to target female customers (such as kitchen utensils or new literature). This time saw great increase of comfort and families took great pride in living amongst luxurious or trendy items. Women enjoyed buying new furnishings for their houses and often passed them onto their daughters. Although up until the Married Women's Property Act of 1882 as mentioned by Berry,<sup>18</sup> they could not purchase nor sell anything themselves – again relying heavily on their husbands.

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<sup>18</sup> Helen Berry, "Women, consumption and taste," 195.

## 2 ELIZABETH BENNET

Elizabeth Bennet is the main character of the popular novel *Pride and Prejudice* and she belongs to Austen's most beloved and well-known characters. Like other Austen's heroines she possesses an inner freedom and sense of individuality which cannot be repressed by others.<sup>19</sup> Although an uneducated reader might not even recognise her as the main character in the first chapters of the novel as Austen rarely mentions her and focuses more on the surrounding community. This is an important choice for without the community in Hertfordshire, Mrs. Bennet and the almost obligatory search for a proper husband, Elizabeth would not be able to be presented the way she was. Mrs. Bennet represents a comic character who does have good intentions with her daughters – to help them become a part of financially advantageous marriages.

There are not many mentions of Jane Austen's mother, which is curious as the main role of a woman at the time was supposed to be that of a good mother. However, Jane herself quite obviously preferred her own sister. That might be the reason why many of her characters' mothers are described as not overly motherly and almost irrational at times – Austen could very well provide her readers another look into her life through her work.

The beginning chapters of *Pride and Prejudice* see the arrival of Mr. Bingley and the commotion it creates in the Bennet family, whilst Elizabeth keeps relatively calm. Many might see Elizabeth as an individualist, Deresiewicz argues with this sentiment: “in crucial ways she is not free and very little of an individualist, ways in which her story must be seen, not as an exercise of freedom, but as an effort to achieve freedom.”<sup>20</sup> Seeing Elizabeth as a person who is striving to profile herself throughout the story and continuously growing. This is surely one of the reasons Thornley et al. describe Austen's characters as: “first-class literary creations”.<sup>21</sup> As the author depicts them including their positive and negative aspects, but also detaches herself from the story enough to let the reader create his own opinion. *Pride and Prejudice* critiques the past social state and paints a portrait of a better life.

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<sup>19</sup> Harold Bloom, *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Jane Austen* (New York: Infobase publishing, 2009), 15, [https://zodml.org/sites/default/files/%5BHarold\\_Bloom%5D\\_Jane\\_Austen\\_%28Bloom%27s\\_Modern\\_Critical\\_V](https://zodml.org/sites/default/files/%5BHarold_Bloom%5D_Jane_Austen_%28Bloom%27s_Modern_Critical_Views%29.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> William Deresiewicz, “Community and Cognition in ‘Pride and Prejudice,’” *The Johns Hopkins University Press* 64, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 504.

<sup>21</sup> G. C. Thornley, Gwyneth Roberts, *An Outline of English Literature* 2nd ed (Essex: Longman Group Ltd., 1984), 116.



The readers meet Elizabeth as the second eldest out of five sisters, living in an estate in Hertfordshire. Most of the story revolves around the Bennet family and romantic relationships that they wish to engage in. Elizabeth's mother - Mrs. Bennet, relishes in the prospect of marriage for her six daughters. She herself says in the novel: "If I can but see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield, and all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for."<sup>22</sup> Her main objective does not lie in her daughters' happiness but the social status and security they would gain from the bond of marriage. She pesters her daughters and tries to control them, lacking motherly love and caring attitude. This is one of the reasons why Elizabeth is closer to her father, Mr. Bennet, with whom she shares similar humour. He is often sarcastic and lax, prefers to spend time in quiet and fails in most of his social duties. Elizabeth is his favourite daughter, which he states himself when mentioning her "quickness"<sup>23</sup> which makes her different from her sisters, which are "silly and ignorant."<sup>24</sup> The sisterhood in the family is not very tightknit, which could be caused by their dissimilar interests, personalities and attitudes. Elizabeth has a very loving and supportive relationship with her sister Jane. The inspiration behind their deep-rooted friendship could have come from the connection Austen had with her own sister Cassandra who was her favourite and closest family member. This is known because of their often-exchanged letters, which were later printed in a book called "Jane Austen's Letters"<sup>25</sup>.

Jane is undeniably Elizabeth's favourite sister and their bond is quite special. The main reason would be their shared similar attitudes towards life and marriage. They confide in each other and always wish the best for each other. This can be seen in Elizabeth's decision to visit sick Jane at the Bingley estate on foot to see if she is getting better. A certainly helping part is Jane's graciousness which is mentioned in the novel on multiple occasions. Their shared outlook on marriage is the exact opposite to their mother's as the two Bennet girls wish to marry only out of love and mutual respect. Not succumbing to the societal norms of the time. Both sisters also have a different outlook on life than Elizabeth's best friend Charlotte. Charlotte chooses to marry Mr. Collins whose marriage proposal had previously been declined by Elizabeth because she did not want to compromise her feelings – her choice being a proof of level-headedness and strong personal values. Her choice angers Mrs. Bennet as Elizabeth's acceptance would help the family in keeping their estate which would be passed onto Mr. Collins after Mr. Bennet's

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<sup>22</sup> Jane Austen. *Pride and Prejudice* (London: Macmillan Collector's Library, 2016), 19.

<sup>23</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Jane Austen, Deidre Le Faye, *Jane Austens Letters*, rev. ed. (Corby: Oxford University Press, 2011.)

death. Charlotte also acts according to her own personal values which are less romantic and more sensible as she realises that such offer might be the only chance for marriage she will ever get.

Once looking at Elizabeth's immediate family, there are not many kindred spirits left. The third oldest sister Mary is generally disliked for being plain-looking and although she is studious, she lacks taste in social situations. The two youngest sisters - Kitty and Lydia, are enamoured with the idea of finding a husband and both can be selfish and ignorant at times. Lydia's unfortunate choice to run away with Mr. Wickham proves how little she cares about others and how she is not able of critical evaluation of her situation. Although her choice might be affected by her young age and the marriage-wanting society around her, she is still described as "self-willed and careless".<sup>26</sup> Kitty plays the second fiddle to Lydia in the first half of the novel, characterized as: "weak-spirited, irritable, and completely under Lydia's guidance".<sup>27</sup> She does change for the better once her sister gets married and she is away from her influence.

Elizabeth is almost like a breath of fresh air between characters with many flaws and negative traits as she is presented as an all-around positive and intelligent character. She is described as having: "lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous."<sup>28</sup> Yet the ridiculousness of her younger sisters and mother often embarrasses her. She is also described as having "a liveliness of mind" by Darcy<sup>29</sup>. She is altogether well-liked by others, her appearance defined as less good-looking than her sister Jane. She is the most intelligent of the Bennet girls, relishes in reading books and is known for her quick wit. She also possesses a strong sense of self and of her values. That is presented during various moments throughout the book. Most extremely in the refusal of marriage proposals. The environment around Elizabeth is full of women who are anxious to get married to any possible admirer, yet she has not got a problem with refusing even financially prosperous relationships. This proves her integrity, one which many other characters in the book lack. The readers can see Elizabeth's moral unreliability once she speaks to Wickham and learns about Darcy's past. Poovey states that the problem does not lie in Elizabeth's listening to a young and handsome man but more so in the way she uses the new learnt information to emphasize her prejudice against Mr. Darcy.<sup>30</sup> A

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<sup>26</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 271.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 472.

<sup>30</sup> Mary Poovey, "Ideological Contradictions and the Consolations of Form: The Case of Jane Austen," in Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Jane Austen ((New York: Infobase publishing, 2009), 44.

prejudice which was created once he called her “tolerable” at the Netherfield ball. Although her playful character did not take offense at this remark, her further reaction after the conversation with Mr. Wickham proves that she did hold negative feelings toward Mr. Darcy. These feelings were then probably reinforced by the hearsays around her. Elizabeth has prejudice against Darcy because of defamation caused by Mr. Wickham, and her pride is offended by Darcy’s ignorance of her. Darcy is also prejudiced in a sense; his prejudice is related less to Elizabeth’s actions and more to the idea that a girl who does not come from nobility must automatically be uninteresting and boring. Both characters must compromise their initial feelings to be together. They both learn their lessons and let the other shape their own personality and view of the world. According to Poovey, Darcy learns that the opinion of an individual is more important than the difference between social classes and Elizabeth recognizes the power of society.<sup>31</sup>

The relationships in the novel are all connected – as each character has relations to the others whether it be through acquaintance or kinship. This causes many possible social outings but also gives space to rumours and gossip. This does not concern Elizabeth too much as she often does not participate in such conversations and at times ignores them. She is not afraid to completely omit set expectations. One example could be her visiting her sick sister at the Netherfield Park by taking a three-mile-long walk.<sup>32</sup> This truly was unheard of at the time as women were usually declined the opportunity to travel by themselves. Austen even mentions that Elizabeth expected the contempt that was awaiting her for this decision yet decided to go fulfil the promise she has given to herself and appears at the estate in a dirty dress and a hairstyle which was ruined by the wind. At this point, she does not behave as a proper lady and acts upon the wishes of her heart. The moment she appears at the doorstep of the estate with blushed cheeks is a crucial point during which Mr. Darcy’s fondness starts to grow.

It cannot be said that Elizabeth makes all of her decisions on her own. This can be seen when she stands her ground in a conversation with Lady Catherine de Burgh: “I am only resolved to act in that manner, which will, in my own opinion, constitute my happiness, without reference to you, or to any person so wholly unconnected with me.”<sup>33</sup> Emsley sees this as a crucial moment for the character, stating that although Elizabeth makes her own decision her statement

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<sup>31</sup> Poovey, “Ideological Contradictions, 50,

<sup>32</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 49.

<sup>33</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 445.

proves that she also takes into account opinions of people who are close to her and thus valuing the community which surrounds her.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Sarah Emsley, *Jane Austen's Philosophy of the Virtues* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1, <https://epdf.tips/jane-austens-philosophy-of-the-virtues.html>

### 3 GEORGE BERNARD SHAW'S LIFE AND THE CULTURAL ASPECTS OF 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BRITAIN

George Bernard Shaw used his writing for different purposes than Jane Austen. Though he is often considered to be a philosopher, Stříbrný sees Shaw first and foremost as “a temperamental artist.”<sup>35</sup> He was a critical realist and before he became a playwright, he had been a reviewer of drama and art. This criticism then transferred to his dramas. Many of Shaw’s plays take pleasure in dealing with socialistic politics such as poverty, capitalism or women’s rights. Shaw’s main playwriting influence, according to G. E. Brown, was a Norwegian playwright Henry Ibsen.<sup>36</sup> The similarities lay in their complementary expressions of intellectual ideas, purposes and fight against accepted views, although Shaw used theatre differently. Brown states that Shaw began writing theatre plays once he understood that drama gave him the possibility to propagate his own beliefs to more people.<sup>37</sup> His beliefs laid in strong political opinions as Shaw was first and foremost a socialist and a speaker for the Fabian Society. He himself defined socialism as: “equal rights and opportunities for all” in the year 1890.<sup>38</sup> He chose theatre for the purposes of educating and enlightening people. He also often took part in political discussions and debates, discussing questions concerning social problems. Since politics was a topic which blends and unifies Shaw’s life and the literary work in question, this chapter is mostly focused on that part of Britain’s history.

Shaw was born in Dublin in 1856 and died in England in 1950 and, according to Brown, he penned *Pygmalion* between the years 1912 and 1913.<sup>39</sup> That is the reason why this chapter focuses roughly at the 19<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to show the possible surrounding influences. Starting in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Britain became the strongest world power during the reign of Queen Victoria. This included the greatest colonial expansion (especially in Africa), commercial and industrial power (as Britain was nicknamed ‘the workshop of the world’). It is then when the division between rich and poor became very apparent. Many people were able to acquire a higher living standard and were provided with wealth which they hadn’t previously possessed and had new job positions such as factory owners or managers. Whilst economists argued that private businesses are essential for working

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<sup>35</sup> Stříbrný, *Dějiny anglické literatury*, 582.

<sup>36</sup> Brown, *George Bernard Shaw*, 19.

<sup>37</sup> G. E. Brown, *George Bernard Shaw* (New York: Arco Publishing Company, Inc., 1971), 19.

<sup>38</sup> Lynda Mugglestone, “Shaw, Subjective Inequality, and the Social Meanings of Language in *Pygmalion*,” *The Review of English Studies* 44, No. 175 (August 1993): 377.

<sup>39</sup> Brown, *George Bernard Shaw*, 22.

economy, this system completely overlooked the lower class, caused unemployment to many and exploited some of the workers – often even women and children. Vesely states the contrasts in society as such: „There was wealth and poverty, construction of impressive palaces and slums, conservatism and reform, religious prejudice and scientific progress.“<sup>40</sup>

The death of queen Victoria in 1901 changed the landscape of British society. Shortly after that, Britain was facing issues connected to trade rivalry. The early industrialization caused Britain to not modernize its machines and was soon unable to compete with other countries, which caused Britain's power to lessen. The economic changes were followed by changes in politics and society – creating the working class which was often exploited. Due to the rising discontentment of the workers, the long period of the reign of Conservative government had ended, and the Labour Party created in 1900 was growing. The issues of the working class were also connected to the fact that upper classes formed only a few percent of the British population and yet owned most private properties. The Labour movement was also popular because the lower classes saw an opportunity to fight the growing unemployment and improve the workers' general discontentment with their low wages and terrible work conditions. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain quickly lost its leading position in the world due to not investing into industry innovation which led to the loss of competitiveness with other countries. As stated by Derry and Jarman, the Labour party was firmly established by 1914 with over forty supporters in the House of Commons.<sup>41</sup>

For these reasons the socialists believed that modern industry should be put into the hands of State, so that everyone would be profiting from it. The Communist Manifesto published by Karl Marx in the 19<sup>th</sup> century focused on the never-ending struggle between the lower and upper classes. This led to the birth of the Fabian Society in the year 1884. Shaw's inclination to socialism started once he read the aforementioned Karl Marx's writings in the year 1882. He became an active member of the Fabian society two years later and went on to become one of the biggest propagandists of the movement. The members of the Fabian society believed, according to Derry and Jarman, in the “policy of permeation”<sup>42</sup> – meaning they wanted to educate public opinion and execute their political ideas by gradual reforms. Capitalism was

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<sup>40</sup> Karel Vesely, *The English Speaking Countries* (Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1983), 27.

<sup>41</sup> Derry et al., *The Making of Modern Britain*, 284

<sup>42</sup> Derry et al., *The Making of Modern Britain*, 214.

their enemy, as they believed it created a damaged society. Stříbrný adds that they avoided direct conflicts and prepared to overcome capitalism through the parliament.<sup>43</sup>

According to Derry and Jarman, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century saw more possibilities for women to figure in public affairs.<sup>44</sup> This might have been because the head of the country was the trendsetting and highly thought of Queen Victoria, because of Florence Nightingales' band of nurses who showed that women were able to work outside of home, or the outcome of popularity gaining suffrage movement. The first half of the century there was demand for women and children to work in textile factories, cotton-spinning mills or even collieries. In the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women gained the right to vote in municipal and country council elections. Working class women were usually employed in industries whilst middle class women were able to become shop assistants. Their wages were relatively small but gave them a chance to become more independent. Relocating the job away from one's household resulted in a more private life. As time went on they had the possibility to form their own trade unions and call for better wages and conditions as they often dealt with long working hours. The Factory Act of 1844 guaranteed only a ten-hour working day for women. Education for women was also possible, the University of London gave degrees to women in 1878, according to Veselý.<sup>45</sup>

The term "the new woman" was coined, which was related to female resistance to traditional norms and active participation in the world outside of one's household. These days the term could be expressed as feminism. Although women were still economically and politically subordinate to men, they started to enjoy life outside of domestic duties, which included having a job, political ventures and cultural experiences. Shaw was aware of the problems which women faced and incorporated them into his work. He proved the understanding of independency in his own letter to his wife Charlotte Payne-Townshend written two years before their marriage. Citing: "Don't fall in love: be your own, not mine or anyone else's. From the moment that you can't do without me, you're lost."<sup>46</sup> Charlotte was Shaw's equal in marriage - a member of Fabian society, political activist and women's rights supporter.

The dramatists at the beginning of the twentieth-century showed similar general tendencies and beliefs, although they do not belong in a certain group. Thornley et al. describes these tendencies as a realistic display of the lives of ordinary people that often contains social and

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<sup>43</sup> Zdeněk Stříbrný, *Dějiny anglické literatury* (Praha: Academia, 1987), 581.

<sup>44</sup> Derry et al., *The Making of Modern Britain*, 201.

<sup>45</sup> Karel Veselý, *The English Speaking Countries*, 29.

<sup>46</sup> George Bernard Shaw, "Letter to Charlotte Payne-Townshend," in *The Portable Bernard Shaw*, ed. Stanley Weintraub (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 117.

political criticism.<sup>47</sup> Stříbrný defines it as a “social discussion comedy”<sup>48</sup>. Shaw managed to create a new form of drama which Stříbrný states is: “intellectually challenging, satirically aggressive, ridiculing the present prevailing sentimental comedies.”<sup>49</sup> Citing the influence of similar types of conversations which can be found in the work of sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Shaw’s play *Pygmalion*, contains a great deal of the aforementioned social criticism as he uses literature and characters as a means to convey a politically charged message. As stated by Brown, some of Shaw’s works critique society which: “Can condemn its poorer members to a life of drudgery and insecurity while they remain in health and can send them to the workhouse when they become sick and old.”<sup>50</sup> Which is partially the topic of *Pygmalion* as well. Although some of the serious messages can be easily forgotten or neglected, thanks to their humorous attitude. Shaw shows his empathetic feelings towards the common people and in *Pygmalion* he demonstrates the absurdity of correct pronunciation and speech being attributed to people from specific social circles. The problem of speech and distinctive accents is dealt with in *Pygmalion* and described by Shaw at the beginning of

The main issue Shaw deals with in *Pygmalion* is the problem of speech and the differences between accents considered to be higher and lower class instead of taking into account the moral qualities of the person in question. Shaw’s perspective on the issue is very clearly stated by himself in the preface of his play: “It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman despise him.”<sup>51</sup> Shaw stated the lack of respect The English have for their language and the hate that is sparked between the speakers of different accents which segregate the British according to their correlative class. His reason for making Higgins the male hero of his play is because he felt that society needed such a phonetic enthusiast, thus he states in the preface of the play.<sup>52</sup> Some of professor Higgins’ opinions regarding language could then be Shaw’s own. His overall interest in language and phonetics lead him to a post-hum funding of a competition which was to create a new phonetic alphabet, as he found using Latin alphabet for the English language to be draining. According to Omniglot.com, Kingsley Read devised the Shavian alphabet, in the year 1958.<sup>53</sup> This proves Shaw’s great interest in the inner workings of the language’s spoken and written forms, and his effort to simplify it.

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<sup>47</sup> Thornley et al., *An Outline of English Literature*, 165.

<sup>48</sup> Stříbrný, *Dějiny anglické literatury*, 581.

<sup>49</sup> Stříbrný, *Dějiny anglické literatury*, 582.

<sup>50</sup> G. E. Brown, *George Bernard Shaw* (New York: Arco Publishing Company, Inc., 1971), 25.

<sup>51</sup> George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion* (Moscow: Higher School Publishing House, 1972), 5.

<sup>52</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 5.

<sup>53</sup> “Shavian Alphabet,” Omniglot, accessed March 17, 2019, <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/shavian.htm>.



## 4 ELIZA DOOLITTLE

Eliza Doolittle is the protagonist of Shaw's play *Pygmalion*. The name of the play is based on a story from Greek mythology about a narcissistic sculptor who falls in love with a statue he carved. Aphrodite, the Goddess of love, pities him and fulfils his wish to give the statue life.<sup>54</sup> The parallels between the story and G. B. Shaw's book are clear. In the drama, professor Higgins transforms a proletarian flower girl to a dignified lady. Thus, giving life to his statue. Eliza undergoes a prominent change throughout the play, starting off as a lower-class flower girl with vulgar vocabulary and cockney accent (which shows her low origin), to a woman who is effortlessly passed off as a duchess at a garden party full of highly regarded people.

The reader is first introduced to Eliza Doolittle in *Pygmalion*'s first act. The audience does not know her name yet, as she is simply named as "the flower girl" and described by Shaw as "not at all a romantic figure."<sup>55</sup> She is around twenty years old, selling flowers on the street with unwashed hair and dirty clothes. Her cockney accent may seem unintelligible to some readers and is flawlessly perfected by Shaw's writing:

„THE FLOWER GIRL. Ow, eez ye-ooa san, is e? Wal, fewd fdan y' de-ooty bawmz a mather should, eed now bettern to spawl a pore gel's flahrzn than ran awy atbaht pyin. Will ye-oo py me f'them? [Here, with apologies, this desperate attempt to represent her dialect without a phonetic alphabet must be abandoned as unintelligible outside London.]“<sup>56</sup>

Shaw often uses Eliza for comedic purposes which can be undeniably seen in the previous citation. Another comedic aspect which Shaw often works with are Eliza's emotions - her courage to raise her voice in a public setting, howl, or to make ill-conceived remarks such as: „You ought to be stuffed with nails, you ought.“<sup>57</sup> Her tone of voice is often desperate and hysterical and her behaviour can often resemble a petulant child more than the lady she later becomes. Through her, Shaw entertains the audience with a description of how alienated lower-class members of society might feel. He also uses Eliza as a representative of two subordinate groups – a working-class citizen and a woman.

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<sup>54</sup> Weng Rongqian, Li Haiyan, "Eliza's Awakening in *Pygmalion*," *Higher Education of Social Science* 11, no. 3 (2016): 45–46.

<sup>55</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 12.

<sup>56</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 12.

<sup>57</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 32.

Professor Higgins despises Eliza and sees her as beneath contempt, the only reasoning for this is her incapability to speak properly. Higgins even states: “A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere—no right to live.”<sup>58</sup> and describing the sounds she produces as a „crooning of a bilious pigeon.”<sup>59</sup> Stříbrný defines Higgins as a typical Shavian intellectual who is too focused on his own field and who only recognizes two types of women – the mother and the housekeeper.<sup>60</sup> Eliza is none of those things which puts Higgins into an uncomfortable position which he is not used to. Eliza seeks professor Higgins to get educated in linguistics and to learn how to act as an upper-class citizen. Her reasoning is motivated by finances as she wants to become a lady in a flower shop and stop selling flowers at the side of the street. A bet is made between Higgins and Colonel Pickering about Eliza’s transformation. Higgins wins the bet in case Eliza is passed off as a lady at an ambassador’s garden party. The story then follows with Eliza’s studying the English language and manners.

While the audience might enjoy Eliza’s profanities and exclamations in the beginning of the story, there are also visible insecurities underlaying her boisterous attitude which come to light with such proclamations like: “Whood marry me?”<sup>61</sup> and “I couldn’t sleep here missus. It’s too good for the likes of me.”<sup>62</sup> There are redeemable qualities about Eliza, for instance her strive for improvement of her position in society which is connected to acquiring a better job, which also makes her to be an outright positively perceived character. Although uneducated, she does have a sense of morality within her, as she never takes part in criminal behaviour and even proclaims as often as she can, that she is a good girl.

According to Haiyan and Rongqian, Eliza’s character goes through many awakenings in the story.<sup>63</sup> All of them are connected to her relations with professor Higgins, whether it be from her position of a student, or as a woman. Her awakening starts with appearance – in her enjoyment of wearing finer clothes and taking a bath, which is a dreadful task at the beginning. Other awakenings follow in terms of correct use of language and behaviour. When Eliza learns to speak and act like a lady, she gains confidence which later evolves in her independence.

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<sup>58</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 19.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Stříbrný, *Dějiny anglické literatury*, 592.

<sup>61</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 31.

<sup>62</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 35.

<sup>63</sup> Weng Rongqian, Li Haiyan, “Eliza’s Awakening in *Pygmalion*,” *Higher Education of Social Science* 11, no. 3 (2016): 43–47.

The character of professor Higgins' could be described as malicious and snobbish. He despises the lower class and disrespects Eliza on a regular basis. Putzell describes professor Henry Higgins as a character who believes in his moral superiority and the right to elevate the lesser people.<sup>64</sup> That is true, as there is an imbalance in their conversations when compared to those Higgins has with Pickering. Chen adds that the gender inequality between Higgins and Eliza is clear from the very beginning.<sup>65</sup> Higgins continuously mistreats Eliza and sees her more so an object worthy of upgrade that he can later be proud of. Her feelings are never in question and his lack of social skills leads to encounters which leave Eliza screaming or crying. Higgins' behaviour does not change at the end of the novel, even though Eliza behaves and speaks like the lady he wanted her to become. And even then, when they should be equals, Higgins' treatment of Eliza is the same. Stating that he treats everyone equally – a flower girl as a duchess and a duchess as a flower girl.<sup>66</sup> A clear correlation with Shaw's socialistic attitude can be found in the statement. At that moment Eliza realises that no amount of manners, class or perfect speech can change his attitude towards her, or other lower-class citizens. Explaining to Pickering, that it does not matter how she herself behaves but how others treat her. Stating: "I know I can be a lady to you, because you always treat me as a lady, and always will."<sup>67</sup>

Colonel Pickering's behaviour towards Eliza is marginally different as he always treats her with care and consideration. Eliza states his influence on her self-confidence herself by saying: "Your calling me Miss Doolittle that day when I first came to Wimpole Street. That was the beginning of self-respect for me."<sup>68</sup> Although Higgins was more important in Eliza's awakening to becoming a lady, colonel Pickling is the character who provided her with enough confidence and dignity which later grew into Eliza's own independence. Brown compares colonel Pickering's part in the play with sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Watson.<sup>69</sup> As his position represents the thoughts of the audience and provides contrast to Higgins' unstable behaviour. Although he is an expert in his field, it is not always perfectly clear and some of his lines function as a comic relief:

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<sup>64</sup> Sara Moore Putzell, "Another Source for 'Pygmalion': G. B. S. and M. E. Braddon," *The Shaw Review* 22, No. 1 (January 1979): 0.

<sup>65</sup> Chen, "A Perspective to Pygmalion," 0.

<sup>66</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 95.

<sup>67</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 91.

<sup>68</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 91.

<sup>69</sup> Brown, *George Bernard Shaw*, 96.

“MRS. HIGGINS. Colonel Pickering: don't you realize that when Eliza walked into Wimpole Street, something walked in with her?

PICKERING. Her father did. But Henry soon got rid of him.”<sup>70</sup>

The open ending itself does not suggest whether Eliza's marriage to Freddy is just a false vow to anger her professor, or whether she truly feels capable of letting go and starting a life as a different woman. It could be assumed that Eliza's change occurred not only in looks, manners and accent, but also in her priorities. Although subsequently after an actor portraying the role of Higgins in the London play in 1914 Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree suggested that the characters become romantically involved and end up together, Shaw wrote a sequel in which he explains the situation further. In it he claims, that although everyone might assume the heroine of the romance would inevitably marry the hero himself, they are wrong. He further explains the undertones of Eliza's choice to walk away from Higgins by stating: “[Eliza] was not coquetting: she was announcing a well-considered decision.”<sup>71</sup> Which she made because of her young spirit and possibilities as her personality grew enough to be able to live without Higgins' influence, no longer to desired to be taught and scolded. Shaw explains Eliza's choice to marry Freddy in his sequel, asking the reader: “What is Eliza fairly sure to do when she is placed between Freddy and Higgins? Will she look forward to a lifetime of fetching Higgins's slippers or to a lifetime of Freddy fetching hers?”<sup>72</sup> Proving Eliza's clear thinking in the situation thanks to which she is capable of making a choice which is beneficial for her own life. Shaw believes the connection between Higgins and Eliza would result in a catastrophe as he found it to be absolutely incompatible.<sup>73</sup>

Eliza does not have any family members left except for her father Alfred Doolittle. He is a common working-class dustman, and, unlike Eliza, he enjoys being part of the working-class because he does not have to shape his morals according to other people. He enjoys the freedom his class provides him with, yet he wishes to possess more wealth. He appears scarcely in the play, firstly when he wants to save his daughter from Higgins, but once he finds out the gentlemen have money, he turns to negotiating a price he could get for her. He further tries to persuade Higgins to provide him with a sum of money for him as he belongs to the “undeserving

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<sup>70</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 64 – 65.

<sup>71</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 102.

<sup>72</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 105.

<sup>73</sup> Weintraub, Stanley. “Editor's Introduction.” in *The Portable Bernard Shaw*, ed. Stanley Weintraub (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 16–17.

poor.”<sup>74</sup> People, who are poor but have got bad morals and so are undeserving of charity. He does not want to work more because then he would become a part of the middle-class. His role functions as a comic relief as well as a contrast to Eliza whose view on life are the complete opposite as she is strong-willed and not afraid of new challenges.

Eliza’s story shows a progression of a female character who is unafraid to challenge everything she once knew and better herself.

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<sup>74</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 44.

## 5 THE COMPARISON OF THE TWO FEMALE CHARACTERS:

The main female protagonists of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Pygmalion* share more than just their first names. This part of the thesis compares the two characters based on their characteristics, actions, expectations and the stories they represent regarding their historical and cultural heritage. For proper distinction, Elizabeth Bennet will further be referred to as 'Elizabeth' and Eliza Doolittle will be referred to as 'Eliza.'

Jane Austen started writing the novel and the character of Elizabeth Bennet in 1796. George Bernard Shaw started writing the play *Pygmalion* and his character Eliza Doolittle in the year 1912. The two characters are separated by one hundred and sixteen years and the whole 19<sup>th</sup> century. The thesis further uses the two characters to examine the change the society underwent during these years and the possible differences in the perception of women's ideals. The topic of women's rights started rising in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Morris claims that this time saw the creation of organized campaigns which strived for better female education, rights to vote and opportunities work outside of home.<sup>75</sup>

The comparison of the two characters cannot begin properly without clarifying their authors' intentions behind their writing. Lionel Trilling characterizes *Pride and Prejudice* as a novel which shows manners as a "living portrayal of ideals."<sup>76</sup> Austen realistically depicts the life of the British gentry and the, often rather superficial, problems it dealt with. Instead of politics, Austen turns her craft to focus on the problematics surrounding women and, most importantly, on romance and ironic social commentary. Linda L. Clark describes the contents of Jane Austen's novels as the deliverance of serious messages about the dilemmas of middle-class women who did not possess enough economic resources and might not find a suitor to get married to.<sup>77</sup>

The novel revolves around Elizabeth's family and the community that surrounds her. The main themes include marriage, love and wealth. Austen often used her writing to criticise these aspects of society or to poke fun at them. The characterization of Austen's characters is indirect as she portrays them through speech and dialogues rather than immediate description. Střibrný

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<sup>75</sup> Pam Morris, *Literature and Feminism*, trans. Renata Kamenická, Marian Siedloczek. (Brno: Host, 2000), 47.

<sup>76</sup> Miles, *Jane Austen*, 113.

<sup>77</sup> Linda L. Clark, *Women and achievement in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 47.

states that although such characterization would usually be possible for main characters only, Austen managed to utilize it in her portrayal of secondary characters, sometimes creating them into caricatures with her irony and satire.<sup>78</sup> An example of such could be the grotesque behaviour of lady Catherine de Bourgh who tries to take control over the lives of everyone around her. Austen's writing was influenced by realists such as Henry Fielding and Samuel Richardson. Stříbrný states that the theme of pride and prejudice comes from Fanny Burney's Cecilia from the year 1782, which focused on similar topics.<sup>79</sup>

As previously mentioned, the time-period of the novel was anything but peaceful, yet Austen refers to the French Revolution – a major historical event happening during the time of her writing, quite scarcely. It is only mentioned within the book in relation to the officers visiting the town of Meryton. They are quite easily recognized for their red-coloured military uniforms (the so called 'red coats'). The officers are not presented in relation to the issues they might be facing or with the war itself. Austen often does not mention them by names and only presents them as objects of admiration for Elizabeth's younger sisters Kitty and Lydia. By which she downplays the importance of their country-serving-duty and rather focuses on their good looks and social status. It is unknown, whether Austen used them as such out of irony or own inclination. An exception the no-named officers is the character of George Wickham who, according to Syeda, represents some of the possible concerns of the time. Namely the fact that militaria consisted of two types of men – those who had possessed wealth before they joined the military and those who only gained their wealth recently.<sup>80</sup> Wickham's personality seems rather favourable at the beginning but it is later revealed that he is indebted, his morals are damaging and the only reason for his marriage to Lydia was Darcy's decision to pay off his debts. It can be concluded, that the rare insight into militia Austen provides does not paint the officers in good light. The war and the problems connected with the French Revolution are not directly mentioned and the same applies for the issues brought by the Industrial revolution. The historian and educationist Asa Briggs even pokes fun at Austen's writing which omits major events, when he names the writer in relation to the history of England: "Jane Austen could ignore all these hard facts just as she ignored the wars against Napoleon."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Stříbrný, *Dějiny anglické literatury*, 425.

<sup>79</sup> Stříbrný, *Dějiny anglické literatury*, 424.

<sup>80</sup> Seema Syeda, "Jane Austen: a wartime writer?" *Military History*, March 8, 2018, 1.

<sup>81</sup> Briggs, Asa. *The Age of Improvement 1783-1867* (New York: Longman Group UK Limited, 1979), 18.

Austen rather focuses on the regular lives of young women which are often connected with longing for marriage and finding the right partner. As previously mentioned in the theoretical part of the thesis, marriage truly was the ultimate dream of every woman. Although not every marriage was the outcome of love, and sometimes it was not even a question of choice for both participants. Austen's work provides a similar outlook on life (for instance in the marriage of Lydia and Wickham which was paid for and is not wholly fulfilling for either party). Still, the writer also pursues the romantic side of marriage in the coupling of Elizabeth and Darcy or Jane and Bingley through which she shows her vision of love.

The novel was of considerable importance for Austen which is demonstrated in one of her letters to her sister Cassandra in which she shares her excitement about receiving a copy of the book which she calls her "own darling child."<sup>82</sup> The nickname used for her novel shows maternal undertones towards her work. The same letter contains additional affection towards the main character: "I must confess that I think her [Elizabeth Bennett] as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print, and how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like *her* at least, I do not know."<sup>83</sup> Proving her strong connection to the character and hoping in the readers' positive reception.

When comparing Austen's spinster status with Elizabeth Bennet's eventful romantic endeavours and Austen's obvious infatuation with the character and the book itself, it is possible to consider Austen's writing as a way of dealing with the frustrations of her everyday life. Elizabeth might be the representation of a character which gives outer romanticized passage to Austen's inner world. A world which is based on what she knows so well yet cannot live herself and in which her relationship with Thomas Langlois Lefroy ends with a wedding and not with separation. The claim that Austen uses her own life to create fantastical yet realistic versions of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries could be furthered by her previously mentioned lack of acknowledgment of crucial historical events. Because of which the historical account of life at the time is not as accurate as it could be, as Austen's family was affected by war. To conclude, the assumption that Jane Austen lived vicariously through her novels would explain her obvious lack of politicization and omission of possible traumatic experiences which might have been a part of her life. This sentiment is furthered by Charles McGrath's attitude towards the physical attributes of Jane Austen. In his 2007 article he compares Austen's period portraits and tries to

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<sup>82</sup> Jane Austen, Sarah Chauncey Woolsey, *The Letters of Jane Austen* (Boston: Little, Brown, and company, 1908), 182.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/42078/42078-h/42078-h.htm>

<sup>83</sup> Austen et al., *The Letters of Jane Austen*, 182.



figure out whether her writing about mostly attractive characters was an escape from her everyday life and her own looks. One of his points being:

„What if, to put it bluntly, she became a writer in part because she didn't have the looks to land a husband along the lines of a Mr. Darcy or a Mr. Knightley?“<sup>84</sup>

Stating Austen's appearance might not be up to par with the two handsome characters.

The first sentence of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* introduces the reader to the continuously prevailing theme of the novel: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife."<sup>85</sup> Austen uses this to mock the prevailing beliefs of the time. As previously mentioned, this was truly the case during the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the most important roles for women was that of the wife and the mother. Elizabeth challenges this view as she does not want to get married unless it is out of true love. The heroine is given her happy ending at the end of the through a marriage to Mr. Darcy, who will further provide her with financial security and higher social status. Not only that, both characters love each other deeply and so their marital bond should without any issues. A fantasy which many women of the time would presumably like to fulfil as arranged marriages and marriages out of convenience were quite common. Austen herself showed her stance on such practices by stating in one of her letters: "Anything is to be preferred or endured rather than marrying without affection."<sup>86</sup>

Although Austen's favourite, Elizabeth was not a popular character at the time as she was considered to be quite bold and even brash for most readers. Her intelligence and ability to speak her mind proves a certain amount of progressivity. As claimed by Marion Reid, the author *A Plea for Women* published in 1843 regarding schooling: 'Any symptom of independent thought is quickly repressed... the majority of girls are subdued into mere automatons.'<sup>87</sup> When comparing this statement to Elizabeth it is clear that she enjoys educating herself through reading and is interested in new opinions and thoughts. Not only that, she is also not afraid to express these thoughts although it is sometimes not fitting to do so. Thanks to that, she does not succumb to the social norms of womanly expectations. Maletzke claims that women were always supposed to keep their decorum and be graceful and relaxed and to complain loudly or

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<sup>84</sup> Charles McGrath, "Pretty Words, Jane; Would That You Were Too," *The New York Times*, April 1, 2007, 1.

<sup>85</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 11.

<sup>86</sup> Austen et al., *The Letters of Jane Austen*, 279.

<sup>87</sup> Pam Morris, *Literature and Feminism*, trans. Renata Kamenická, Marian Siedloczek, (Brno: Host, 2000), 41.

speak ill of one's situation were bad manners.<sup>88</sup> Such behaviour is exhibited by Bingley's sister Caroline and oftentimes Mrs. Bennet – it is important to note that both women are not perceived as overall positive characters, thus explaining why Austen equipped them with negative and rude attributes. When considering Maletzke's statement, Elizabeth's sister Jane might be a better choice for the ideal woman at the time as she is described as kind, considerate and the most beautiful of the Bennet family. Austen spends a lot of time focusing about Jane's story – after all, it is thanks to Mr. Bingley and his ball that Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth met. The romance between them is double-sided, although Mr. Darcy separates the two lovers before the resolution gives them the opportunity to marry – providing the readers with another happy ending. Many other characters in the book have their own storylines which directly or indirectly affect Elizabeth's life and the plot. Such as Lydia's unexpected elopement with Wickham or the arrival of Mr. Collins and subsequent marriage to Elizabeth's best friend Charlotte.

Although nowadays the most often mentioned focal point of the novel in mainstream media is the romantic relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy (usually occupying a spot in the top ten lists mentioning the most romantic literary couples). This might be because the focus of the modern-day adaptations usually focuses on such. However, the period reviews of the novel show a different approach. Greenfield and Troost mention various reviews made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century which either completely omitted the central pair of Elizabeth and Darcy or they mentioned it only briefly and focused mostly on the secondary characters.<sup>89</sup> This further proves Austen's versatility and ability to create an interesting and entertaining group of characters. The tendencies of choosing secondary characters over the main couple can be demonstrated by Sir Walter Scott's review of the book which focuses mostly on description of the “absurdity” and “folly” of other characters before praising Elizabeth only for her “vivacity”.<sup>90</sup>

Although Elizabeth Bennet displays a sense of self and does not always bend according to the social standards of the time, which has to do with her stubbornness and often mentioned impertinence, her ending is the ultimate fantasy of a 19<sup>th</sup> century woman. By the action of marriage, she gains more wealth, betters her social status and can spend the rest of her life with a man she loves. It could be said that by marrying she succumbed to the social norms of a male dominated culture. Yet her choice was made by herself alone and marriage was not her goal

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<sup>88</sup> Maletzke, *Jane Austenová Životopis*, 62.

<sup>89</sup> Sayre N. Greenfield, Linda V. Troost, “Before It Was All About Mr. Darcy: Nineteenth-Century Views of Austen's Characters,” *Persuasions On-Line* 38, no. 1 (Winter 2017): 1.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

from the beginning. According to Morris, Austen created a heroine with a complicated and lively inner life whose character contradicted the position of women and their choices at the time, but in the end the story turns out to be about submission through the heroine's own mind.<sup>91</sup> Chang claims that although feminism was practically non-existent at the time, Austen gave her heroine the possibility to decide for herself which was more than other period writers allowed their characters to do.<sup>92</sup> Pointing at the fact that Austen used the novel to critique the advances of patriarchal society but ended it by furthering them. Poovey criticises the ending of the novel by stating: „The romantic conclusion of *Pride and Prejudice* effectively dismisses the social and psychological realism with which the novel began.“<sup>93</sup> Yet none of the other female characters in *Pride and Prejudice* strive for a life of freedom, as they all take part in the same society without critically evaluating it. However, her character is still more progressive than most at the time and to expect Austen to provide her readers with progressive feminist thoughts at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century would be naive. Morris claims that Austen created a very sophisticated and varied inner life of her main characters which was contradicting to what was expected of women at the time.<sup>94</sup>

The late 18<sup>th</sup> century rise of consumerism also appears in the novel, most notably in Lydia's ecstatic presentation of a new bought bonnet, which other sisters do not find to be especially pretty.<sup>95</sup> Traces of starting consumerism can also be found in the lavish and pompous lifestyles of Lady Catherine de Bourgh or in Elizabeth's need to admire every piece of furniture in Mr. and Mrs. Collins's living room upon her arrival.<sup>96</sup>

Romance is what rules the story at its core as most female characters are looking to marry whether it out of love or because of a possible new acquired wealth. Miles claims that the novel concerns itself with certain aspects of self-knowledge, one of them being the changeability of one's character and the recognition of oneself that is stemming from other people.<sup>97</sup> Elizabeth's prejudice against Darcy gives her the possibility to break away from the way her surrounding community makes her feel about a person she once barely knew. Morgan claims that Elizabeth understands her fault of mind and learns to observe everything more critically once she learns

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<sup>91</sup> Morris, *Literature and Feminism*, 90.

<sup>92</sup> Hui-Chun Chang, "The Impact of the Feminist Heroine: Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*," *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature* 3, no. 3 (2014): 0.

<sup>93</sup> Poovey, "Ideological Contradictions," 49.

<sup>94</sup> Pam Morris, *Literature and Feminism*, trans. Renata Kamenická, Marian Siedloczek. (Brno: Host, 2000),

<sup>95</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 278.

<sup>96</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 202.

<sup>97</sup> Miles, *Jane Austen*, 119–120.

of her folly.<sup>98</sup> As Miles further mentions, Austen's novels show heroines that overcome obstacles through the act of getting to know themselves.<sup>99</sup> Elizabeth is a proof of that as she overcomes the obstacle created by her environment and later learns how to think more critically and without prejudices.

Roughly one hundred years later, George Bernard Shaw pens his play *Pygmalion* with different intentions in mind. The writer's divergent influence on his creation could be propelled by the elapsed time, gender difference, by the character in question or by the medium in which the work would be consumed – as a drama for the masses. Shaw's intentions with his main female character Eliza were rather particular as the motive behind her existence (and the existence of the play) is to express Shaw's political agendas and thoughts. Shaw draws from the real situation of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The main character Eliza – a poor girl who belongs to the working-class meets two upper-class gentlemen – Professor Higgins and Colonel Pickering who later help her become her dream self. Shaw creates a rather likeable and captivating character of a flower-girl-turned-governess who breaks the barriers of lower and upper classes whilst engaged in a humorous and exciting dialogue. It could be said that the writer's intention is the exact opposite to what Austen had created. The crucial difference lies in his contrasting life philosophy and beliefs that heavily influence the character and the environment of his play. Whilst Austen is mirroring the inner workings of her own family life, Shaw's decision while writing *Pygmalion* was to target the more general social problems of the time, enwrap them in comedic situations and challenge people's political and social thinking. This goes hand in hand with his participation in the Fabian society and life-long commitment to the socialistic movement. Stříbrný describes Shaw's characters as personifications of ideas and story specifying social principles.<sup>100</sup> Unlike Austen, he does not concern himself with the family issues of the time (apart from the rather cold and complicated relationship Eliza has with her father and the critical attitude shown by Higgins' mother), and rather focuses on more general problems. Brown states that Shaw used drama to express a social protest.<sup>101</sup> Thus, it could be argued that Eliza Doolittle is less of a character and more a symbol of oppression of the working class and of the female gender. Throughout the book she follows the nature of socialistic rhetoric which rebels against the set system. The difference of perception is caused by Eliza's dreadful working-class origins causing her to long for a change. The progression of

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<sup>98</sup> Susan Morgan. "Intelligence in 'Pride and Prejudice'," *Modern Philology* 72, no. 1 (August 1975): 67.

<sup>99</sup> Miles, *Jane Austen*, 66.

<sup>100</sup> Stříbrný, *Dějiny anglické literatury*, 272.

<sup>101</sup> Brown, *George Bernard Shaw*, 122.

proactiveness of the character could also be the proof of people's growing animosity towards the State.

Shaw presents the separation of society by their classes in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through Eliza's appearance, behaviour and speech – as her accent and clothes prove that she is part of the working-class. She makes money by selling flowers on the dirty streets of London. Chen argues that Eliza's occupation proves her inner intelligence, for a girl in her position could be selling her own body instead of flowers.<sup>102</sup> Yet she is not working because she desires to but rather because she has not got a man in her life whom she could rely on and who would provide for her – this was still very much the case at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Through her conversations with other people and Higgins' contempt, Shaw expresses the bullying lower classes could often endure. Eliza's job does not satisfy her for she does not make enough money. This was again true for many working-class citizens and more so women. This is unstated by Shaw, but Eliza's lack of finances and social status must be unbearable, since she herself seeks change. This way Shaw refers to and criticizes the lack of state support for working class people and their small wages. The employments were usually fixed, and unreliable and social welfare was provided rarely and only to those who were in real need. Eliza's expressions prove that she is oftentimes driven by her emotions, this must be presumably hard for a woman living on the streets in harsh environment. Eliza's categorization in the working class could stem from Shaw's own personal experience - as he was born in Ireland in a working-class family and then moved to London and strived to better his social status. With *Pygmalion*, Shaw breaks through the set social standards of the time by giving Eliza social mobility. According to Oliveriusová, Shaw believed in Sam Butler's evolution theory which claimed that people are gradually and automatically approaching perfection.<sup>103</sup> It could be argued that his work is thus a manual how to achieve such positive outcome as that is exactly what Eliza accomplishes – she becomes a proper lady and is not afraid to riot against her creator. The whole plot of *Pygmalion* is built on receiving the opportunity to fulfil one's potential, elevating them to a different class despite his or her roots.<sup>104</sup>

All social issues appearing in *Pygmalion* are brought to the reader's and viewer's attention through often comical situations. Such as Eliza – a poor girl on the street who normal reader

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<sup>102</sup> Chen, "A Perspective to *Pygmalion*," 43

<sup>103</sup> Oliveriusová et al., *Dějiny anglické literatury*, 205.

<sup>104</sup> Brown, *George Bernard Shaw*, 124.

should feel sorry for is made fun of by the titular characters and supposed to be especially comical for the readers.

Shaw's socialistic ideals are revealed through professor Higgins, most notably in his response to Eliza's reproachful claim about his equal treatment of everybody around him to which he responds:

“The great secret, Eliza, is not having bad manners or good manners or any other particular sort of manners, but having the same manner for all human souls: in short, behaving as if you were in Heaven, where there are no third-class carriages, and one soul is as good as another.”<sup>105</sup>

Displaying beliefs similar to those of socialists', in which everyone is equal. Although Chen states that such thinking only provides Higgins with an excuse for unfair treatment of the people around him.<sup>106</sup> He is often selfish and stubborn and exploiting of his superior position over Eliza. His target is not to help her better herself, but to win a bet. His behaviour is often vulgar, tyrannical and childish and the way he treats Eliza could be described as bullying (which is defined as “abuse and mistreatment of someone vulnerable by someone stronger and more powerful.”)<sup>107</sup> Higgins often uses his higher status to frighten and belittle Eliza such as when he scares her with the possibility of cutting her if she fails to be approved as a lady at the garden party<sup>108</sup> or when he belittles her by pretending she is only an object: “Pickering: shall we ask this baggage to sit down or shall we throw her out of the window?”<sup>109</sup>

When faced with conflict, Eliza usually starts shouting and crying. This provides an interesting contrast to the behaviour of Elizabeth Bennet who, when faced with disagreeable behaviour from gentlemen, takes a more delicate approach. Such as when Mr. Darcy calls her to be “tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me.”<sup>110</sup> It is not difficult to imagine how Eliza would act in a similar setting. But Elizabeth is capable to hide her true feelings, which she states are not very cordial and she delightfully shares the story with her friends.<sup>111</sup> In this case Elizabeth behaves in a true 19<sup>th</sup> century fashion.

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<sup>105</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 95.

<sup>106</sup> Li-hua Chen, “A Feminist Perspective to Pygmalion,” *Canadian Social Science* 2, no. 2 (2016): 43.

<sup>107</sup> “Bullying,” Merriam-Webster, accessed March 20, 2019,

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bullying>.

<sup>108</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 34.

<sup>109</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 20.

<sup>110</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 23.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

In comparison to Eliza's introduction in the play, Austen introduces the main protagonist of her novel with less splendour. First making sure the audience understands the priorities of the Bennet family by making her mother and father the focus of the first chapter. The chapter starts with Mrs. Bennet informing her husband about a new eligible bachelor arriving in their neighbourhood.<sup>112</sup> The married couple's exchange sets the tone for the entire novel both in terms of storyline (which heavily involves the search of new husbands for the Bennet girls) and in the way the story often progresses often without the focus on Elizabeth herself.

Elizabeth is described as her father's favourite, as can be seen in the very beginning of the novel by mentioning her as "his little Lizzy."<sup>113</sup> This might be because she acts differently from her sisters, is generally disinterested in finding a proper husband and chooses to speak only when she feels her statements count for something. This quality is often presented in contrast to the careless chatter of her younger sisters and mother. Elizabeth's words do not possess a specific charm and wit which can be seen, for instance, when she turns down Mr. Darcy's offer for a dance at the Netherfield ball:

"You wanted me, I know, to say 'Yes,' that you might have the pleasure of despising my taste; but I always delight in overthrowing those kinds of schemes and cheating a person of their premeditated contempt. I have therefore made up my mind to tell you, that I do not want to dance a reel at all—and now despise me if you dare."<sup>114</sup>

This excerpt proves Elizabeth's eloquence and intelligence which she uses to straightforwardly express her feelings and add a biting remark – yet again proving her impertinence. That might be caused by her sense of equality. Bloom believes that Elizabeth as a character does not feel inferior to anybody.<sup>115</sup> This gives her confidence to express her opinions freely, as opposed to Eliza who must better herself throughout the play and gradually gain the confidence to oppose Henry Higgins.

Another difference between the two characters lies in the societal forming which they endure and its results. Eliza is essentially created by Higgins. Taken from the lowest of classes and jobs - dirty, unhinged and loud. Through hard work she achieves to transform herself into a person of opposite qualities, charm and elegance. She undergoes the change in many layers as

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<sup>112</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 11-14.

<sup>113</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 14.

<sup>114</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 72.

<sup>115</sup> Harold Bloom, "Introduction," in Bloom's *Modern Critical Views: Jane Austen*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase publishing, 2009), 0,

her personality, accent and clothing is altered to comply with what is considered to be “upper-class.” Eliza is at first apprehensive towards her change, but later seeks Henry and decides to take on a new persona. Although she chose this herself, she is not free until she leaves Higgins to be with Freddy. Through her change she also becomes a new person who changed because of surrounding social norms. With this she also loses a sense of freedom which the working-class people often possess – as is proclaimed by her father.

The character of Elizabeth does not take surrounding influences into account too much. She is, in a way, a complete opposite to Eliza by not succumbing to classical social norms of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. This can be seen in various cases throughout the book. Although her mind is probably influenced by her environment, she is not afraid to refuse somebody’s marriage proposal, nor to look ‘shabby’ (as seen when visiting her sick sister at the Bingley’s estate). Although most of her peers are aspiring to marriage, Elizabeth and her older sister Jane are looking, first and foremost, for love in a potential partner. Although Elizabeth is not diligent in her search for love, and rather phlegmatic at times, as she accepts most things as they are and looks at them with humour. Her personality does not change throughout the story, although she does undergo a development in her feelings towards Mr. Darcy. She then critically evaluates her former prejudice which clouded her judgement. This change occurs rather late in the story, when she reads Mr. Darcy’s letter, her feelings described by the narrator:

“She grew absolutely ashamed of herself. Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think without feeling she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd.”<sup>116</sup>

Elizabeth’s lack of interest in marriage at the beginning of the novel again proves how different she is in comparison to other young women of her time. She is described as a twenty-year-old girl<sup>117</sup> in the novel, and although some time passes before she marries Darcy, she is still in her early 20s when she gets married. That makes her younger than previously mentioned statistics about the average age of married girls being 26,2 years old. The statistics also help to comprehend Charlotte’s motive for getting married to Mr. Collins – a coupling which was unfathomable to Elizabeth and other characters. For Charlotte is described as being “around twenty-seven,”<sup>118</sup> thus older than the norm. The narrator proves that she married not out of love nor for wealth but more so because marriage had been her objective even mentioning her lack

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<sup>116</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 265.

<sup>117</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 213.

<sup>118</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 30.



of admiration for her future husband.<sup>119</sup> Charlotte's character again proves the significance of marriage on young women. Seeing it as the ultimate goal to achieve acceptance within society.

Charlotte is not the only one who is interested in marriage. Mrs. Bennet's wish to wed her daughters is sometimes borderline obsessive. The search for a suitable partner is not out of her good will to fulfil her daughter's wishes but more so to ensure their future financial security after their father's passing. The family is part of the upper-class society and since Mr. Bennet owns an estate, it can be assumed the girls live rather comfortably. The fact that Mr. Bennet's descendants are all daughters complicates the situation as the family must find a male heir. Lack of finances does not present an issue for Elizabeth. Eliza, on the other hand, represents the working-class which, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century did not have the security of income, health care nor housing. Her poverty is expressed by her scruffy clothes, way of speaking and occupation. She herself admits to it when trying to sell flowers to a nearby standing gentleman – who later turns out to be Colonel Pickering: “So cheer up, Captain; and buy a flower off a poor girl.”<sup>120</sup> She has to provide for herself as she is on the street on her own. Her father leaving her without financial support. Money is the ultimate motive for Eliza's change, because of it she decides to take the offered opportunity and better herself. In that sense, she is more proactive than Elizabeth, whose possibilities for brighter future come to her on their own and her only task is to decline or accept them. Elizabeth has not her own goals (or at least never mentions them), whilst Eliza's character and choices revolve around her ultimate aspiration – which is to become a lady in a flower shop.<sup>121</sup>

Eliza seems to be the stronger character out of the two, as her beginnings were considerably harder, and she has not got enough from her environment. In *Pygmalion*, it can be quite difficult to find a character that is agreeable and truly friendly with Eliza. Before she leaves Higgins, she does have an amicable relationship with Freddy, Colonel Pickering and Ms. Pearce. Yet, when compared to Elizabeth Bennet, it appears that she lacks real human connection that should be based on love, care and understanding. Her main relationship with professor Higgins is rather tumultuous and disagreeable. The contrast might be created by the dissimilar environments the characters live in thanks to their social classes. Throughout the whole Elizabeth's story, she has her sister Jane by her side whom she deeply cares about. The friendship is double-sided, as well as the friendship with her friend Charlotte Lucas and her romantic affinity to Mr. Darcy.

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<sup>119</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 161.

<sup>120</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 13.

<sup>121</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 27.

Although Eliza achieves her objective and learns how to act like an upper-class lady, though her decision to marry Freddy is mostly to save herself from Higgins' dominance. Shaw has stated that his main interest in writing comedies is „the struggle between human vitality and the artificial system of morality.“<sup>122</sup> Eliza's vitality thus conquers Higgins' morality as she walks away from him at the end of the play. She does not marry Freddy out of love but more so out of convenience which likens her to most characters mentioned in *Pride and Prejudice*.

According to O'Donnell, the inner and outer transformation of Eliza's character reflect Shaw's optimism in change.<sup>123</sup> As she turns from a shrieking and dirty “creature” to a dignified lady who realises her own purpose. She represents an unconventional and progressive heroine who claims her right to be whoever she wants to be. Eliza might had been created as an idol for the lower classes. This assumption is based on Shaw's preface in which he encourages his audience to not be afraid to be tutored how to speak properly and to follow their ambitions.<sup>124</sup>

Elizabeth, although not as bold nor independent as Eliza (which might be caused by her older date of creation), takes smaller steps to riot against the set system, especially in some of her opinions and in her carelessness of what others think of her. Yet in the end she becomes a part of said system by getting married to Mr. Darcy. The difference between her marriage and the marriage of some of her peers lays in their morals – as Elizabeth gets married out of her own conviction and out of love, which was much desired and not always possible for the women of this era. Her marriage thus might be the proof of the ultimate aspiration of women at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – a marriage based on love to a wealthy and suitable gentleman.

Shaw's heroine shows a bigger growth throughout the play which relates to her appearance, accent, sense of individuality and confidence. Only after that is she able to realise what she desires to do next. Eliza Doolittle can also be seen as a role model, as Shaw created her and the whole play for the purposes of bringing attention to current underlying topics. Although Eliza's approach to change and improve herself is rather exaggerated. She conveys a message of plentiful possibilities and opportunities which one gets if they are able to adapt to a different environment – thus breaking the barriers of social classes.

Whilst *Pride and Prejudice* could be considered more romantic and sometimes naive, it does not carry any deeper political meaning and focuses solely on the family life and the moral values

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<sup>122</sup> Norbert F. O'Donnell, “On the ‘Unpleasantness’ of ‘Pygmalion,’” *Bulletin* (Shaw Society of America) 1, no. 8 (May 1955): 9.

<sup>123</sup> O'Donnell, “Unpleasantness of ‘Pygmalion,’” 9.

<sup>124</sup> Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 7–8.

of the time. Although Austen also uses Elizabeth and other characters to criticize some of the occurring social problems such as the childish infatuation concerning marriage found in both young and older women (such as Elizabeth's sisters and her mother), *Pygmalion* shows the broader picture of life in the Great Britain, which is less romanticized and deals with the clear distinctions between social classes and their superior and inferior parts. Yet, both works deal with serious topics in often grotesque and comical ways, creating literary works beloved by many and still popular to this day.

## 6 CONCLUSION

What occurs between the characters can be defined as a natural progression which results in a bigger politization and activism after the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although Austen's character is rather progressive for her time, as she does not long for marriage and is not afraid to state her opinion, the ending she is provided with ultimately proves that she morally conforms to the societal norms of the time. She is not the ideal of a woman of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as she was not particularly popular in the book's early reviews. It is assumed that she was created as an extension of Austen's self to fulfil her fantasies and voice unpopular or concealed opinions regarding the society she lived in, resisting some of the restrictive morals.

Shaw's character Eliza is more strong-willed and rebellious, admittedly belonging to the contradictory time of larger division between social classes - the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain. She adapts to fit into the environment of the upper-class and works hard to achieve her goals. The creation is complete once she feels comfortable in her growth and gains the confidence to leave her tutor behind. Shaw created her as a vessel to prove the possibility of refusing to obey societal standards.

In conclusion, women ideals changed a lot of during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Whilst the older character, Elizabeth Bennet, shows a heroine with her own mind who takes smaller steps towards acting upon her own desire, Eliza Doolittle represents the beginning of women's active participation in the fight against societal oppression. Though both characters do not stay silent and are able to speak up against social injustices at the time.

## RESUMÉ

Cílem bakalářské práce je porovnání rozdílného pojetí dvou ženských postav populárních britských děl. Práce představuje a analyzuje spojitost mezi Elizabeth Bennetovou z románu *Pýcha a předsudek* od autorky Jane Austenové a Lízou Doolittleovou ze hry *Pygmalion* od autora George Bernarda Shawa. Zaměřením práce je analýza těchto postav v kulturně-historickém kontextu doby, ve kterém se jejich příběhy odehrávají. Díla od sebe dělí zhruba sto let, a tak práce zároveň využívá postavy jako vyobrazení vývoje společenských norem, které byly v dané době aplikovány na ženy.

První kapitola se věnuje úvodu do života autorky díla „*Pýcha a předsudek*“ a konci osmnáctého a začátku devatenáctého století. Jedná se o časové rozpětí, po jehož dobu autorka knihu psala. Skrze získané informace lze zjistit, jakým způsobem byla její tvorba touto dobou ovlivněna. Samotný autorčin život je použit jako studie ženy v daném období a v kapitole se prolíná s historickým a kulturním kontextem. Dalším důvodem pro přidání úryvků ze života Austenové je autorčino časté čerpání z vlastního prostředí, které se v jejích knihách objevuje a skrze nějž sdílí tehdejší ženské vnímání světa. Kapitola poukazuje na problematiku dané doby, jakou byly např. Napoleonské války či průmyslová revoluce, které však autorka z neznámých důvodů ve své tvorbě vynechává. Zaměřuje se spíše na svět, který je jí známý a blízký – tedy na život venkovské šlechty a rozmanité rodinné vztahy. Z toho důvodu se kapitola také věnuje důležitým informacím týkajících se tehdejší společnosti, především se zaměřením na strasti žen, které se týkaly hlavně společenského útlaku jejich názorů a podřízené pozici vůči mužům.

Druhá kapitola se zabývá charakteristikou hlavní postavy *Pýchy a předsudku* – Elizabeth Bennetovou. Je popsán její život v rodinném kruhu, nejbližší vztahy a situace, díky kterým lze zachytit její důvtip a intelekt. Jedním z nich je například její rozhodnutí navštívit svou sestru na Netherfieldském panství, ačkoliv se jedná o dlouhou cestu, která se pro takto mladé děvče nesluší. Elizabeth je též porovnána s jejími nejbližšími přáteli a rodinou, z tohoto porovnání tak vyplývá její výjimečnost. Důraz je též kladen na Elizabethiny postoje vůči společnosti a sňatkům – tedy centrální témata, kolem kterých se točí téměř celý příběh románu.

Třetí kapitola obsahuje kontext začátku dvacátého století se zasazením do života druhého autora – George Bernarda Shawa, jehož pohled na svět byl velmi rozdílný od Jane Austenové. Na rozdíl od ní totiž Shaw do vlastních děl nezrcadlil svůj život, ale spíše je využíval k vyjadřování vlastních názorů, které byly často spojeny s jeho socialistickým smýšlením. Zabýval se mnoha

problematikami britské společnosti, mimo jiné například chudobou, kapitalismem či otázkou ženských práv. Tyto témata zasazoval do svých děl a často jim dával humorný nádech. V kapitole je vysvětlena příčina rozkvětu socialistického smýšlení v Británii a způsob, jakým pro něj Shaw ve svém díle bojoval. Opět poukazuje na ženské postavení a problémy, které se v tomto období v Británii vyskytovali. V tomto případě se jedná především o problémy spojené s třídní strukturou společnosti a špatnými pracovními podmínkami dělnické třídy. Opět je zde kladen důraz na související ženské problémy. Část kapitoly je též věnována autorově zálibě – anglickému jazyku a fonetice.

Čtvrtá kapitola obsahuje charakteristiku hlavní postavy Pygmalionu – Lízy Doolittleové. Soustředí se především na útlak, se kterým se potýká jako žena dělnické třídy a mluvčí výrazného přízvuku cockney a skrze její reakce charakterizuje její povahu. Jsou zde zmíněny Líziny kladné i záporné stránky, se kterými může čtenář soucítit. Jedna z částí se věnuje jejímu nerovnocennému vztahu s profesorem Higginsem, který vůči ní často jedná hrubě a neomaleně. Zároveň je zde komentován Lízin odchod od profesora Higginse na konci hry. Kapitola poukazuje na vybrané části Lízina života, která představují její vlastnosti – např. její výbušnost, nízké sebevědomí či pevnou vůli v proces přeměny v ženu s lepším postavením.

Praktická část se zabývá porovnáním výše zmíněných postav a příběhů v historicko-kulturním kontextu daného období a zároveň v kontextu, který představuje úmysly autorů. Informace získané o postavách a jejich okolí z četby literárních děl jsou aplikovány na témata a popis doby, který byl zmíněn v předešlých kapitolách č. 1 a 3. Tato část se zabývá především způsobem jednání hlavních hrdinek v obdobných situacích – jako jsou například vztahy, rodina či finanční záležitosti. Práce dále zjišťuje, zda by tyto ženské postavy mohly být považovány za ideál své doby.

Další průzkum se zabývá hledáním spojitostí mezi úmysly autorů a jejich tvorbou. U Jane Austenové se jasně jedná o splnění jejích vlastních nenaplněných snů skrze postavu Elizabeth Bennetové. Její román nemá žádné skryté pohnutky a snaží se pouze vykreslit přívětivou atmosféru anglického venkova a dívčí fantazie o perfektním ženichovi. V Shawově případě se jedná o apel na společnost, kterým propaguje vlastní socialistické pohnutky. Pygmalionem totiž probourává bariéry sociálních tříd a dělnické třídě tak dodává naději na světlejší zítřky, které by mohli nastat, pokud by se všichni řídili Líziným příkladem. Spojitostí mezi samotnými autory děl je málo, dokonce by se dalo říct, že se jedná o úplné opaky. Zatímco Shaw se ve svých dílech snaží zaměřit na co nejvíce sociálních a ekonomických problémů, Austenová se

nezabývá ničím, co se někdy přímo netýkalo jejího života. Nejnápadnější spojitostí je jejich smysl pro humor a ironii, které umí oba ve svých dílech mistrovsky vykreslit.

Ačkoliv jsou obě ženské postavy velmi odlišné – obě pocházejí z jiné společenské vrstvy, jiného období Britské historie a jsou napsány za jiným účelem, mají některé společné vlastnosti. Obě se nebojí vzepřít pravidlům, dle kterých by měly žít. Elizabeth toto prokazuje například odmítnutím žádosti o ruku pana Collinse. Eliza zase rozhodnutím přetvořit svůj život v něco lepšího. Obě projdou výraznou změnou. U Elizabeth se jedná o změnu vlastního pohledu na svět a předsudky, které někdy chová důsledkem svého okolí. Lízina změna je mnohonásobně větší, jelikož se změní její zevnějšek, přízvuk i chování vůči ostatním i sobě samé.

Následně práce vyvádí závěr, že Elizabeth je spíše pasivní postavou, které se většina událostí stává téměř mimoděk. Líza je naopak velmi iniciativní a vlastním rozhodnutím se sama podílí na změně svého já.

Z porovnání postav vyplývá, že se pozice hlavní hrdinky během 19. století výrazně změnila. Ačkoliv se stále potýká s formou sociálního útlaku (který závisí i na společenské třídě, do které patří), z porovnání jasně vyplývá jistá modernizace postavy, která úzce souvisí se změnami společnosti.

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