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Comparison of Jane Austen and Božena Němcová

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This bachelor thesis is focusing on these two authors and their attitude towards women in their era, which are captured in their works. I want to explore in which aspects are these two authors similar and how are their lives and works viewed today.

Seznam doporučené literatury:

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Tille, Václav. *Božena Němcová*, Praha: Zlatoroh, 1911.

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Declaration

I declare I have written my bachelor thesis independently under the guidance of my supervisor and that I used only sources listed in the bibliography.

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1. Introduction

In this bachelor thesis I would like to examine one of the most important female writers in England, Jane Austen, and one of the most important female writers in Czech Republic, Božena Němcová. Both authors are considered to have great influence on development of literature in their respective countries. Although their literature style was different, I would like to find some similarities in their works, especially considering their picture of a female heroine. I am interested in discovering if their approach to women's characters can be viewed as a feminist approach. Jane Austen is known for her romantic novels, which deal with the role of the women in the Victorian era. Božena Němcová, on the other hand, is known for her collection of fairy tales. One may be surprised that even in this genre, feministic hints can be found.

Firstly, I am going to focus on the term "feminism" in literature and I will look for the most important arguments feminists' works share. Secondly, I am going to concentrate on the works of Jane Austen and Božena Němcová and the representation of female characters in them. As for Jane Austen, I am going to examine one of her most famous works *Pride and Prejudice* and the main character Elizabeth Bennet. Furthermore, I will look on the main protagonist of *Mansfield Park* Fanny Price. In Božena Němcová's works, I am going to examine the main character of her fairy tale called *Seven Ravens* Theodora and the main character of a short story *Divá Bára*, Bára. In the next chapter, I will focus on the similarities and differences that I discovered between these authors and their works. Furthermore, I would like to state my opinion regarding the question if the works discussed can be viewed as the beginning of a feminism in literature.

2. Feminist criticism

According to the *Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms* by E. Quinn, feminist criticism is “[t]he application to literature of the principles of feminist theory.” (Quinn 2006, 162). Although the emergence of this term is dated in the late 1960s, this thesis believes that it had been evolving even earlier. This is, however, not the only definition of feminist criticism there is, and it is, therefore, crucial to emphasise that there is not just one united form of feminism. According to Warhol and Price Herndl (1991, 10), having more “feminisms” may be somehow confusing on one hand, but on the other it can also support the learning progress and can contribute to the cultural heterogeneity. Even though more types of feminism exist, there are certain important premises they share.

The following paragraph is paraphrased from *Critical Theory Today* by L. Tyson (2015, 92). Patriarchy, or patriarchal society, is the source of women’s economic, political, social, and psychological oppression and in the patriarchy dominating fields, a woman is regarded as “other” and is being described and defined only by the difference from the male gender and its norms and values, meaning that she supposedly lacks the “men’s” norms and values. The emphasis in the feminist theory is put on the difference between biological definition of sex (male and female) and cultural definition of gender (masculine and feminine). That includes the prejudices in certain patterns of behaviour, as some are thought to be feminine and some masculine. These can include behaving like a woman with the meaning of submission and behaving like a man with the meaning of power and strength. Fundamentally, the main goal of feminists is the promotion of equality between men and women and the denial of a false premise that it opposes “family values”. In addition to the last point, this thesis finds important to deny the prejudice that feminists claim women to be superior to men, as the purpose of feminism lies in the equality between the sexes. As this thesis focuses on answering the question whether Jane Austen and Božena Němcová can be considered feminists, it is necessary clarify the term “a feminist” and to point out that any person, irrespective of the gender, can be a feminist, a person, supporting the ideas above.

In the following chapters, Austen’s and Němcová’s works will be analysed and Tyson’s arguments will be compared to the symbols found. Based on this comparison, this thesis will then conclude, whether Jane Austen and Božena Němcová are feminists’ writers.

3. Analysing the works of Jane Austen

3.1. Jane Austen's biography

3.1.1. Austen's life and family

Jane Austen (1775-1817) grew up in a family of a clergy man. She was one of eight children. She had only one sister, Cassandra, with whom she had a close relationship. The Austen's daughters were educated in home, then sent to boarding school in Oxford and Southampton (Irvine 2005, 2). Neither of them married and although Jane had been proposed to, she declined the offer. Austen spent her entire life "out of the the spotlight", in her parents' house, writing and dedicating herself to traditional activities suitable for middle-class women, such as attending balls or visiting her family. It is worth mentioning that Jane was a keen reader, and she spent much time in her father's library. In 1817 Austen succumbed to an unknown disease. Although her brothers possessed the knowledge of her condition, seemingly they did not show much interest in their sister's wellbeing. Not even in her last days did two of her siblings, James and Frank visit her. Other two brothers Henry and Charles did, nevertheless, they did not stay for long. In her last moments, her sister Cassandra and her aunt Mary Austen kept her company. Jane Austen's authorship of her novels was officially announced in the newspaper with the message of her death. (see Worsley 2018, 309-13)

3.1.2. Writing

Austen's literary talent had been manifesting itself from a very early age. According to biographers, she started writing for her own pleasure and her family's amusement at the age of twelve. Later, at twenty-two she started to send her work to the "booksellers". At the turn of the 18th century, it was not common for a woman to write, and even less frequent to publish. Thus, Austen decided to remain anonymous. One of the reasons for that could be the fact that being known for any other role than daughter, wife or widow could attract the attention of stranger men, which could have been viewed as a breach of feminine modesty. (Irvine 2005, 3). It was then her brother Henry who dealt and negotiated with the booksellers. Her first payment for writing was in 1803 when she gained £10 for the novel *Susan*, which however did not get published, so in the end she had to buy it back. Her next novels *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park* were published in the following years at her own expense. She wanted to protect her reputation, thus she used the signature "By a Lady"

when publishing *Sense and Sensibility* and “By the Author of “Sense and Sensibility” when publishing *Pride and Prejudice* and so on. Later, as the career as female authors rose, she became more confident about using the public identity. Owing to Henry’s sudden illness, she took over the correspondence with her booksellers and published her next novel *Emma* (Irvine 2005, 4). *Persuasion* and a revised version of *Northanger Abbey* were then published posthumously again by her brother. (see Irvine 2005, 1-5, 12-18)

3.2. Historic-cultural context

As Jane Austen lived at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, her works are greatly influenced by this period’s culture, and Paula Byrne describes her as “a portraitist of her own social world” (Todd 2005, 297). Even though her works are set before Victorian era (1837-1917), one could characterize that time very similarly to this well-known historic period. There is no doubt that women led a completely different life than the one led by today’s women, therefore it is crucial for a reader to be familiar with the cultural context in order to understand Jane Austen’s works (characters’ behaviour in particular). Hence, let me briefly summarize basic beliefs of this era, such as identity and morality.

3.2.1. Identity

A person’s identity was determined by his or her race, gender, and class. Those factors were then decisive for the behaviour of a person—what one could, should or must do. According to Goring (2008, 29), Victorian society was “fiercely patriarchal”—women were thought to be secondary to men and were treated accordingly. They had no right to possess a fortune or even to discuss it, to vote, to be involved in politics, and often were denied higher education. Their duties were set mainly in the household—nurturing and raising children, cooking and preparing food and doing laundry.

A woman’s identity also depended on the fact whether she was married and whether she was introduced to the society. This plays an important role in Austen’s works and is often a subject of conflict – men flirting with women who were not introduced to the society (Tom Bertram in *Mansfield Park*), or women being introduced to the society before their older sisters married (*Pride and Prejudice*) (Todd 2005, 302).

Family and marriage were considered one of the most significant features of the culture Austen lived in. Some historians claim that in the nineteenth century marriages from love started rising (Steinbach 2004, 125). Until then, it had not been so common. In Austen's work one can observe various "types" of marriage: marriage of convenience, of passion and of love, which will be discussed later. Either way, to marry well was crucial for Victorian people. That is clearly stated in the very first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*. "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." (Austen 1999, 5) Women, however, did not have the privilege to "be in a want of a husband". They were supposed to behave in such a way, that a man would like them enough to propose to them. Due to the fact that women were mainly working in their household and predominantly did not earn money, they had to marry to "possess money". If not married, they had to be dependent on either their parents or other relatives. Class played a huge role in engagement, of course. One could marry "above" or "beneath" oneself, depending on the class, and gain either more or less money and consequently respect (Todd 2005, 361). A respectable married woman then had to follow yet another set of rules. These rules occur in many books, such as James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* (1776), which is the book from which Mr. Collins reads to the girls in *Pride and Prejudice*, or Thomas Gisborne's *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*. Those books put emphasis on the necessity for women to be subordinate to the men's needs and not to express the needs of their own. (Todd 2005, 334). The "perfect" woman, one worth of men's attention, is then described by Caroline Bingley in *Pride and Prejudice*: "A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages ...; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions ..." (Austen 1999, 30).

3.2.2. Morality

This leads us to another important feature of that time, which is morality—in other words manners—that were supposed to be followed. Women of marriageable age were introduced to the society. They were supposed to be chaperoned when walking outside, should always wear a smile. Indoor activities for respectable women (no matter if married or not) were needlework, which was considered an absolute necessity for women of all classes (Todd 2005, 302-3), playing an instrument, reading, drawing, etc.

Men, on the other hand, other than managing the finances and properties, should not flirt with women who were not introduced to the society yet nor to be alone with them. As far as indoor activities are concerned, men often played billiard or cards, cleaned their guns for hunting and read (Todd 2005, 341).

3.3. Signs of feminism in *Pride and Prejudice*

In this chapter I will focus on the situations in *Pride and Prejudice*, which can be considered signs of feminism. I argue that such signs can be found in the way of conduct of the main protagonist Elizabeth Bennet.

3.3.1. Reading

Even though reading was a popular past time activity for both men and women, the contents of those books varied greatly. As women did not have the right for proper education, many of them were reading only romantic novels, which were considered silly, especially by men. Reader can notice this in the scene where reading of Mr. Collins is interrupted by young Lydia Bennet who is obviously bored. Mr. Collins reacts: "I have often observed how little young ladies are interested by books of a serious stamp, though written solely for their benefit. It amazes me, I confess; for, certainly there can be nothing so advantageous to them as instruction. But I will no longer importune my young cousin." (Austen 1999, 52)

Elizabeth, on contrary, is very interested in more advanced books. Miss Bingley is even making fun of her: "She is a great reader and has no pleasure in anything else" (Austen 1999, 29). One can observe, on the one hand Mr. Bingley, who is not interested in books at all: "...but I am an idle fellow, and though I have not many [books], I have more than I ever looked into." (Austen 1999, 29), on the other hand, Elizabeth, who reads a lot. Even more distinct is the picture of an intellectual woman Elizabeth's sister Mary. Her father, Mr. Bennet, is describing her as: "... you are a young lady of deep reflection, I know, and read great books and make extracts ..." (Austen 1999, 9). By looking at the mentioned contrast between Elizabeth and Mr. Bingley, one may claim that Jane Austen wanted the reader to show how prejudices (here the prejudice that men read more and are therefore somehow "cleverer") can often be false. The fact that both Elizabeth and Mary enjoy more complex books, contributes to the idea that women are

capable of gaining knowledge as well as men, and that they can be equal on the intellectual level, if given the same opportunities.

3.3.2. Walking alone in the countryside

As stated earlier, women were not supposed to walk alone (without chaperoning) in the countryside, nor was it seen fit to travel alone by coaches. However, Elizabeth Bennet is not worried about that issue at all. Upon visiting her sister Jane at Netherfield, she walks (to be precise she even runs (Todd 2005, 301) alone three miles and is therefore held in contempt by Miss Bingley as she got dirty along the way, which was, without a doubt, not adequate for a woman. The important message here is that she is not scared of potential danger that could emerge along the way. This kind of behaviour can be viewed as a proof of Elizabeth's independence and courage. Elizabeth Bennet is a representation of a woman, who is brave and that can take care of herself without the need of a man. "She is not afraid to express her opinions although they are very controversial for the lady of that time. She is not the one who just follows the crowd, she has her own will" (Ocetková 2010, 33).

3.3.3. Elizabeth's marriage refusal

In this chapter, I would also like to explain the "types" of marriages that occur in *Pride and Prejudice*, so one could precisely understand, why Elizabeth's refusal might be seen as a sign of feminism. First, and in that time perhaps the most common one, is a marriage of convenience. Such engagements were mainly based on rational reasons, such as who would be the most reasonable spouse, how much would one acquire from such a marriage, etc. In the novel, the marriage of Charlotte and Mr. Collins represents marriage of convenience, as Charlotte agrees to marry Mr. Collins for his future fortune, even though she obviously does not love him. The friendship between Elizabeth and Charlotte is damaged because of it, as Elizabeth does not approve the marriage. Lydia and Mr. Wickham represent a marriage of passion. It is obvious that Charlotte did not think her agreement through properly—she is young, blinded with love, eager to catch up with her older sister, who already has a suitor. Mr. Wickham is, on the other hand, taking advantage of Lydia's naiveness. Finally, I would like to mention the most important marriage of all—a marriage of love, which is represented by both relationships: Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy and Jane and Mr. Bingley. Such a marriage is

the most complicated one, as one can see in both of those relationships. By looking at the fact that marrying for love is a common “happy ending” in Jane Austen’s novels, one can argue that, in Austen’s view, marrying for love is worth all the problems and drama.

Keeping in mind the paragraphs above, it seems that Elizabeth’s refusal to proposal made by Mr. Collins is a sign of feminism. Mr. Collins is leading a long monologue giving Elizabeth many reasons for this marriage of convenience. Elizabeth, as a single woman, was supposed to smile and agree. She, however, chooses to resist this prejudice: “It was absolutely necessary to interrupt him now. “You are too hasty, sir,” she cried. “You forget that I have made no answer. Let me do it without further loss of time. Accept my thanks for the compliment you are paying me. I am very sensible of the honour of your proposals, but it is impossible for me to do otherwise than to decline them.” (Austen 1999, 78) Not only does she refuse Mr. Collins’ offer (outrageous behaviour for a woman in that time), but she makes it very clear that it is disrespectful not to wait for her answer, supposing she must say yes. Later in this scene, she reassures him, he will not make her happy and she will not make him happy either. One can observe that Elizabeth is putting her feelings on the same level as those of Mr. Collins’, which is one of the rights feminists fight for—equality within men’s and women’s emotions.

3.3.4. Elizabeth’s confidence

To conclude the analysis of Elizabeth, I would like to point out Elizabeth’s overall confidence during the whole book. As stated many times earlier, she is very confident, bold, and independent. These traits can be noticed in her dialogue with Lady Catherine (Tytler 2013, 117-18). Lady Catherine was visiting Elizabeth to forbid her marrying Mr. Darcy. “Where a weak woman might have been cowed ... Elizabeth stands firm and comes out triumphantly. (...) Elizabeth Bennet is dutiful, in all the relations of life; she is even scrupulous as to its proprieties; but she is not a puppet in the hands of a Lady Catherine” (Tytler 2013, 118). I strongly believe that Elizabeth’s attitude within the whole book was the reason which convinced me of her being an early feminist.

3.4. Signs of feminism in *Mansfield Park*

In this chapter, I will look at the main protagonist’s behaviour through the lens of feminism. Fanny is a young girl hiding in the shadows, never wanting to cause any

harm and keen on pleasing other. Although it is possible to describe the character of Fanny Price as static, a change can be still observed throughout the book. It is, however, not as much in her attitude, as in the attitude of the ones surrounding her.

3.4.1. Fanny's interest in education

As already mentioned before, women did not have much access to education. Whereas men were travelling abroad to see the world and to study, women usually stayed home, spent their adult lives as wives, mothers and housekeepers (Steinbach 2004, 9). Young women then often had no interest in education, as their main goal supposed to get married. In order to impress men and attract a potential husband, they, for example, learned to play an instrument and paid a lot of attention to the clothes they wore. As Fanny does not have a suitor at the beginning of the novel and it even seems that she does not even want one, she focuses more on education. She wants to go to see Sotherton because of its beauty and new experiences and knowledge she might gain. This suggests that her priorities were different from what was thought appropriate for a woman of that era, which, as mentioned earlier, revolved around impressing the male sex. Fanny, on the other hand is keen on experiencing the atmosphere of a place, learning its history and much more. Fanny's attitude towards education is captured in the following extract: "... she (Mrs. Rushworth) addressed herself chiefly to Miss Crawford and Fanny, but there was no comparison in the willingness of their attention, for Miss Crawford, who had seen scores of great houses, and cared for none of them, had only the appearance of civilly listening, while Fanny, to whom every thing was almost as interesting as it was new, attended with unaffected earnestness to all that Mrs. Rushworth could relate of (...)"(Austen 2005). By looking at the citation from the book, one may notice that Mary Crawford is showing interest in Mrs. Rushworth's lesson, in comparison to Fanny, only to be polite. The reader senses, she would rather spend the whole day with Edmund, which becomes more apparent, when she confronts him a few pages later. Fanny is, on the other hand, indeed interested in the knowledge. Later, she develops a conversation about history of Sotherton by asking questions regarding the Sotherton's chapel. In contrast, Julia is changing the subject of the conversation—from a discussion about history to a discussion based on mocking her sister. By comparing Fanny to Julia or Mary, the paper claims that Fanny, having different priorities and having the purpose of life much greater than she was expected to have, again represents a feminist idea of women being on the same intellectual level as men.

3.4.2. Fanny's marriage refusal

Refusals of a marriage proposal, as well as the beforementioned “types” of marriage, are a recurrent feature of Jane Austen's books. Analogously to *Pride and Prejudice*, some of the “types” of marriages occur in *Mansfield Park* as well. Mr. Rushworth and Maria's matrimony represents the marriage of convenience. Their relationship is accepted very positively by almost everyone in Mansfield Park, since Mr. Rushworth possesses a great amount of fortune, which would allow Maria to live a wealthy life. It is not possible to say whether Maria really falls in love with Mr. Crawford, whose flirting with both Bertram's daughters causes the majority of problems thorough the book, or if boredom got the better of her and she decides to explore her options. Either way, Maria marries Mr. Rushworth because it was the right thing for a woman to do. The climax of the story brings two surprising relationships to light: Mr. Yeats and Julia elope, and Maria runs off with Mr. Crawford. Both relationships happen quickly, even though the reader could have noticed hints of it. Neither of those relationships is approved by the spouses' families, hence it can be claimed that passion is the reason for contracting the marriages. Jane Austen gives the reader a happy ending, represented by Edmund and Fanny's marriage of love. Analogous to *Pride and Prejudice*, this relationship straightforward from the beginning. Despite having received a marriage offer from a man, who, perhaps, would have been “a better suitor”, Fanny's love towards Edmund remains faithful. Since the basis of their relationship is a true friendship, understanding and mutual respect, it can be argued that this is the very definition of love and a solid foundation stone for a marriage of love.

There might be more reasons for Fanny's refusal of Mr. Crawford's offer. Firstly, she despises his behaviour in general, as he is knowingly flirting with both her cousins and he hurts their feelings greatly: “I have seen too much of Mr. Crawford not to understand his manners; if he understood me as well, he would, I dare say, behave differently.” (Austen 2005, 355-56). The reader knows that her accusations were right, as few pages earlier Mr. Crawford confesses to his sister about his intention with Fanny. Secondly, her heart does not belong to him. She does not want to settle for a marriage of convenience, despite the value that she accredits to Sir Thomas' and Edmund's advice to marry him. This can be understood as a piece of evidence of the ability of to decide for herself.

3.4.3. Teaching her younger sister

As Fanny grows thorough the book, she matures from a girl into a woman. Upon visiting her family in Portsmouth, she is now able to observe how “inappropriate” life the family leads. Fanny, raised in Mansfield Park, can now understand the manners of the higher society. This newly acquired ability results in shock when she sees the chaos in her family’s house. The main point of her critique is her mother’s inability to maintain the household. On the other hand, she sees great potential in her sister Susan, who often takes the initiative in the house (e.g., giving orders to the maidservant) and who takes care of her siblings. Having growing up without a proper leadership (Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Bertram did not fulfil this responsibility), Fanny wants now to lead her younger sister—to help her become a woman. She suggests taking Susan to Mansfield Park, so she could experience the proper manners and learn them just as Fanny did—with one difference—Susan would have Fanny by her side, so she would not be lonely and helpless in the shadows. By examining this situation, it can be argued that Jane Austen emphasizes the importance of women being an example for girls. Setting a good example and teaching them importance of certain matters is crucial in order to change the positions of women in patriarchal society. By leading younger women towards feminists’ ideas from the early age, one can help them to become more independent and aware of their choices.

3.4.4. East room

As the novel progresses, Fanny is gradually becoming a woman. As she is slowly stepping forward from the shadows and others are starting to take more notice of her, the reader can observe the forming of her personality. She does not adjust to the ideas of others anymore. On the contrary, she starts to develop ideas of her own. She begins to spend her pastime in a cold room full of books, which is situated a little bit further from the “centre” of the house. When Edmund arranges heating there, the room becomes something like a refuge for her. Here she finally finds peace from Mrs. Bertram and Mrs. Norris and has time to think—about Edmund, about Mrs. Crawford’s friendship and most importantly about Mr. Crawford’s behaviour and marriage proposal. A century later Virginia Woolf emphasises: “A woman must have money—and a room of her own—if she is to write fiction” (Woolf 1929, 3) Not only Fanny’s life, but also that of Jane Austen’s could be regarded as a case in point. In December 1800, the Austens decided to leave their home and move to Bath. Jane, at the age of twenty-five, was not notified

of their intention in advance. Some biographers claim that the reason behind this decision was to enhance the prospects of Jane and Cassandra's finding husbands and marrying. Yet, in the following decade, she produced almost nothing. Her mind was probably preoccupied by the travelling, new people and the new place, in which she was not comfortable. (Irvine 2005, 3). Even though Fanny does not use the East room to write fiction, she uses it to compose her own thoughts and ideas. Hence, the East room may be seen as the symbol of Fanny's independence of thought.

3.4.5. Fanny's overall respect towards others

In this chapter, the overall behaviour of the women will be compared. Even though Fanny's cousins, Julia and Maria, had better access to education about manners and society in general: "[t]heir rank, fortune, rights, and expectations, will always be different." (Austen 2005, 12), it is Fanny, who seems to be more educated in that matter. Despite the fact that her cousins treat her rather poorly, as exemplified in this excerpt: "They could not hold her cheap on finding that she had but two sashes, and had never learnt French; ..." (Austen 2005, 15), Fanny never says or does anything that might be deemed "bad" to them. That may be caused either by Fanny's low self-esteem: "... though Fanny was often mortified by their treatment of her, she thought too lowly of her own claims to feel injured by it." (Austen 2005, 22). Another reason might be the fact that she actually lives according to the manners she learnt. Maria flirts with two men at the same time; Julie is obviously jealous of her, and they compete with each other. Despite these circumstances, Fanny still respects them, and she never reveals the reason for not wanting to marry Mr. Crawford because she wants to protect her cousins' reputation as well as their feelings.

By comparing Fanny and Mary, especially when speaking to Edmund, a significant difference in behaviour can be noticed. Mary often puts herself above Edmund. This is exemplified in her disapproval of his profession—Edmund wishes to become a preacher—as well as the fact that he is a second-born. She considers herself to be a member of the higher society for the reasons that she lives in London and that she has experienced more from the world than Edmund. Fanny, who, on the other hand, grew in rather poor conditions, is very humble. Even when Mr. Crawford starts to express his love towards her, she never gets too proud of herself and never makes anyone feel inferior to her. She persists with her fair treatment even when Edmund is in

love with Mary, which is naturally difficult for her. She perseveres through Mrs. Norris' constant humiliation as well.

Fanny shows respect and holds the opinions of Sir Thomas in high regard, which is most significant, when disapproving the home theatre: "Fanny is the only one who has judged rightly throughout, who has been consistent. Her feelings have been steadily against it from first to last. She never ceased to think of what was due to you." (Austen 2005, 219)

Home theatricals were popular since the 18th century and in the houses of higher society in particular (Todd 2005), 341-42). A reader might ask, why organising home theatre is not accepted by Sir Thomas. One of the reasons for that may be the fact that the young people use Sir Thomas' resources—his money for a carpenter and his rooms in the house (including the study). At first, Edmund is against the home theatre too, but he soon falls for that idea, as he is presented with the opportunity to play a romantic scene with Miss Crawford. The fact that in Sir Thomas' absence, none of his sons is able to maintain the house in order, adds to the idea of feminism that even men can succumb to their desires and are often not able to be firm on something.

4. Analysing the works of Božena Němcová

4.1.Božena Němcová's biography

4.1.1.Němcová's family

Barbora Panklová (1820-1862) was probably born in Vienna and raised in the Austrian spirit, attending Austrian schools and learning German. It was her grandmother, who came to visit the family in Ratibořice, a small village they lived in, to help her daughter Tereza with the children, who planted the Czech seed in her. The relationship with her mother was rather cold, so she bonded with her grandmother instead. At the age of seventeen, Josef Němec, a frontier huntsman, who was eleven years older, proposed to her. At first she opposed to the idea of their marriage, but eventually she succumbed to her parents' pressure. Their marriage was an unhappy one. Josef never understood Božena's free spirit, and she never obeyed him as he was expecting her to. He was cruel to her, even used violence against her. She, on the other hand, had various affairs and often flirted with other men. The only thing that the married couple had in common was patriotism. Božena Němcová was one of the first well-known women, who were not scared to publicly express their rightfulness for diversion from an unhappy marriage. She even felt that she has the right to be understood by the society (Neudorflová 1999, 25). She gave birth to four children, whom she loved greatly.

4.1.2.Němcová's life

Due to the patriotism in her literary works, the family had to move a lot—they lived in Ratibořice, Domažlice, Prague, where she connected with local patriots, intellectuals and authors, and in many more other places. With her husband she organized gatherings at their home, where the writers and intellectuals could meet. Later, as she published more works, which dissatisfied the Austrian government, her husband started to lose one job after another and in the end, he had to move to Hungary. Božena refused to accompany him. She wanted to stay in Prague. Josef, whose salary getting progressively scarcer, then stopped sending Božena and the children money. Božena got sick and they fell into poverty. Many lent her money, many came to their home to keep Božena company. She got better for a while, but her disease never properly disappeared. When her condition allowed her to, she travelled to Slovakia, where her husband was again transferred. There she gathered inspiration for her works

from the local oral tradition. Her disease got worse, when her first-born son Hynek died and her marriage with Němec got even worse. The married couple decided to become financially separate, despite the fact that they were still living together, only in different rooms. At the age of forty-one Němcová died in her beloved Prague from cancer.

4.1.3. Němcová's patriotism

Her friends included many Czech patriots, both, male and female, such as Nebeský, Čajka, Klácel, Erben or Světlá, Podlipská. Němcová raised awareness of the fact that young women do not have anywhere to study properly, and she seeks a way how to improve this situation. She invites young women to read Czech books, but these gatherings did not last long. She often lent her books to her neighbours. Němcová's love for her nation is most visible in her works, where she celebrates Czech traditions and customs.

4.1.4. Němcová's works

Němcová is known for many of her literary works. She collected fairy tales and often transformed them to her liking. She also wrote poetry. "Českým ženám" is her first poem published with the help of V.B. Nebeský, her friend and lover. In this poem, Němcová encourages women to become mothers and raise children because that is, according to her, the most significant action a woman can do for her nation. As far as novels and short stories are concerned, the most famous of them are *Divá Bára*, *Karla* or *V zámku a podzámčí*. The work, which brought Božena Němcová the most recognition, is the so-called "treasure of Czech literature"—*Babička*. Němcová died before this book was published. The story contains autobiographical signs, since the character of "Babička" is based on Němcová's real grandmother. (see Novotný and Tille, 1947)

4.2. Historic-cultural context

In the first half of 19th century, informal and unorganized women movements started to emerge. It was the prose written by women, which played a significant role in spreading the nascent feminist ideas, such as understanding the feminine gender properly. What was significant for the women's movements in the Czech part of Austria-Hungary is the fact that they were encouraged by educated men. Czech women

understood the necessity of cooperation of both genders in order to establish equal roles for them. Czech men were aware of the value of the family and the women's role as mothers. It is important to mention that the feminist movement had just started – for that reason its form was rather conservative. Feminism in that time was mainly concerned with the women's right for education. There are no signs of the possibility of suffrage or women's involvement in politics. The women of that period, including Božena Němcová, believed that their main role was to be a mother, which, in today's form of feminism, is seen differently.

4.3. Signs of feminism in *Seven Ravens*

In this chapter, an analysis of Božena Němcová's fairy tale called *Seven Ravens* will be provided. The focus will be directed at its main protagonist, Theodora, as well. This fairy tale is much more interesting than it seems at the first sight. Hints of feminist ideas, as well as an intriguing contrast between feminist behaviour on one hand and traditional distinction between the role of a man and a woman on the other hand, can be observed. The story deals with seven brothers who do not listen to their mother. Little did the mother know that describing her sons as "greedy ravens" (Erben and Němcová 2015) would really turn her children into these animals. The seven brothers then indeed turn into seven ravens. Theodora's task in the story is to find her brothers and complete a difficult mission: to make a shirt for each of them. It is so challenging because it includes sowing the linen, weeding, spinning and bleaching it in order to rescue them.

4.3.1. Breaking the stereotype: A woman on an adventure

At the beginning of the story, Theodora decides to "go out in the world". In most fairy tales it is usually a male character who does so. In Czech stories in particular it is most often a man named "Honza" who decides to see the world and to embark on an adventure. Theodora is determined to go, even though her parents do not want her to do so. Němcová breaks the stereotype of only men being brave enough to travel and to seek adventures, which was mostly grounded in the fact that women did not have the privilege to travel as they were supposed to run the household. At the same time, Němcová's story maintains the stereotype of a traditional role of men and women in a household: "... she used to sit with her mother and Dorothy when spinning while her father told them stories or read to them." (Erben and Němcová 2015, 103) This extract

shows a common situation: men reading out loud while women, considered bad readers because they have little access to education, are doing household chores, such as spinning.

4.3.2. Theodora's heroism

Extraordinarily, in this fairy tale it is a woman, who “saves the day”, which has been a quite rare occurrence in fairy tales until recently. What is even more intriguing, is the manner, in which Theodora saves her brothers. There is no great fight with a dragon or a witch as it might be expected by the readers. Theodora saves her brothers by doing such works, which were typically done by women. The story shows the reader the very basis of feminism and simultaneously denies the most basic stereotype of it. By looking at Theodora's actions, the reader can understand one of the principles of feminism: women can “save the world” by doing what they can do best, which was in Theodora's case a traditional women's task, just as men can do so too by doing what they can do best. Demonstrating the fact that heroism can come in multiple versions corresponds with the idea of equality between men and women—both genders can achieve great things, even though the way they do differs.

4.3.3. Equality among Theodora and her husband

This chapter focuses on the symbol of equality between men and women. One of the antitheses against the idea of Theodora being a feminist character is her behaviour when a prince found her by the willow: “... she now showed his master that she was unable to speak. Regardless, he resolved to take the lovely spinner with him because he found her very attractive. (...) So she bravely submitted to the will of the young man, convinced that the trial was necessary for the liberation of her brothers” (Erben and Němcová 2015, 103) One may argue that submitting to the man without any resistance is a clear picture of a patriarchy. If Theodora had been a feminist character, she should have fought for herself. A counterargument to this suggests that this is a sign of Theodora's bravery. She knows that she must stay quiet, in order to save her brothers. If she fought, it would be probably impossible to do so. Based on the last sentence of the paragraph mentioned, she went with a stranger, even though she might have not liked it, so she could fulfil her task. The beauty of their relationship, and an implication, this was a marriage based on love, can be found in the way that Theodora is treated by her

husband: “Many times her husband begged her not to spin so diligently, that it was not necessary. But she did not allow herself to be dissuaded and finally made it clear to him by gestures that she would be most unhappy if he did not permit her to do as she wished. After that, she was able to do as she liked.” (Erben and Němcová 2015, 105) Even though the background suggests that Theodora lived in a patriarchy society, one can see an anti-patriotic, therefore feminist, behaviour from her husband. He could have ordered her not to spin. Although not explicitly mentioned, one might assume that she neglects her responsibilities in the house or her sexual “responsibilities” towards her husband, otherwise he would not have “begged her”. He, however, decides to give her a personal space, so she can devote oneself to her past time activity (as he most probably thought spinning was an important hobby for her). Theodora’s husband is willing to make compromises because he puts himself and Theodora on the same level. He treats her with respect and love. Their relationship could be considered a prototype of a “equal marriage” even in today’s society.

By stating both arguments for and against Theodora being a feminist, this paper wanted to achieve a summary of these two ideas. This paper does not claim *Seven Ravens* to be a feminist work itself, but only to have implications of it. It was taken into consideration that Božena Němcová wrote this story on the grounds of oral tradition. The reason, why *Seven Ravens* was chosen for this thesis is the intriguing contrast between feminist signs and traditional view on men and women. The fact that the contrast is so visible, suggests that Božena Němcová inserted her view as a strong and independent woman and gave the traditional fairy tale a small feminist twist.

4.4. Signs of feminism in *Divá Bára*

Němcová’s attitude in this book reflects the social pressure that has been put on women. Women were often defined only by their looks and not by their abilities. By creating Bára, a different kind of a female character, she encourages women not to be ashamed of their looks and puts greater value to the knowledge and education, which this paper considers an act of feminism.

4.4.1. Bára’s look

How much did the appearance matter, can be sensed from the very first pages of this short story. The first thing most people notice about Bára are her “bull-eyes”. Her

hair is dark, her eyebrows are very thick, she is tall and muscular. Due to her appearance, which included her having more muscles than boys her age and the fact that such an appearance was not typical for women, people started to think, she was a “wild child”, whom “Polednice”, a well-known witch in Czech fairy tales and superstitions, slipped to Jakub and Bára, Bára’s parents. One may argue that Bára looks and behaves like a boy. As the people, highly influenced by religious conventionality, are not able to understand Bára’s boyish looks and boyish behaviour, they blame the whole situation on Polednice. This thesis however believes that Němcová’s choice of Bára’s behaviour was to show the reader that there is no “feminine” or “masculine” behaviour, as both genders can behave in its own way. This claim can be also supported by Tyson’s premises, listed earlier.

4.4.2. Bára’s intelligence

Not only in her appearance, but also in the mindset and attitude Bára differentiates from the girls her age. It is not explicitly said that she is somehow smarter than the other girls, but given her life situation, her intelligence and knowledge is intriguing. One may wonder where it comes from since her father is a shepherd who believes in silly superstitions, such as not going to heaven if childless (Němcová 1974, 54), it leaves the reader with the question how Bára get to the knowledge she has. Naturally, she gained a lot of knowledge in school, although her father initially did not want to send her there and even when he did, she had to skip it sometimes to learn household chores (Němcová 1974, 55). That her intelligence is significant can be seen in many Bára’s actions. First sign of her interest in education is her knowledge of the Bible. Not only does she know what is written in the Bible, but she also understands it and apply it in the reality: “Afterall, God would not like a service, which is not trueful.”¹ (Němcová 1974, 72). Her understanding of religion also worth mentioning, as it again differentiates from the former understanding. When her father accuses her of smiling during the storm and pointing at it, she bravely explains to him that storm is worth as much appreciation as any other of God’s miracles and there is no reason to believe that storm is a sort of God’s punishment. Another sign of her intelligence, which distinguishes her from other people in the neighbourhood, is her attitude towards

¹ As there is no official translation of the work *Divá Bára*, the excerpts from this book were translated by the author of this thesis.

various superstitions. Not only she does not believe in them, but she finds it funny. It should be however mentioned that she does doubt the existence of devils and tries to summon one. Such an act underlines how brave Bára was. When she fails and does not see the devil, she never questions their existence ever again. Although not explicitly said, one may argue that her intelligence gives Bára another important quality for a strong character and that is confidence and bravery.

4.4.3. Bára's qualities and abilities

This chapter continues with Bára's qualities. Her bravery goes hand in hand with her confidence, which creates a strong and independent character. When insulted by the boys from the village, she does not hesitate to pick a fight with them—and what is more—she usually wins. Furthermore, Bára is almost never scared. She easily kills snakes on the road, while the boys run away from them. She is not scared when being near a cemetery, as she does not believe in dead becoming alive. Němcová creates an interesting contrast here: a girl being tough on the outside, looking and acting as a boy and at the same time very soft on the inside. The reader gradually discovers that her feelings are often hurt by the boys' insults and that she does not like her dark hair. Moreover, she deeply cares for her friend Eliška. In combining Bára's affection towards Eliška and her fearlessness, the reader ends up with a fascinating twist in the story, when Bára, dressed as a ghost, scares Eliška's suitor.

After her mother's death, Jakub raises his daughter alone, which may have an influence on her. Although one cannot claim that there was nobody to teach her proper manners of a decent woman, it is however indisputable that she learnt the most from her father. One of the most significant abilities she has learnt from him was swimming in the river. She was not scared of the water, neither of the animals living there. When Bára uses swimming to get away from the villagers, people are shocked by this particular skill of her. They find it really disturbing and proclaim her to be a tomboy. Her swimming may be considered as a symbol for Bára's qualities: savagery and bravery.

Bára is a capable young woman. She can cook, she is responsible and all animals in the house obey her, people from the village praise her: "Having such a girl in a household is a true God's blessing." (Němcová 1974, 66). Nevertheless, if a boy decides to marry Bára, his mother immediately forbids this, as everybody is scared of her, probably because of how different from the other girls she is.

Examining Bára's qualities and abilities, it might be concluded that Němcová again breaks the stereotype of a common woman. As a whole, Bára seems to combine common girl's and boy's characteristics, which underlines the idea of equality and hence having equal right to do anything. One may argue that this story may be the story that Němcová might have wanted for herself. By looking at Němcová's life, one sees that men often treated her unfairly and with no respect. By creating such a character as Bára, she established a utopian world, where a woman could step up for herself and still get a happy ending.

4.4.4. Contrast between Jozífek and Bára

Given the society manners in the times, the contrast between Jozífek and Bára may be viewed as a symbol of feminism. "Jozífek was rather small, pale, read-headed, warm-hearted and very timid. Bára, on the other hand, was a head taller than him and during a fray, Jozífek always hid behind her. She bravely defended him from the boys, as he could not measure with them." (Němcová 1974, 60) From this extract, one may see that the traditional roles of men and women are attacked. On next few pages, one quickly understands that Jozífek's mother does not like Bára, and she maintains this attitude throughout the whole story. This paper argues that Jozífek's inability to "be a man" and step up for himself in a boy's fight, may add to the reasons, why Jozífek's mother does not like Bára: "The sexton's wife was angry with Jozífek for being an oaf and letting a girl defend him and for being in love with that girl." (Němcová 1974, 67). Overall, the fact that boy can be "soft" and "weak" and a girl can be "tough" and "strong" breaks another cultural stereotype of that time. By showing the reader, who is probably a child or a teenager, Němcová's target audience, she assures them that it is neither strange, nor unacceptable to be different. On the contrary, she celebrates it. Jozífek's softness could be a huge benefit in his job as a preacher, because such a profession directly requires having strong emotions to feel God's presence and sympathy not to judge people when coming for forgiveness.

4.4.5. Bára's attitude toward marriage

Nobody thought that Bára would ever get married (Němcová 1974, 73). Despite having the same abilities as any other "marriageable" woman and even more, people are scared of her. As already mentioned earlier, mothers advise their sons not to propose to

her. At the same time Bára does not seem to pay much attention to finding a husband. Neither does she flirt with boys, nor does she persuade any. Thanks to her attitude, one may assume that she is ready to stay without a husband and be happy nevertheless. Despite knowing about Jozífek's feelings for her, she never wants him to propose. By focusing on the fact that Bára prioritizes her happiness (which she believes can be achieved even without husband) over the social manners, which requires women to get married, the reader sees a glimpse of feminist idea: the choice of not being a wife or a mother.

5. Comparison of Jane Austen and Božena Němcová

5.1. Overall lifestyle

Němcová and Austen led very different lives. Jane Austen never married, had no children and led generally a peaceful life. Božena Němcová, on the other hand, had a husband and children, struggled her whole life with money, marriage, and reputation. Furthermore, the conditions of the countries they lived in varied greatly. Great Britain at the turn of 18th century dealt with Napoleon's invasions, whereas Czech Republic was under the Austrian domination. Austen does not mention the situation in her country in the works, whereas the intention of Němcová's works was often to raise knowledge of the Czech nation. However, as female authors, they struggled with similar problems, such as publication issues. Jane Austen published her works through her brother Henry, although her authorship was mostly known. Although Němcová was known and acknowledged, some argued that the works she published were not indeed hers since her friends, Nebeský or Čejka often corrected her works before publishing.

5.2. The heroine's appearance

One of the similarities this paper finds in the books of these authors is the fact that they create heroines whose appearance can be extraordinarily beautiful or plainly average. As far as Elizabeth and Theodora are concerned, Elizabeth's appearance is not described in great detail, whereas Theodora is referred to as a beautiful woman. When examining the looks of Fanny and Bára, the reader soon discovers, they look rather "average" if not even "ugly". At the beginning of the *Mansfield Park*, Fanny Price is described rather negatively: "... there might not be much in her first appearance to captivate (...) with no glow of complexion, nor any other striking beauty; exceedingly timid and shy, and shrinking from notice ..." (Austen 2005, 13). Bára is, on the other hand, described in a quite normal way, with the difference that the description would rather suit for a boy than a girl: "Thick bones and strong muscles—that was her body. Her head seemed large because of the hair, black as raven, long and coarse as horsehair. Her forehead was low, her nose was short and pug, her mouth was big and her lips were always pouting." (Němcová 1974, 55-56). This thesis believes that both authors wanted to point out the fact that women were often judged only by their looks and therefore by the ability to represent their husbands. By creating female characters, who are not defined only by their beauty, authors bring other women's abilities into the light, such

as their intelligence, interest in education and sympathy. As far as Fanny and Bára are concerned, their strong sense for friendship and sympathy is what makes them special. The fact that there is more in a woman than her beauty and that women deserve the chance to be extraordinary in other fields, is yet another of the main feminist ideas, which both Austen and Němcová inserted in their works.

5.3.Narrative forms

Irvine (2005, 110-16) suggests that there are two narrative styles competing in the works of Jane Austen—education and the marriage plot. This paper believes those same approaches can be seen in the works of Božena Němcová as well. The educational narrative style focuses on the development of the protagonists, especially on inside: “the protagonist becomes happy not primarily by changing their outward circumstances but by changing their “self” through a process of thinking about that “self” ... (Irvine 2005, 112). This approach is worldwide known by a German term *Bildungsroman*. Austen’s round characters, Elizabeth and Fanny, both undergo a change throughout their story and learn “to accept a seemingly inevitable unhappiness” (Irvine 2005, 115). Elizabeth’s prejudice towards Darcy is broken in the climax of the story, as Elizabeth discovers the truth and by “self-analysing” herself realises, she was wrong about him. Fanny accepts her inevitable unhappiness when discovering Edmund’s affection towards Mary Crawford. Although Edmund’s heart seems to belong to Mrs. Crawford she does not succumb to Mr. Crawford for the reason that she not only does not love him, but she even despises him for his previous mind games. As far as Němcová’s protagonists are concerned, this thesis considers them as round characters undergoing various changes as well. Theodora accepts her inevitable unhappiness as she is ready to die in order to save her brothers. Bára changes her “self” when she steps up to save her friend from an unhappy marriage. The reader observes Bára’s realisation that her friendship with Eliška is more valuable than the public’s opinion of her. Furthermore, Bára is ready to stay unmarried rather than marry without love.

The second narrative approach—the plot ending with a marriage as a happy ending—seems contradictory to the educational approach. In the works of Austen and Němcová, it however co-exists in a sort of symbiosis. According to Tave (1973, 17-18) the reason for that might lay in the fact that the happy endings are not caused by the heroines’ actions. The protagonists are prepared to stay unhappy beforehand, and the happy

endings then happen by a sudden arbitrary event. Irvine (2005, 115) therefore believes that by maintaining the grounds of the romantic genre (marriage as a happy ending), Austen was capable to insert a feminist agenda into it without breaking the genre as such. This thesis believes that Němcová, using similar approaches, inserted feminist ideas into her works in such a deliquiate way, her works got published, nevertheless.

5.4. “Marriage refusals”

In this part, marriage refusal, occurring in the works of both authors, will be compared. Although not no marriage is explicitly refused in the works of Božena Němcová, there are signs that suggest them. No matter how untypical, Bára in *Divá Bára* refuses two potential marriages. In the climax of the story, when Bára dressed as a ghost scares Eliška’s suitor and threatens him not to come to see Eliška again, she is basically delivering him a message from Eliška (however without knowledge), which clearly shows that Eliška does not love him and does not wish to marry him. The second “refusal” is again never specifically said. What makes it clear to Bára that Jozífek has feelings towards her, is that he does not want to become a preacher because of his love for her. Although Bára had no other suitors, she did not want to be with man that she did not love, as it would be unfair to both of them. She might have learnt from her parents’ actions, as their marriage was mainly based on Jakub’s belief in superstitions, and it is not ever really clear if they were in love. There may be a certain connection between Bára and Božena Němcová herself. It is no secret that Němcová was suffering greatly in her marriage, as her husband did not treat her well. Hence, Bára in *Divá Bára* might behave in the way Němcová wished to behave herself—not to marry her husband in the first place.

In the works of Jane Austen, numerous marriage refusals occur. Both Elizabeth Bennet and Fanny Price, heroines discussed in this thesis, refuse their suitors. The reasons for that are very similar: neither of them loves the potential husband and do not want to settle for a “marriage of convenience”, as their hearts belong to someone else. This thesis argues that Jane Austen, when creating such situations, was influenced by her own life decisions. Regarding Austen’s love life, there are two men mentioned in her biographies. Tom Lefroy, a family friend, who was however too young and poor, never even proposed to Jane. Another suitor, Bigg-Wither, also a family friend, who was, on the contrary, from a wealthy landowning family, proposed to Jane and she accepted it.

She however took her acceptance back in the following morning. Some argue that she had realized, she would never love him, as he was supposedly a man very hard to like (Irvine 2005, 3).

Each author used the marriage refusal in a different way, but it can be argued that it expressed a very similar thought. As it can be seen in the previous chapters of this thesis, both authors wrote in rather romantic style, focusing on romance and believing in true love. Hence both found it necessary to fight for those ideals. All heroines discussed had to fight in order get a happy ending and in the cases of Elizabeth, Fanny and Bára, one of the struggles concerned an unlovable man, who tried to trap them in either marriage of convenience or simply in a marriage without true mutual love. By focusing on the heroines' attitudes towards such marriages, one may observe an idea of beginning feminism—fighting for an option of choice. By putting their feelings on an equal level with the potential husband's feelings, they express the importance of equality between men and women as such marriages are not, according to the authors, fair to neither the man nor the woman.

6. Conclusion

The main goal of this thesis was to explore similarities and differences between Jane Austen and Božena Němcová's selected works. The thesis analysed these works and tried to find arguments for or against the claim whether any feminist signs appear there. The reason for choosing these particular authors, was their influence on the literature in the respective countries. First part of this thesis is dedicated to the feminist background in literature. The fundamental thesis by L. Tyson were presented and the definition of a feminist was clarified.

Second part of this thesis focuses on Jane Austen, her biography and the historic background of her time, and on the analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park*. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the following symbols were discussed: reading, walking alone in the countryside and Elizabeth's marriage refusal. Reading, although activity suitable for both sexes, is considered a sign of feminist attitude, as Elizabeth reads more complicated books, which enabled her to speak of more complicated matters. That contradicts the stereotype that women enjoy only romantic novels or short stories, whose plot is rather simple. By considering the feminist premises by L. Tyson, one is not difficult to find the reason for the existence of this stereotype. It is the patriarchal society, which teaches it is always the man, who is supposed to make decisions, since they are seen as "more capable". The claim here is that patriarchy is the reason why women were thought to be unable to understand more complex literature. This claim can be supported by the other two symbols discussed in the analysis. The fact that Elizabeth's walks without companion in the countryside are considered inappropriate, again indicate the prejudice of women's inability to fight the danger, perhaps even the unsuitability for a lady engage in such activity. The last symbol, marriage refusal, which occurs in *Mansfield Park* too, contributes to the claim of feminism the most, as the patriarchy views women as unable to decide for themselves and therefore are completely dependent on the man. In the analysis of *Mansfield Park*, the following was discussed: Fanny's interest in education, her marriage refusal (already mentioned in *Pride and Prejudice*), teaching her younger sister, the East room and her overall respect. Again, Tyson's premises were applied on the symbols above. When discussing Fanny's interest in education, one can raise similar arguments, as this thesis already did when analysing the symbol of reading in *Pride and Prejudice* (considering reading more difficult books may implicate the desire for education). Tyson premises were not

applied, when analysing Fanny's attitude towards her sister and her being a role model for her, because this symbol does not directly consider the problem of patriarchy. The reason for mentioning this symbol lies more in the relationship in the feminist community. This thesis wants to raise the awareness of the importance of supporting and leading young woman to follow the correct example, as Fanny, in contrast to her mother, did. This closely correlates with Fanny's overall respect towards everyone in the family, including Mr. Norris, who could be very mean to Fanny. This thesis sees in Fanny's attitude the very basis of the theory of feminism—equality and respect. Last symbol discussed in *Mansfield Park* was the importance of the East room, a room where Fanny decides to stay in the second half of the book. One sees the connection in the A Room of one's own by Virginia Woolf, where she underlines the importance of women having a personal space if they desire to achieve something and states the fact that they are often not able to do so. Similarly wanted Fanny to be further from Mr. Norris' orders in order to have the time and privacy to think about her struggles, so she decides to move to the East Room, which becomes a shelter or a refuge for her. To conclude the second part of the thesis, it believes that Austen's works do include feminist signs. This outcome was based on the clear connection between Tyson's premises and the evidence lying in the symbols discussed and on the additional information in the secondary literature, such as Todd's *Jane Austen in Context* or Irvine's *Jane Austen*.

The third part of the thesis focuses on Božena Němcová - her biography, the historical context of the time she lived in, and, most importantly, on the analysis of her works, the fairy tale *Seven Ravens*, and short story *Divá Bára*. By focusing on Němcová's life, this thesis focuses on her involvement in various writers' organisations, her participation in movements fighting for women's and girls' education and her patriotism, as those activities support the idea of her being a feminist. When analysing the fairy tale *Seven Ravens*, the following was discussed: a woman on adventure, Theodora's heroism and the equality between Teodora and her husband. By examining the main protagonist, Theodora, the difference between this fairy tale and other fairy tales written in that time can be seen. As it was a man, who usually embarked on the adventure, this book offers the reader a female character, who is not scared of leaving her parents and is brave enough to look for her brothers. The thesis claims that this attitude is what makes Němcová a feminist. Theodora is able to find her brothers by doing "feminine things". This thesis believes that Němcová wanted to show how important the job of women in the house is, and that they should be celebrated for the

endeavour they put into the family's well-being. When applying Tyson's premises on the symbols, one can again connect the dots between her argument of patriarchy describing women as the "other gender" and Němcová's effort to break this stereotype by putting a female protagonist in the spotlight. Lastly, the main goal of feminism, which is, according to Tyson, equality, can be seen in the relationship between Theodora and her husband, who is able to respect her personal wishes, even though he might not find them as important as Theodora does. In the analysis of *Divá Bára* the focus was primarily put on the main protagonist, on her look, intelligence, abilities and her attitude towards marriage. In the analysis of Bára, very similar arguments can be made to those made when discussing Theodora in *Seven Ravens*, because both of Němcová's heroines break the stereotype "women=weak", which Tyson mentions in her premises. As far as breaking the stereotype is concerned, Němcová's portrayal of both Bára and Jozífek, shows the reader that men can be the psychically weak ones and women those who are able to protect the weak. Němcová here emphasizes the need of distinguishing sexes and gender, just as Tyson's premises refer.

Last section of this thesis pursues the similarities and difference between Jane Austen and Božena Němcová—their overall lifestyle, their narrative style, including the heroine's appearance, and the symbol of marriage refusals in her works. When looking at their biographies, one must take in consideration that they lived in completely different environments. Therefore comparing, for example, their involvements in any political movements, is not objective because women's role in the society had greatly changed. Even though they lived in a completely different situations, this thesis could find a few similarities in their narrative style, such as their shared belief in marriage based on love and a happy ending. Neither of them considered women's appearance as particularly important for the heroine and their heroines were not women of exceptional beauty, but they were still able to achieve great things. Last similarity examined in this thesis is the symbol of marriage refusal. As stated before, this thesis believes that both authors shared a positive attitude towards marriage based on love. In addition to this, the heroines thought that fighting for this kind of marriage is worth going through various struggles. A connection can be found in the Austen's biography, as she is said to have declined a marriage herself. Němcová, on the other hand got married and spent her life, according to various historians, in an unhappy marriage.

This thesis tried to answer the question whether the works discussed may be viewed as feminist works. Looking at a literary work through feminist lens is rather

subjective. It must be therefore kept in mind that the claim of this paper was not meant to express a universal truth, but rather to state an opinion based on evidence. Thanks to the information found in secondary sources regarding Jane Austen and the evidence found in the works analysed (*Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*) in the chapters three and four, the paper claims that the ideas of nascent/arising feminism do appear in the works. Adding to the fact that Jane Austen also denied a marriage proposal because she could not love the man who asked her hand, the paper concludes that Jane Austen can be indeed considered to be an early feminist. As far as Božena Němcová's works are concerned, there are feminist signs included in her works, but they are not as visible as in the works of Austen. But considering Němcová's life, this paper would place her among early Czech feminist for numerous reasons. By collecting the Czech fairy tales and Czech traditions, she was raising awareness of the Czech spirit. She cooperated with other Czech patriots, such as Palacký, Erben or Čajka. Her patriotic works caused her and her husband a lot of troubles with the Austrian government. Not only was she involved in patriotic actions, but she also took part in the early feminist actions in Czech Republic, such as founding schools for girls. In conclusion, this thesis claims both authors to be early feminists—each in her own way—Jane Austen was a bigger feminist in her books, Božena Němcová in her real life. Finally, I would like to conclude this paper with a quote from *Divá Bára*, which, in my opinion, expresses the very foundation of the feminist movement: “Do not belittle yourself and do not exalt me, as we are equal.” (Němcová 1974, 74)

7. Shrnutí

Cílem mé bakalářské práce bylo srovnání autorek Jane Austenové a Boženy Němcové a zodpovězení otázky, zdali tyto autorky mohou být nazývány feministkami. Práce se v prvních kapitolách zabývá teorií feminizmu, upozorňuje na různorodé definice a vytyká základní teze feminizmu. Podle L. Tyson (2015) je základní myšlenkou feminizmu rovnost mezi muži a ženami. Tyson také odmítá fakt, že by taková rovnost měla nějakým způsobem ovlivnit rodinné hodnoty. Tyson upozorňuje na rozdíl biologické definice (muž a žena) a kulturní definice pohlaví, tzn. považování určitých vzorců chování za „ženské“ či „mužské“, např. pokud „chovat se jako žena“ indikuje podřízenost a „chovat se jako muž“ indikuje sílu. Feminismus mimo jiné definuje tzv. patriarchální společnost, což je společnost, kde ženy jsou vnímány jako sekundární pohlaví, definováno jako „není muž“, tj. na základě odlišnosti od mužského pohlaví. Dále feminismus uvádí, že právě patriarchální společnost je důvodem k ekonomickému, politickému, sociálnímu či psychologickému útlaku žen. Tato bakalářská práce dále definuje pojem „feminista/feministka“, tj. osoba, podporující výše zmíněné argumenty, a zdůrazňuje, že feministy mohou být jak muži, tak i ženy.

Třetí kapitola je věnována Jane Austenové – její biografii, kulturně-historickému kontextu doby, ve které žila, a analýze děl *Pýcha a předsudek* a *Mansfieldské panství*. V těchto dílech jsou hledány symboly, které můžeme označit jako feministické. V díle *Pýcha a předsudek* analyzujeme následující symboly: četba, chůze v přírodě o samotě a odmítnutí nabídky ke sňatku. Ačkoli četba byla aktivita vhodná pro obě pohlaví, tento symbol poukazuje na myšlenku feminizmu. Elizabeth, hlavní hrdinka, totiž čte náročnější knihy, a je tak schopna vést konverzace na vyšší úrovni, což je v rozporu s předsudkem, že ženy by měly číst pouze romantické příběhy, jejichž zápletka není příliš složitá. Přirovnáme-li tento fakt k výše zmíněným tezím, můžeme si odvodit původ tohoto předsudku. Patriarchální společnost tvrdí, že pouze muž může být zodpovědný činit rozhodnutí, protože je „schopnější“. Práce proto tvrdí, že za tímto předsudkem stojí právě patriarchát. K tvrzení přispívají také další dva symboly, které jsou v analýze rozebrány. Fakt, že Elizabethino rozhodnutí chodit sama v přírodě, je považováno za nevhodné chování, naznačuje neschopnost žen bojovat s nebezpečím, což je opět předsudek patriarchální společnosti. Poslední symbol, odmítnutí nabídky ke sňatku, který nalezneme i v *Mansfieldském panství*, přispívá k tvrzení, že v díle jsou náznaky

feminismu, nejvíce. Patriarchální společnost totiž vnímá ženy jako bytosti neschopné se rozhodnout samy za sebe, a považuje je tedy za naprosto závislé na mužích.

Analýza díla *Mansfieldské panství* se soustředila na následující symboly: Fannin zájem o vzdělání, odmítnutí nabídky ke sňatku (již zmíněno výše), vyučování Fanniny mladší sestry, důležitost východního pokojíku a Fannino chování k ostatním lidem. Tyto symboly byly opět srovnávány se základními znaky feminismu podle L. Tyson. Předpokládáme-li, že zájem o vzdělání implikuje touhu po čtení náročnějších knih, můžeme při zkoumání symbolu „Fannin zájem o vzdělání“ dojít ke stejnému závěru jako při zkoumání symbolu „četba“ v díle *Pýcha a předsudek*. Naopak symbol „vyučování Fanniny mladší sestry“ byl analyzován jinak než předchozí symboly, které byly srovnávány se znaky feminismu podle Tyson, a to proto, že symbol přímo nekonfrontuje patriarchát. Důvod k zahrnutí tohoto symbolu spočívá spíše ve vztazích feministické komunity. V práci upozorňujeme, jak je důležité věnovat se mladším ženám a být pro ně správným příkladem. To pozorujeme právě u Fanny, jež, na rozdíl od své matky, byla pro mladší sestru příkladem, který potřebovala, aby mohla rozvíjet své schopnosti a nadání. Toto úzce souvisí také s dalším ze symbolů v díle, a tím je chování Fanny k ostatním lidem. Fanny, přestože se k ní její sestřenice nebo i paní Norrisová, nechovaly příliš hezky, přistupovala ke všem s respektem a úctou a práce v tomto přístupu vidí znaky feminismu – rovnost mezi lidmi a vzájemný respekt. Posledním symbolem, kterým se tato kapitola zabývá, je důležitost východního pokojíku, do kterého se Fanny přestěhovala v druhé části knihy. Pokud se podíváme na dílo Virginie Woolfové *Vlastní pokoj*, můžeme zde vidět souvislost. Woolfová zde považuje za důležité, aby žena měla soukromí, pokud chce něčeho dosáhnout, a kritizuje to, že ženy tuto možnost často nemají. Stejně tak i Fanny chce být dál od paní Norrisové a jejich neustálých úkolů, touží po soukromí a času přemýšlet. Východní pokojík se tak pro ni stává útočištěm a skrýší. Závěrem tato kapitola vyvozuje, že *Pýcha a předsudek* a *Mansfieldské panství* obsahují prvky feminismu, a to na základě srovnání důkazů nalezených ve vybraných dílech s feministickými tezemi a vybranou sekundární literaturou.

Čtvrtá kapitola je věnována Boženě Němcové – její biografii, historicky-kulturnímu kontextu doby, ve které žila, a především analýze děl – pohádce *Sedmero krkavců* a povídky *Divá Bára*. Tato práce vyzdvihuje život Boženy Němcové, která se účastnila mnoha spisovatelských setkání a bojovala za vzdělávání žen a dívek, což považujeme za znak počátečního feminismu. Při analýze pohádky *Sedmero krkavců* jsme se soustředili

na následující symboly a témata: žena, která jde do světa, Bohdančino hrdinství a rovnost ve vztahu mezi Bohdankou a jejím manželem. Při studiu hlavní hrdinky jsme narazili na několik rozdílů mezi pohádkou Sedmero krkavců a ostatními „klasickými“ pohádkami. Většinou to byl právě muž, nejčastěji „Honza“, který se vydává do světa za dobrodružstvím. Zde nám naopak Němcová představuje statečnou ženu, která se nebojí opustit své rodiče a je rozhodnuta zachránit své bratry, což, podle této práce, přispívá k myšlence, že Božena Němcová byla feministkou. Bohdanka je totiž schopna zachránit své bratry tím, že vykonává „ženské práce“ jako je tkaní látky a šití košil. Myslíme si proto, že Němcová chce tímto zdůraznit, jak důležitá je role ženy v domácnosti a že si za to zaslouží uznání společnosti. Aplikujeme-li na tuto symboliku feministické myšlenky podle L. Tyson, pozorujeme spojitost mezi patriarchálním tvrzením, že ženy jsou „sekundární pohlaví“ a odmítnutí tohoto postoje Němcovou, kdy do popředí příběhu dosazuje právě ženu. Posledním symbolem, který v pohádce Sedmero krkavců nalézáme, je rovnost ve vztahu Bohdanky a jejího manžela. Bohdančinu manželovi se nelíbí, kolik času Bohdanka věnuje práci na košilích, a přeje si, aby přestala. Přesto ale respektuje její přání v tom pokračovat, což nás opět odkazuje na znaky feminizmu – rovnost mezi lidmi a vzájemná úcta. Při analýze povídky *Divá Bára* jsme se soustředili především na hlavní hrdinku Báru – na její vzhled, inteligenci, schopnosti a postoj k manželství. Zabývali jsme se velice podobnými argumenty jako při zkoumání postavy Bohdanky v pohádce „Sedmero krkavců“, a to z toho důvodu, že Němcová v obou postavách bortí stereotyp „žena=slabost“, který Tyson zmiňuje výše. Němcová podobně postupuje při zobrazení Báry a Jozífka. Ukazuje čtenáři i tu možnost, že muž může být fyzicky slabší a žena schopná jej ochránit.

Poslední část je věnována podobnostem a rozdílům mezi Jane Austenovou a Boženou Němcovou. Je zaměřena na životní styl autorek, způsob vyprávění, včetně vzhledu jejich hrdínek a symbolu odmítnutí nabídky ke sňatku. Při posuzování životních stylů autorek musíme mít ovšem na paměti, že žily ve zcela jiné době, a tak není možné, aby toto srovnání bylo objektivní. Ačkoli se role ženy ve společnosti od doby Jane Austenové do doby Boženy Němcové hodně změnila, můžeme nalézt několik podobností v jejich dílech. Obě se shodují na tom, že vzhled ženy není zásadní, a obě tak psaly i o hrdinkách, které nevynikaly krásou, přesto ale byly schopné dosáhnout velkých věcí. Obě autorky, přestože se jejich životy lišily, věřily, že manželství z lásky je „šťastným koncem“. Navíc obě psaly o tom, že za takové manželství stojí bojovat, a to i tak, že jejich hrdinky odmítaly nabídky k sňatku, které z lásky nebyl. Zde můžeme

vidět spojitost v životě Jane Austenové, kdy sama odmítla nabídku ke sňatku, což bychom také mohli považovat za náznak feministického smýšlení. Na rozdíl od Austenové, Němcová nebyla takového činu schopna, a prožila tak velice nešťastné manželství.

Tato bakalářská práce se také zabývala zodpovězením otázky, zdali vybraná díla mohou být nazývána feministickými. Vzhledem k tomu, že posuzování literárních děl prostřednictvím feminismu je velmi subjektivní, musíme vzít v potaz to, že závěrečné tvrzení práce je pouze subjektivní názor podpořený důkazy. Na základě analýz děl Jane Austenové a sekundární literatury docházíme k závěru, že prvky feminismu se ve zkoumaných dílech opravdu vyskytují. I v dílech Boženy Němcové jsme našli prvky feminismu, i když nebyly tak výrazné jako v dílech Jane Austenové. Podíváme-li na její život, zařadili bychom Němcovou mezi feministy z mnoha důvodů. Spolupracovala s českými vlastenci, jako byli Palacký, Erben nebo Čajka, sbírala lidovou slovesnost, a tak se aktivně podílela na českém národním obrození. Její vlastenecká díla nakonec způsobila mnoho problémů nejen jí, ale i jejímu manželovi. Nejenže se Němcová účastnila akcí vlasteneckých, ale také se podílela na zakládání škol pro dívky. Dnes je Němcová považována za jednu nejvýznamnějších postav české historie.

Tato bakalářská práce tak zařazuje obě autorky mezi jedny z prvních feministek, kdy každá se o to zasloužila jiným způsobem. Jane Austenová svůj feministický postoj vyjadřovala spíše prostřednictvím svých hrdinek a Božena Němcová svůj feministický postoj dala najevo svou aktivní účastí ve vlastenecké společnosti. Práci bychom chtěli zakončit citátem z *Divé Báry*, který shrnuje základní myšlenku teorie feminismu: „Nesnižuj sebe, nepovyšuj mne, jsme si rovny.“ (Němcová 1974, 74)

8. Annotation

Jméno a příjmení:	Gabriela Czyžová
Katedra:	Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky
Vedoucí práce:	doc. Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, Ph.D.
Rok obhajoby:	2022

Název práce:	Srovnání Jane Austenové a Boženy Němcové
Název v angličtině:	Comparison of Jane Austen and Božena Němcová
Abstrakt práce:	Tato bakalářská práce pojednává o Jane Austenové a Boženě Němcové, o jejich životech a jejich postoji k ženským hrdinkám. Práce zkoumá podobnosti mezi těmito dvěma autorkami a snaží se zodpovědět otázku, zdali bychom je mohli nazývat feministkami.
Klíčová slova:	feminismus, Jane Austenová, Božena Němcová, Pýcha a předsudek, Mansfieldské panství, Sedmero krkavců, Divá Bára
Abstrakt v angličtině:	This bachelor thesis is focuses on Jane Austen and Božena Němcová, their lives and their attitude towards women in their era, which are captured in their works. It explores the aspects in which are these two authors similar and whether they can be described as early feminists.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	feminism, feminist criticism, Jane Austen, Božena Němcová, Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park, Seven Ravens, Wild Bára
Přílohy vázané v práci:	-
Rozsah práce	43 s
Jazyk práce:	anglický

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