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**The Comparison of the Role of Literary Heroines and Gender
Stereotypes in the Past and the Present Time**

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Prohlášení:

Prohlašuji, že jsem svou diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a použila jsem pouze prameny uvedené v seznamu literatury.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BJD - Bridget Jones's Diary

NUWSS - National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies

PP – Pride and Prejudice

WSPU -Women's Social and Political Union

WWI –First World War

WWII –Second World War

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ABSTRACT

This diploma thesis deals with the status of women in the British society throughout the centuries, and the reflection of their position in literature. In the theoretical part all historical periods, from prehistoric times until today, are covered, and the change of the position of the female gender and the progress is outlined, with regard to the centuries. The practical part is based on the theoretical background and it focuses on two selected literary works from different time periods. I deal with the role, life and attitudes of the literary heroines of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Bridget Jones's Diary*. The analysis is focused mainly on the protagonists of these novels. The content of the novels as well as the analysis and the comparison of the lives of Bridget Jones and Elizabeth Bennet serve as a reflection of the gender stereotypes and oppressions in the context of the changing position of women in the course of British history.

INTRODUCTION

The topic of the gender equality has always held my interest. I have decided to focus on The Great Britain because it has been the European cradle of women's rights. The status of women has considerably changed over the centuries. It takes a great leap of imagination to realise that the benefits, rights and freedom British women of the new millennium possess is actually a great victory. It should not be considered as a standard. Nowadays, many women take for granted the fact that they are given the possibility to choose their own path in life. In my humble opinion, it is most important to remember that people fought hard to accomplish the current status that women have in the British society. Moreover, people should continue to enhance and strengthen the position of the female gender because the genuine equality between the genders has not been entirely won yet.

The diploma thesis concentrates on how the gender stereotypes and restrictions, characteristic for the selected periods, and the changing status of women resulted in literature. The status of women throughout centuries is discussed in the theoretical part, and the reflection of their roles is dealt with in the practical part.

The aim of the theoretical part is to lay the basis for the complex and detailed insight into the issue of women's rights and the changing position of female gender throughout the centuries of British history. It focuses on the lives and the position of British women throughout the course of time. I decided to cover all the historical eras, starting with the prehistoric times and ending with the current era, in order to provide a thorough knowledge of the role of women in the society.

The work outlines the role of female gender in each period in relation to duties, rights and possibilities. The level of liberty and independency of women, their access to education, occupations and public functions and their everyday life in general are taken into consideration. The goal is also to show what obstacles women had to face and overcome to gain the current status, independency and the level of equality.

The practical part is dealing with the reflection of the role of the female gender in literature. It focuses on the content of two novels- Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*. I try to analyse these two books and later compare them, in relation to the themes, literary heroines and their role in the society of the turn of the 19th and the late 20th century, and the society of their times in general. The analyses and the comparison of

both books serve as a portrayal of the changes and most importantly of the progress regarding the issue of female rights. By comparing the everyday life of protagonists Bridget Jones and Elizabeth Bennet, the society around them, the social manners and demands, and the oppression and restrictions characteristic for their period authentically, the position of women in relation to their rights, equality, independence, and opportunities is going to be reflected. The progress and changes over the nearly 200 years, which is the time difference between publishing both of the novels are also going to be depicted.

THEORETICAL PART

1. The position of women in the society throughout the centuries

21st century women take it for granted that the majority of them have the freedom to own property, vote, speak their minds, be educated, have a career, obtain custody of children, independently decide whether or not to marry, or whether to start a family or not. This was, however, not the case of our female ancestors. In the following chapter, the change of position of women throughout the British history is going to be discussed in order to gain a better insight into the complex nature of this topic. It lays the foundations for deeper understanding the conditions and influences under which the status of women changed over the centuries.

1.1 From the Stone Age to the Vikings

Although each historical period of time is undoubtedly unique and the conditions differ, the inferior position of woman remained more or less unchanged during long centuries. The different role of men and women was clearly visible since the Stone Age. The division between male and female work was already determined in that time. Men as the stronger sex were supposed to be the protectors of the family and breadwinners, they were hunting and fishing and providing the food. On the other hand, the task of women was to take care of descendants, prepare meals, preserving, storing a gathering food (like nuts, fruits, berries, leaves from wild sources) and keeping the fire. (Judge, Langdon, 2011, p 4)

Despite dividing the duties into exclusive domains of women and men, which can be already taken as the general perception that women are weaker and subordinate to men, women still had still a strong position in the society because they were worshipped for reproduction of the human race. This was reflected in the cult of mother as a goddess of fertility. Nevertheless, we cannot assume that a society that worships female fertility gives real power to women. (Mráz, 2009)

Over the thousand years, the nature and weather changed and these new conditions resulted in the fact that people started to domesticate animals for meat and milk and other utilization. Agriculture and animal husbandry gradually led to rising position of men in society. The increasing importance of men caused that matriarchy was replaced by patriarchy. (McDowall, 1989, p 3-6)

The only period of time where women were considered to be equal to men was Celtic period. This period, also called Iron Age, lasted from 700BC until the Roman invasion in 43 AD. In that time, the Celtic culture spread over the most of the area of the British Isles. Celtic women had more independence compared to their counterparts in Greek, Roman, and other ancient societies, and they were distinct in the ancient world for the rights they enjoyed and the position they held in society. (Lonigan, 2007)

They were cherished for their modesty and morality and for maintaining households. They were protected by the law for their whole life, by their parents from the time they were born, then it was their husband's role to keep them safe and last but not least by their children. As for marriage, women could freely choose their husband. It was not the matter of business. Only noble women were being advised about whom it is beneficial to marry or not. Another important right that belonged to them was to own property, which gave them, without no doubt, more sovereign position in the society. (Savino, 2002)

Women were also protected in the fields of crime and sexual rape. Celtic women were not discriminated even in other, until that time unachievable, domains. Firstly, one of the biggest advantages was the opportunity to be educated, secondly the possibility to fight for their tribe and to become its leader. One cogent proof of such fact is indubitably Boudicca, famous Celtic woman that remains in the awareness for successfully leading her tribe against Roman capitol London. At first, Boudicca gained poor reputation by early British historians, she was depicted as a negative hero, but later on in the period of Elizabeth I. her reputation improved and before long, she represented a model for Suffragettes and to the present she is honoured as a successful, courageous heroine. (Collingridge, 2016)

Due to the fact that Celtic women served as both warriors and rulers, and it was possible for them to be trained to fight with swords and other weapons, it was only logical that they were included in myths, so typical for Celtic culture. They were inspiration for creating supernatural women and various goddesses. (MacLeod 2012, p 185)

Celtic women seem not to have been disqualified from any occupation, they could become druids, including priestesses, healers, poets and they could even conduct business without consent from their husbands. They managed to hold a prominent role in spite of the fact that the public life was largely a men's domain in that period. (Savino, 2002)

In comparison with the Celtic society, Roman society was very patriarchal, men were holding all the power and women did not have many rights, they were not allowed to vote or participate in political activities, they have to get married in an early age and their primary role was childbearing. Women did not have control over their lives and apart from childbearing, the other prescribed role for woman was mother, daughter and wife. Women did not have their own identities or personal choice, they should remain modest, loyal and obedient to their families. Notwithstanding all the benefits and improvements Britain accomplished under the rule of Romans, the position of women regressed in comparison with Celtic society. (Mason, 2011)

The situation improved into some extent in times of the Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings. Women were nearly equal to men until Norman Conquest in 1066, when women were considered to be unimportant in the eyes of the military society. (Fell, 1984)

The position of women in this period depended on her social status and religion. Many women hold a solid status and independence, but again according to the class they belonged to. In general, the job of ordinary, working class women, was to work with textile (e.g. sewing, weaving wool and making clothes or bed clothes for their family members), feed and milk the domesticated animals, make cheese and dairy, etc. They did not carry out hard physical work if they were not peasants or slaves. (Sharman, 1995 p.23)

Marriage was not so strict as in Roman period, although for nobility entering into marriage was mostly for political reasons and financial benefits. Divorces were rare, but possible, women could also gain custody over their children. Even though there were laws against rape and seduction, women were regularly beaten by their husbands. Speaking in general terms, the way of treating women was primarily the result of social class than sex in Anglo-Saxon England. (Mason, 2011)

Within Viking society, the prosperity of family was at the forefront of interests. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle notes that when Vikings were moving from Scandinavia between years 892-895, they took their whole families with them. Viking women did play a part in the process of settlement, they were heads of households and everything connected to it (their responsibilities were to look after the farm, children, animals, cooking, cleaning, washing, sewing, weaving and spinning wool, etc.), and also when the husband was out, it was the woman who was in charge of the farm. (Jesch, 2011)

1.2 The Medieval period

In comparison with previous periods, the rough time of the Middle Ages affected by wars, disorders, rebellions, plagues and famine, was a hard period for everyone and so were conditions for women. The weakened population starved, people had to work hard in order to survive, women included, and women's status changed dramatically in the medieval society. They had large scale of duties, no rights, they were oppressed and subservient. (McDowall, 1989, p 43-44) The society was completely dominated by men and the place of women was often dictated by biblical texts in which they were portrayed as subordinate and likely to tempt men into a sin (the story of Eve eating fruit from the forbidden tree that led to disobedience of God). In particular, the writings of the apostle Paul emphasised the inferior position of women and instructed them to remain silent. Bovey (2014)

On the other hand, there can be found some exceptional cases where women wielded power. Inside the monastic walls, they could hold a position as an abbess of convent, and outside the church, they could gain political power as a queen or regent on behalf of their absent husband or underage son. Despite some powerful women in the Middle Ages, the overwhelming majority of women were oppressed and had no power at all. (Bovey, 2014)

Medieval woman was dictated what jobs she could or could not do, and her role was to support her husband, produce children and aside from the daily work, she had many domestic responsibilities (take care of children and livestock, grow vegetables, cleaning, washing, cooking etc.) Above all, the life of peasant women was very harsh because of her large scale of duties and never-ending work. (Bovey, 2014)

The law limited women to a large extent as it was set by men. It was banned for women to own a business or property (unless they were widows), to inherit land from parents if there were any surviving brothers, or to divorce. Regarding marriages, it was a decision of the family to choose a potential partner for their daughters as it was seen as a chance to improve wealth or social position of the family. (Trueman, 2016)

Most women, even the privileged ones had a negligible control over the direction of their lives. Most women from rich backgrounds tended to get married in an early age and even these weddings were arranged by their families. Women from poor families had to stay with their family as long as possible in order to help with work, so they did not get married usually

until they were in their twenties. Once married, they were under the control of their husbands. (Bovey, 2014)

Both noble and poor women had to live up to expectations to produce children, in the aristocratic circles, it was vital to produce a male heir. Especially for people from a poor background it was preferable to have a son too but the most important thing in poor families was to have many children because child mortality was high, and they were in need of workers. Therefore women spent a great time of their miserable life pregnant and many of them died in childbirth due to the poor medical care. (Trueman, 2016)

The other alternative for a medieval woman, apart from marriage, was to become a nun. Though this way of life of contemplation, prayer and work behind the walls of monastery might not sound very appealing, one of its attractions undoubtedly was the freedom from the dangers of childbearing. (Bovey, 2014)

To sum it up, the status of women in the Middle ages radically changed, they had very few rights, they were extensively oppressed, they had to at all cost obey their husbands who had the leading positions.

1.3 The Tudors and the Stuarts

During the Tudor and Stuart period, England faced during this time span greater economic and social problems than ever before due to the population grow, and the gap between lives of poor and wealth people deepened. There was a significant difference between the life of a noble woman and a woman from a poor background. The majority of women were submissive to men and had neither power nor respect, with few exceptions, mostly noble women, for example Queen Elizabeth I. (McDowall, 1989, p 62-63)

As for the responsibilities of women they remained practically the same, to take care of children, husband and domestic chores, farmer's wives also helped in the fields and cared for cattle. There were not many jobs that women could carry out and it varied according to a social class. Teachers, lawyers and doctors were seen as purely male professions in a view of the fact that women were considered weak and unwise beings driven mainly by their feelings, and literacy and education was unfeminine. Despite such attitudes, women were at least given opportunities to work as bakers, domestic servants, tailors, milliners, dyers, shoemakers, embroiderers, washerwomen, confectioners, or in other low paid positions. However vast majority of women were housewives and they had a hard and busy scale of work. Not only

poor women were kept busy also middle class wives had demanding duties, they were supervising and organising their household servants and in the absence of their husbands they run the estate. (Lambert, 2016)

The role of a married woman was clear, she had to be an obedient wife and she was not allowed to oppose her husband. She looked after her children, the household and duties connected to it. It was common to have a lot of children in this era since about a half of them usually died in an early age. Marriages were frequently and profitably arranged, to marry for love was a privilege rarely ever seen, except for the poorest people. (Mason, E., 2016)

When it comes to unmarried women, they were relatively in a good position because they were not obliged to listen to any husband but often they lived with relatives and they had to work long hours to support themselves and not to become a burden. Only widowed women gained some belongings and thus partial independency, but they were still under the control of sons or other male relatives. (Lambert, 2016)

Another limitation imposed on women was that they were also expected to be virgins before they married. In the eyes of society ruled by men, women had to be pure and holy as Virgin Mary, on the other hand, they also represented a moral danger to men so they could not be trusted, they had to be given constant guidance. The society believed in the subordination of women in the eyes of God, and even the Reformation did not change this belief. (Trueman, 2016) The protestant leader John Knox wrote: *“First, I say, that woman in her greatest perfection was made to serve and obey man, not to rule and command him”* (Knox and Mason, p12)

In the field of education, schools were only for boys not girls, but it should be noted that it does not apply to poor children. Girls from poor conditions did not get any proper education, they had to learn all the necessary skills from their mothers, and by that it is meant the practical skills needed for their future adult life. The majority of these people were illiterate. Wealthy girls from middle class were educated at home, they were taught by their mothers too but apart from skills like sewing, maintaining household etc., they learned also to read and write. Thanks to humanistic ideals, at least some upper class women gained solid education. Considering these women, they were taught by tutors and they were educated in music, dancing, embroidery, some of them even learned languages as Greek, Spanish, French or Latin. Nonetheless, academic subjects were not regarded as vital towards the end of 16th century, and in general it was assumed that literacy was not important for women. For

example, Jane Seymour and Catherine Howard, the two wives of Henry VIII, were barely literate. (Trueman, 2016)

On the other hand, some writers highlight the fact that Henry's first wife Catherine of Aragon was well educated. She was not only regarded as an intelligent woman, but also a patron of humanistic movement, and she supported the education of women. Especially the education of her daughter Marry, infamous as the "Bloody Mary". (Dowling, 1991, p 38-42)

Another child of Henry VIII., Elizabeth I (the future Queen of England and Ireland) was also well educated and she is considered to be an important female monarch and figure in a male world. According to the voters of BBC television poll of the Great Britons, carried out in 2002, Elizabeth I is the best known and most admired English monarch. She is nowadays often perceived as an icon for feminists. She is admired for the fact that she held the power and gained respect in a patriarchal society of the 16th century. (BBC, 2002) She was a strong icon, and a progressive woman at the time when women were nothing more than obedient possessions of men. She was also a powerful ruler of her country and moreover, she refused to marry, which was not typical for her period. Despite all her advisors pressuring her to do so, because from the view of the male hierarchy, woman was not competent to rule on her own, she declined that to protect her dominant position, and proved them wrong. On the other hand, she was kind of isolated in that power. She did not support other women to seize the opportunity and to enhance their status in the society or acknowledged any right for a politically powerful position. In a modern context, we can argue her actions were sexist, and in a way even though being a woman, she lived a life of a prominent man. (Doran, 2003)

This perspective supports famous quote of Elizabeth I that she stated in her speech to the troops at Tilbury in 1558: "*I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and a king of England, too*" (Elizabeth I in *Gender and Heroism in Early Modern English Literature*, Rose, 2002, p 35). Such a statement is emphasising the fact the women had to sacrifice their femininity, accept male qualities and their supremacy, and figuratively speaking become a man in order to gain a leading position.

Although many historians argue whether Elizabeth I can be regarded as a feminist icon, in her time such a movement did not exist and the inferior position of women was a widespread standard, she proved that women were capable and intelligent. She succeeded to be one of the most influential monarchs in England. She demonstrated that women's place did not have to be only in households. Even though she was hardly supportive of other women she still

managed to fight her place in society dominated by men and therefore it is understandable why she can be portrayed as a possible role model for feminists. (Walters, 2005 p 17)

In the 16th century England, women were more or less ranked at the bottom of society, not only did they not have the right to gain education, to vote, to receive inheritance money or inherit their father's titles, but another big problem for them was possible accusation of witchcraft during the Elizabethan period and the intellectual era of the Renaissance. Women formed the majority of people accused of this phenomenon, the most targeted ones were old, poor, unmarried or widowed women. In 1542, Parliament released the Witchcraft Act that stated that this crime was punished by death penalty. (Parliament UK, 2015)

The Tudor England was a harsh period for women. With very few exceptions, women were not given much freedom or rights of any kind and their social duty was to be obedient wives, caring servants and as often as possible expectant mothers. The situation did not get better the following century on the contrary it got even worse.

1.4 17th century England

17th century is known as the Stuart age. It was a turbulent period affected by conflict between Crown and Parliament, Gunpowder Plot (1605), the bloody civil wars (1642-51), beheading of King Charles I in 1649 and religious disagreements. (McDowall, 1989, The Stuarts) Stuart monarchs reign was more absolute than the Tudors and the authority of a husband and a father increased. Men were authoritative heads of the families, women and children were their property, and they had to respect them duly. Disobedience was not tolerated. It was seen not only as an act against the head of the family but also as an act against the God. (McDowall, 1989, p 105)

A document, published by an unknown author with initials T.E in 1632, called The Law's Resolution of Women's rights outlines their rights on issues such as marriage and governing property. This text underscored how few rights were at their disposal. The document declares that women are not equal to men, and above all married women are hardly a half person, it states that wife's possession automatically passed on men, moreover, it gave men permission to beat their wives without being punished, to quote the exact line: *"If a man beat an out-law, a traitor, a pagan, his villain, or his wife, it is dispensable, because by the Law Common these persons can have no action"* (The Law's Resolution of Women's rights, 1632).

Regarding work opportunities, it was still impossible for women to hold influential positions such as teachers, lawyers or doctors. Although in the second half of the 17th century some additional jobs, up to now carried out by men, became available when speaking of employment (e.g. playwrights, actresses). The remaining problem was that they were hardly respected. Actresses were often compared to prostitutes, female playwrights mocked and accused from plagiarism. As we can see, women were still entrusted mostly with managing the household, the preparation of food, childbearing and raising children. There was, however, a change in the age of brides as it was more common to get married in mid twenties which resulted in the fact that women had fewer babies. This was reflected in a decrease of population, so the amount of people finally steadied after it rose rapidly in the Tudor age. (McDowall, 1989, p 105)

The phenomenon of witch trials mentioned already in the previous subchapter continued until the late 17th century. In the field of education the situation stayed unchanged too, but some people opposed this stage of affairs. One of such people was Daniel Defoe. In his essay *The Education of Women* (1719), he promoted the idea not to deny education to women. He wrote:

“I have often thought of it as one of the most barbarous customs in the world, considering us as a civilized and a Christian country, that we deny the advantages of learning to women. We reproach the sex every day with folly and impertinence; while I am confident, had they the advantages of education equal to us, they would be guilty of less than ourselves” (Defoe, 1719).

He also pointed out how insufficient and superficial the education of women is:

“Their youth is spent to teach them to stitch and sew or make baubles. They are taught to read, indeed, and perhaps to write their names, or so; and that is the height of a woman's education” (Defoe, 1719)

He believed that apart from Music and Dancing, women should be taught also languages, above all French and Italian.

It needs to be noted that during 17th century the amount of supporters of female education was increasing in both genders. Also voices among women were pressing for a change. Most importantly, a few female writers who had the courage to oppose the traditional society norms and attitudes, published they own works, in which they discussed such matters. They usually

used pseudonyms in order to keep their anonymity. Bathusa Makin can be considered one of the significant women who criticised female exclusion from education and restricted role of women in domestic sphere. (Walters, 2005, p 18) Another personage, who vigorously defended women's right for learning, dealt with their marriage status and the overall suppression of women, was Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle. Although her situation was in many respects different from other women, due to her privileged position in the society (prominent rank and wealth), she wrote about common concerns and sorrows of women (Walters, 2005, p 18) As it was mentioned earlier, female writers were mocked and they had to face public contempt.

When we take into consideration the Stuart period, the life of women was very similar to their life in the previous century. They were strictly controlled by men in many spheres. First by fathers, then they had to submit to their husbands' will, and in order to be a proper wife, withstand their demands. They could not inherit a property and they were oppressed of their rights. At least one positive outcome, brought the 17th century, namely that is, the courage of some groundbreaking women to not only openly express but also publish their disagreements with established standards and confront the male-dominated society.

1.5 18th century

In the 18th century, England (after 1707 Great Britain) started peaking as a leading world's colonial power with steady economic and social growth at home. In spite of Great Britain being in the ascendant, the position of women in the society did not change for better throughout the centuries. The idea that the most genuine, fulfilling and most important meaning of life of a woman is to get married has still persisted. (Porter, 1990, p. 15-21)

In general, women were in an unenviable and complicated position, they were still under repression of the patriarchal system which continues to deepen differences between both sexes and forces women to accept its biased moral principles and norms. They were oppressed in field of work opportunities, just as they were denied the right to vote, receive proper education, to own a property or to engage in politics. The critical literacy rate of women was both a cause and a consequence of it. Although, female education stopped being a complete taboo, and first "schools for women" originated in 18th century, the quality of it was pitiable. The main aim of such facilities was to bring up an attractive and appealing, well-mannered future wives, to be a satisfactory adornment for their husbands-to-be. The goal was not to promote any academic desires in females. (Walters, 2005) On the contrary, it should support

only domestic activities, and emphasize the idea of ideal womanhood. Stress was laid mostly on good Christian morals and duties of a wife in a household as it was considered to be the proper social sphere for women. This poor-quality and unilateral substitution for education was not even available for every social class, only upper-class and wealthy middle-class women were educated. McDowall (1989, p 116) also stated that according to one lord: *“Women are only children of larger growth . . . A man of sense only plays with them . . . he neither tells them about, nor trusts them with serious matters.”* From this quote, the attitude of man-driven society to women is obvious. They were not taken seriously, and they were not supposed to by any means get involved in more serious matters. Generally speaking, whether poor or wealthy, their sole purpose in life was to find a husband, reproduce and spend the rest of the life obeying and serving him. Naturally, conditions for poor women were even harder. (Walters, 2005)

However, some women were aware of their unjust subordinate position and they were unwilling to remain silence and withstand the patriarchal norms and traditions anymore. Many of such first activists were British and they are often referred to as founders of feminism though the term emerged a century later. Nevertheless, these revolutionary female thinkers undoubtedly laid the foundation of the feminist movement of the 19th and 20th century. (Walters, 2005, p 26)

One of the earliest female writers advocating women was Marry Astell. At the turn of the 18th century, she wrote and published her first book, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, where she encouraged other women to think for themselves and to be aware of their own personal values, beliefs and attitudes. In another work of hers, she stressed the necessity of educational opportunities for women. (Walters, 2005, p 27) She was one of the first among English women who dared to claim that women deserve the same rights as men. In *Some Reflections upon Marriage* she wrote: *“If all Men are born free, how is it that all Women are born Slaves?”* (Marry Astell, 1700).

It was nearly at the end of the 18th century when other women dared to speak their minds and express their disagreement with the restriction of life of women by convention, and became targets of mockery of the general public. The critique addressed to them came from contemporaries of both sexes. They were often referred to as *Amazons of the Pen*, inspired by the race of female warriors from Greek mythology. This name came from Samuel Johnson, an

avid critic of women authors, who held the view that women were meddling into writing i.e. male field of expertise. (Turner, 2002, p 129)

One of the greatest revolutionary female writers was without any doubt Mary Wollstonecraft, whose short life was characterized by passion for reason inspired by the ideals of Enlightenment. She is best known for her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Here, she outlined the vision of equality between men and women, and she claimed that the inferior position of her sex is a product of mis-education and double standards. She wrote: *“Taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison.”* (Wollstonecraft, 1972, p 49) Wollstonecraft indicated that young women lacked encouragement, they were taught from an early age to focus only on acquiring graceful social skills, their beauty and outward accomplishments. In her book, she also claimed that women should not be seen only as a property, they should not be treated differently than men because they deserve the same fundamental rights. (Walters, 2005, p 29-32) Wollstonecraft, however, believed that the attitude towards female gender would not improve without a change in the society. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and her other books became an inspiration for later generations and it is often cited even nowadays.

1.6 19th century

The Industrial Revolution meant a great change for the life in Britain. Many people left countryside in order to work in the city, mainly in factories. Not only rapid increase of towns but also an enormous rise in the population was registered, which went hand in hand with growth of the middle class. The fact that more and more power was entitled to middle class, forced a social and lifestyle change as well as change in political balance. The result was that by the end of the 19th century most men had the right to vote. Naturally, it did not apply to women (McDowall, 1989, p 131)

Other ambitions of female sex were considered more or less as taboo or pointless, like higher education, ownership of property or unbiased possibility of working. The limitations that society had imposed on women, by law and custom, still persisted. Being a woman was still a hard position to be in the beginning of the 19th century, especially unprivileged and indigent woman from a poor background. Whether married or not, women were still treated as subservient low-ranking human beings. (Strachey, 1978, p 16-17) Both sexes were believed to fit separate spheres of society, and they should not interfere in the area of the opposite sex.

Men as stronger sex were expected to enjoy the advantages of public life, spend their time socializing in public places, like clubs, bars and meetings and express their ideas and thoughts freely discussing them with likely-minded men. Women, on the contrary, were expected to live their lives homebound and occupy domestic duties only. The domesticity of women was also strengthened by the fact that the importance of family was at the forefront in the Victorian society. The Queen Victoria was a role model for this era, she herself personified these values. (Abrams, 2001)

During that time, more and more women started to call for improvements in their position. It was however not before the second half of the 19th century, when first early feminist movements for women rights began to emerge along with organized clubs and campaigns, particularly for the purpose of improvement of female rights and conditions regarding education, right to vote, reform in laws of marriage, opportunities to work outside their household, etc. Although both women and men openly supported these ideas and spoke out and acted on their beliefs, female emancipation was still problematic, controversial subject. (Walters, 2005, p 41-43) Nevertheless, it was thanks to those people and representatives that by organizing protests, rallies and other meetings, contributed to the enhancement of women's rights, and brought the cause into the public consciousness. Women not accepting their traditional deep-rooted roles and liberal-minded men and philosophers were joined in their calls for reform. Their movements and vocal agitation for change mark the first wave of feminism.¹ John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor, Emily Davies, Barbara Leigh Smith or Elizabeth Garrett belonged among such people. Together they published several petitions for female emancipation in society, above all political sphere because the right to vote became a principal issue as they believed that the improvement and change of the status of women laid in it. (Strachey, 1978)

In the first half of the 19th century, there were many people who rejected such matters and disapproved with the idea of female voters. In essay *On Government* James Mill (1829) argued that the female right to vote is not a necessary issue as their political voices are represented by fathers and husbands. As a reaction to not only this statement but also to similarly embedded attitudes of others, contradictory points of view were expressed by many advocates of female rights (e. g. William Thompson, etc.).

¹ The term feminism represents a range of political and social movements and ideologies that share the same aim to define and enhance the equal rights for women in relation to political, social, economic and personal rights. (Beasley, 1999, p 3-11)

As it was already mentioned earlier in this subchapter, with the approaching onset of the second half of the 19th century, campaigns advocating female rights broke out. The ideas of feminism started spreading faster and most importantly began the long-term process of the change in the position of women in the society and in eyes of general public. The ideas and proposals for gender reform in education, marriage, employments and politics originated from a group of women meeting at Langham Place in London. Those alliances led by Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and Bessie Rayner Parkers resulted in organized women's movement. Along with like-minded women and their supporters, they contributed to promoting and defending their gender rights, and became public speakers and fighters for female equality. The majority of these goals were fulfilled and more developed in the next century. However, some voices of these advocates were taken into consideration already in this century, although it did not mean that life got suddenly easier for women or that they gained their equality and rights overnight. (Smith (2007))

In 1857, the Matrimonial Causes Act passed, a divorce reform act, which introduced the possibility to divorce through the court. The conditions were not same for both genders, a man could divorce his wife when she was unfaithful, but a woman could file for a divorce on the basis of adultery only in case she showed some additional misconduct of her husband (rape, incest, cruelty, etc.). Before this act, divorce was exceedingly rare and the right to remarry was restricted to very wealthy man only. Despite the evident inequality of the act, it was still a great accomplishment and a great step towards equality of both genders (Strachey,1978) Thanks to Married Women's Property Act from 1882, the law regarding the property rights of married women was altered. It enabled women the right to own and manage their property and income even after they enter into marriage. Four years later, Parliament passed another important act, the Guardianship of Infants Act, which gave women better chance in achieving custody over their children in case of the death of their husband or divorce. (Strachey, 1978)

Education differed mostly according the gender and class of the people. Wealthy people and foremost men had significant advantage. Thanks to the efforts of many female activists who contribute to a proper education of girls even this field reached a certain level of betterment in the second half of the 19th century. Since a few private schools were established by charities and religious institutions, more middle class girls were given the opportunity to study, nevertheless, their schooling was vastly different from the one that boys received. However, it is important to mention that the beginning of higher academic education for girls is dated to

this time. Colleges and universities began to accept female students at the end of the 19th century. The first college open for women was founded by Emily Davies and Barbara Leigh Smith, the Girton College was opened in Cambridge in 1869. Although women could study here, it was not possible for them yet to get a degree yet, until 1920-21. (Institute of Education University of London, 2009)

The 19th century meant also a great change when it came to women and work. Despite the public opinion according to which women's domain should be domestic duties, lots of women were working outside their household. At first women should officially occupy only positions as dressmakers, domestic service, teachers (after expansion of girl's schools the demand for this occupation has even increased). The prospects of women in relation to their career choice, has improved in the second half of the 19th century, and new work opportunities were opened for them. The reason behind this is to be found in the economic and industrial changes in the nineteenth century Britain, as well as in the effort of female activist to promote women's workforce. (Jordan, 1999) An organization supporting this aim and demonstrating female capability to work in a wide range of occupations was founded in 1859. The leading figure of this Society for Promoting the Employment of women was Jessie Boucherett. These endeavours resulted in increase in work opportunities for middle-class women and in general in growth in number of female workers. Professions earlier occupied purely by males became available for women, more over some jobs were even feminized (clerical work, librarianship, retail work, hospital dispensing etc. Some of such positions became unsuitable for men with respect to long hours and low wages. Many employers realized how beneficial female workforce could be, as their labour was cheaper, and they started to take female workers into consideration. (Jordan, 1999)

The Society for Promoting the Employment of women undoubtedly achieved their goal. On the other hand, working-class women called and strived for better working conditions. Trade unions, political organisations and movements were established to support working women against the gender inequity in lower wages of women. They emphasised the accomplishment of equal pay, improvement of working conditions and warned against possible health dangers of their work. One of a greater importance was the Women's Protective and Provident League (WTUL). (Owen, 1989, p 11)

The main pressing goal of women (mostly middle-class women) and their supporters was to achieve the right to vote. The first person who promoted this issue on a political level was

James Stuart Mill. This important figure of first wave feminism publicly defended women's rights and brought the topic of women's suffrage into the Parliament. In 186, he was elected to the House of common and a year later he was addressed to present a petition concerning women's political rights. In order to collect signatures for Mill's petition the first Women's suffrage committee was formed in (London1866). Even though this try was unsuccessful, women's suffrage was slowly gaining supporters and it led to the founding of the National Society for Women's Suffrage in 1867 in order to unite the efforts of women's movement. (Holton, 1996)

Since that time, there were many attempts to pass a bill granting women's suffrage almost every year. More and more pro-suffrage activists were dissatisfied with the injustice that men regardless of social status, education level and literacy, wealth, etc. had the right to vote while educated women who paid taxes were excluded. (Rendall, 2001, p 168-170)

Later, Mill was replaced by Lydia Becker as a leading figure since the effects of his participation became debatable. In any case, his approach to this matter and his work was an essential element in women's suffrage movement. After 1870, women were at least allowed to vote and to be elected to borough or county councils (McDowall, 1989, p 162). Slowly the position of women in British society began to improve in relation to previous centuries. The activists have ensured many achievements and have accomplished a great progress. Nevertheless, there were still some crucial lawful limitations to overcome, and women still had a long, convoluted journey ahead towards their equality with men.

Although it was possible to vote or to be voted to local governments the demand for female suffrage which would give women the opportunity to vote or be voted to national elections was not satisfied. In 1890s, there were several groups supporting women's political franchise. Some of these groups united and formed the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). The suffragists, as were the members of this society were called, argued powerfully, but peacefully to gain their common goal through peaceful and legal means by lobbying the members of Parliament and collecting signatures for petitions. The leader of this democratic organisation was Millicent Fawcett. Members of this organization were called suffragists (Holton 2013). Their approach was unfortunately inefficient and their efforts did not succeed. It was not until beginning of the next century that they realized that a change in strategy is needed for the purpose of making a difference and achieving women's suffrage. Universal franchise was finally granted in 1928 when the Equal Franchise Act passed. This

Act granted women voting rights on the same terms as men, women over 21 were allowed to vote.

1.7 20th century

1.7.1 Until WWII

The 20th century and the First World War meant a time of significant changes and an ongoing development concerning women's rights and their role in the society overall. Although there were some improvements regarding the women's suffrage it still was not sufficient and the changes affected only the privileged ones.

Since all peaceful attempts seemed to be ineffective and the progress was slow a new, more radical organisation was formed in 1903 in Manchester, under the name The Women's Social and Political Union (henceforth WSPU). The main intention of this union was to gain suffrage on the same principles as men. The leading figure of WSPU was Emmeline Pankhurst and its members and members of other militant groups were called suffragettes. The term itself emerged first in Daily Mail in 1906 to distinguish suffragettes from suffragists. In order to be noticed and taken seriously the members of these militant organizations engaged in series of violent actions. They were trying to gain publicity by committing crimes like vandalism (breaking windows, throwing stones), arson as they set fire to public and private property, they chained themselves to railings, they also provoked the members of parliament and disrupted political speeches at public meeting and even in the House of Commons. (Murray, 2011)

As a result of such illegal actions, many suffragettes were arrested, but their dedication to securing voting rights for women did not always stop there. They often went on hunger strikes to continue their agenda. Before soon, Women's Suffrage became a hotly contested issue of the whole country. (Murray, 2011) Emily Davison became a martyr to this cause when she realized one of the most extreme acts of this union. In 1913 on a Derby Day, she threw herself under the feet of King's horse, later she succumbed to her injuries. Her coffin draped in white, green and purple (the colours of suffragette) was followed by many supporters of suffragettes. The general public was shocked at the depth of such devotion that the women were willing to sacrifice for their purpose. Not only women but the whole nation started to be more aware of this matter which had the impact in increasing number of members of societies involving the struggle for women's suffrage. (Strachey, 1978)

However, the situation changed with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Suffragettes called of their militant actions as the unification of the country against the common enemy and facing the upcoming war had priority over struggles for vote. At the end of the WWI it was inevitable to recognize contribution of female gender to the war effort. In 1918, a partial victory was gained when The Electoral Reform Bill granted all women householders over 30 the right to vote. The first breakthrough was noticed when the first woman, Nancy Astor, took a seat in British parliament in 1919. It was not until almost ten years later that women were allowed to vote at the same age as men thus 21(in 1928). The follow-up major step for female politics was in 1929 when another woman Margaret Bondfield became the first female cabinet minister. (Murray, 2011)

The war without no doubt cannot be perceived as a positive phenomenon, atrocities were committed, many innocent people, and people in general died etc. But if there is a positive outcome, it certainly is the fact that it gave women the opportunity to feel useful as citizens, to prove themselves equal to men, and capable of jobs beyond the traditionally rooted role of female gender in the society. Due to the fact that men were sent into the war, it was vital to substitute them in relation to work positions. During the 1914 and 1918 more than 1, 5 million women joined the workforce, and they occupied jobs normally carried out by men before the war years. (Parliament UK, 2017)

The involvement of British women in the war effort was not the sole reason that strengthened the arguments for female suffrage. The pre-war suffrage movement can also claim credit for achieving it. (BBC, 2015)

Beyond any doubt, the war changed women's lives, but the initial enthusiasm wore off when women realised that their contribution did not inevitably guaranteed them equal position and perception in the society yet. Despite their invaluable help, most women were dismissed from their wartime jobs and position when the troops returned (due to The Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act, 1919). Women were expected to return to the old ways, and go back into domestic life. (BBC, 2017)

Those women, who managed to stay in their occupations, were -still being paid less than man, in relation to doing the same job. As it was mentioned earlier, the 1918 Representation of the People Act gave right to vote to 8,5 million women, however such things as university education or standing or becoming a MP (member of parliament) was still the preserve of

men. The situation got even worse during 1920s and 30s due to deep recession of British economy leading to increase in unemployment. (Owen, 1989, p 28-29)

At a first glance, the progress still seemed to be rather slow-paced and limited, but there is no such thing as an overnight success. Despite the fact that it was not a linear A to Z process, and there were many obstacles in the way, it led to a crucial victory – the full enfranchisement in 1928. The existence, actions and consequences of women's movements together with the extensive help and participation of women in wartime led to a further significant progress, and greater freedoms both at work and in personal relationships. It gave women not only healthy self-esteem, but they also became aware of their further personal development possibilities, potential, they also developed talents and new skills. Their fight and struggle were a legacy for future generations. So other people could learn about these achievements and be inspired by unyielding will of these women, and continue and strengthen their efforts and the position of female gender in the society. This legacy is the foothold of women's independence and citizenship nowadays. (BBC, 2017)

During the course of time, step by step the conditions of women were improving in relation to previous centuries. New important law changes concerning divorce and marriage were established. The Matrimonial Causes Act (1923) allowed women to file for divorce on the same conditions as men. A new Guardianship of Infants Act in 1937 guaranteed women an equal guardianship over their children. The 20th century is also the time, when the issue of contraception was brought out into the open. The topic of birth control was considered immoral those days, but Marie Stopes opened first birth-control clinic in Holloway in 1921. The real revolution occurred, later though in the 1960s with the arrival of the oral contraceptive pill. (Hyndley, 1989, p 27)

One of the important reflectors of the series of changes happening in women's lives is arguably the change in fashion trends registered over the four years of the war. Trussing corsets were no longer so popular, the skirts got shorter (knee-length), trousers appeared for the first time, and short haircuts became stylish. Also, shaving legs became part of standard female grooming. Traditionalists were outraged by such drastic changes, but the development was hardly stoppable. (BBC, 2017)

1.7.2 WWII until the present

When the Second World War began, women rejoined the workforce similarly as in the First World War. And similarly as the WWII ended, they were advised to go back to their traditional roles. The tendencies to repress feminism and to enhance the importance of families emerged once again. Although many women lost their jobs, a few were still able to keep theirs. Their wages were much better than they were before the war, but at the same time substantially lower than men's. Although there was no immediate change after the peace was restored, as was visible after the WWI, the experiences and stories of these women supported and added weight to the campaign for equality between the sexes. This resulted a decade later when the call for equal workplace, pay and opportunities came to life. It was the second half of the 20th century that brought some major changes that improved many aspects of women's lives (Harris, 2011).

The second half of the 20th century is seen as the break-even point at which the lives of women became vastly different from the lives of their female ancestors. In 1967, the Family Planning Act made contraception readily available to unmarried women. The contraceptive pill has been accessible to the public since 1965. It meant an opportunity to reduce a size of family since the tendency was to have smaller families because women had more choices now and their only purpose was no longer only bearing children. (Hyndley, 1989) With the arrival of the pill, the Sexual revolution (also known as Sexual Liberation) started. The swinging 1960s were times of rebellion against traditional codes of behaviour and constraints of the previous generation. It was a social movement that liberated people from taboos in relation to sex. It included not only greater acceptance of contraceptive pills, but also premarital sex, free love, explicit sex on screen and stage, pornography, erotic fantasies, homosexuality, etc. (BBC, 2010). In 1967, the Parliament also passed another important law, the Abortion Act. It legislated that an abortion could be carried out on the condition that two doctors gave their references. Women had now for the first time control over reproduction. Getting a divorce was easier thanks to the Divorce Reform Act (1969) which meant that women could now escape from unhappy marriages. Another law concerning married couples, the Matrimonial Proceeding and Property Act (1970) improved material settlement. Although the Sexual Liberation started in the 60s, it took a few decades until the attitudes actually really changed and people fully accepted them. (Hyndley, 1989)

Another crucial progress ensured better work opportunities and conditions for women. The Equal Pay Act in 1970 ensured that women and man were paid equally for the same job. However, in many cases the law was avoided. Some job positions were named differently according to the fact if the job was carried out by men or women, in order to pay women less and avoid the law. The law did not apply to some jobs seen as entirely feminine. The Discrimination Act (1975) protected women from discrimination on the basis of sex or marital status in the fields of education, employment, provisions of goods and services, harassment, etc. (Owen, 1989)

Thanks to the Employment Protection of 1976, women were given the right to maternity leave and their job was given back to them after having a child. This applied only to women who worked at least two years full – time or five years part – time for the same employer.

In the early 20th century (except wartime), it was not very usual for married women to work. Around 1950s, it became more common to do a paid work, mostly thanks to new technology (e.g. washing machines, fridges and vacuum cleaners, etc.) which made it easier to combine jobs with responsibilities at home. In times before, the housework was so consuming that women did not have time for anything else. Service industries grew which created more opportunities for women (job positions like waitresses, cinema usherettes and other jobs connected to free time activities). In general, after the Second World War, the living conditions improved extensively. Around 1990s, almost every British household had conveniences such as a television and a telephone. (Hyndley, 1989),

In the current time, we are living in the 21st century and there is no doubt that the status of female gender has improved dramatically since the beginning of the Victorian era. Our predecessors had to overcome a long, demanding journey full of obstacles standing in their way in order to achieve the level of independence and equality that we have nowadays. It may seem that all differences, troubles and fights have been surmounted, but the truth lies somewhere in between. At the dawn of the new millennium the fact was that women were not entirely equal to men when it came to working conditions or wages, and the matter is still not settled even now in 2017.

In the contemporary Britain, one of the leading voices of feminism is represented by the organization UK Feminista founded in 2010. According to the official website of this organization, the fact is that in most cases, men are paid higher wages than their female co-workers. (UK Feminista, 2013) The gender pay gap in the United Kingdom is one of the

biggest in Europe, and the wages of female gender constitute seventy nine percent wages of male gender. The two areas where the differences between the pay of both genders are the most visible are Pharmaceutical and Technology industry. (Allen, 2010)

Allen further mentions the pay inequality is not the only problem, in spite of the fact that the Sex Discrimination Act has been in force since 1975, women are frequently fired for being pregnant or not even hired in the first place because it is likely that at some point in the future they are going to want to start a family. The possibility that a woman could go on maternity leave is often the cause why the employer gives preference to a male applicant over a female one.

The issue of a parental leave is the most asymmetric in Europe. In Britain, the view that a woman is the only one responsible for childcare is mirrored in the way the parental leave is ensured. While mother can stay at home with the baby up to 52 weeks, father gets only two weeks. (Gray, 2008) The author also believes that sharing the parental leave between the parents could positively affect the chances of female candidates to get a job.

Also other writers have suggested that the reason why it is harder for women to climb the corporate ladder is the threat of maternity leave. To quote Abercrombie (1994, p. 210-211):

"Some writers have suggested that men get paid more than women because women can neither work the hours necessary to earn higher rates, nor do they possess the skills to get better jobs because of the time and effort they expend on care of home and children".

Despite the progress achieved and all the changes for the better, when a woman wants to be equal to man in the professional field, she often has to choose between having a family and gaining a job position. This dilemma has resulted in a new trend, a steady rise in the age at which women give birth. More and more British women are delaying motherhood because they want to establish a career and to ensure financial stability before starting a family. According to the data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in 2013, the average age at which women in Britain have their first child is now 29,8 (Chalabi, 2013).

Another problem is that the cost of childcare in the United Kingdom is so expensive that it does not pay off when both parents work. The British families are better off if one parent gives up work in order to look after their offspring. In most cases it is naturally the mother. Unless the woman earns significantly more than her male partner, it is most likely to be exactly her who stops working. The prohibitive cost of childcare reaches yearly £11,000. This

unfair penalization of women can cause long term damage to their careers. According to an OECD report, by the time a woman goes back to work, her male counterpart is earning about 21% more than her. The average pay gap between couples without children is 7%. (Ferguson, 2015)

As for the appearance and beauty standards, it is also one of the current pressing issues. Women have to face exaggerated demands the modern society is imposing on them. The trend of female perfection is strengthened also thanks to the modern technology, like media, social websites, television, etc. The writer Naomi Wolf stated that over the last years, troublesome issues connected to this field emerged. For instance, eating disorders are much more frequent, also cosmetic surgery gained unparalleled popularity, consumers spending has increased etc. Feminism gave women many rights, and liberated them in many points of view but women are still struggling to keep up with their newly acquired roles and the current problems that have emerged hand to hand with the present freedom of female gender. (The Beauty Myth, 2002, p 9)

In short, as we can see, there are still some problematic areas to improve, even nowadays. The fight for genuine equality is not over yet. The role of female gender is still developing and changing, depending on need, circumstance and personal choices. Throughout the course of time, mostly 20th century, women, indeed, have achieved crucial improvements. Women in the United Kingdom have the same legal rights as men. They can vote, stand for the election or they can be appointed to the public office on the same basis as men. They are also equal in relation to criminal laws. They have the liberty to own property, get a divorce on the same conditions as men, and they have the same rights when it comes to education.

When it comes to fashion they have much more options than ever before. They can dress according to their own discretion, wear make-up, chose whatever hairstyle they want to etc. Women towards the 20th century began to take themselves more seriously. They are more independent, self-sufficient, they pursue careers and they can intervene in politics. It is up to them to decide whether they want to start a family or focus on their careers, they do not even have to marry.

Women have already passed a long journey towards respect, freedom and gender equality. Their struggle continues even nowadays. Not only the efforts of current organizations trying to empower women in the eyes of society, but also the small, everyday achievements of every single woman, are a victory that counts. Who knows what lies in the future of women's

rights? Maybe the 21st century is going to be the era, when the struggle for the gender equality will be finally over and equality between men and women will prevail. As the UN Women Goodwill Ambassador, in HeForShe campaign², Emma Watson stated: *“I’m inviting you to step forward, to be seen, and to ask yourself...If not me, who? If not now, when?”* (Emma Watson, 2014)

²HeForShe campaign stands for gender equality, engaging both men and women to take active steps in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. (Suhay, 2014)

PRACTICAL PART

The practical part is divided into three sections. The first two sections are devoted to analyses of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*. The lives of both protagonists of the novels, as well as the themes of the books are depicted here. The third section is a comparison of these two works. It is focused on the changes in the themes, thinking of the protagonists and the society, the social manners, demands, the life of the main heroines in general etc. in relation to the progress of women's rights, equality and independence.

2. Pride and Prejudice

2.1 Basic information

This most famous Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* was anonymously published on 28th January in 1813. It is based on manuscript called *First Impressions*, written during the years 1796-97, that was declined to be published.

The plot of the story is set mainly in the countryside estate of Longbourn in Hertfordshire and it centres on the Bennets family. The property of this family is entailed to pass to the nearest related male heir, since Mr. and Mrs. Bennet have had five daughters. Thus, the main concern of Mrs. Bennet is to marry her daughters, preferably to men with a large fortune, in order to provide a future and security for them. The story revolves primarily around the second born daughter Elizabeth Bennet, who falls in love with a rich man Mr. Darcy, despite her initial antipathy and disfavour towards him. Both Elizabeth and Darcy have to overcome not only the class differences and social prejudices, but most importantly, their own pride and prejudices, which are standing in the way of finding the true love. The necessity of marrying of love, in spite of social pressures and deep-rooted traditions and customs or moral principles of society at that time is emphasised.

The pivot of the novel lies in the perception of other human beings, first impressions, how people judge other characters, and at the same time are judged by others. Aside from the protagonist Elizabeth, Austen outlined also other characters in the course of the book. On these characters and situations related to them, she portrayed various attitudes towards marriage and life in general. She portrayed different kinds of marriages and relationships,

behaviour of distinct classes and also other typical manners resembling the 19th century society and the then way of life.

Austen's book is still one of the most popular English novels, more than 20 million copies were sold and the unflagging interest in the novel has resulted in numerous adaptations of the story.

2.2 Austen's depiction of literary heroines

The time when Austen lived and wrote, The Regency era, was a period of strict social rules and customs that must have been followed. In her novel *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen not only depicted but also mocked, to some extent, the society and the way of life at the turn of the 19th century. Austen provided an important insight into the historical context and daily life of English society of her period. Nevertheless, she depicted such society from her point of view, from perspective of well-educated woman of the English gentry, who comes from relatively well established and well connected family, living in a small, rural English village. Some essential aspects of her era are thus not mentioned or depicted at all, such as the beginning of the Industrial Revolution or the impact of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars etc. Instead of concentrating on political events, historical background and literary trends of her time she focused on the social aspects. Mainly on themes as social class differences, social hierarchies of the time, middle class manners, gender roles, courtship and marriage. Her novel depicts everyday life of gentry, their joys, sorrows and troubles. All of these themes and issues come together in *Pride and Prejudice*. In a comprehensive, often ironic way, Austen takes the role of a critical judge of her own society by reflecting the condition of life of middle class women.

Her value also lies in the fact that she created diverse types of heroines. She created heroines who rebelled against the social norms as well as female characters that conformed to the social model of that time. Austen portrayed both, cultural ideals and also taboos. On the basis of contrasting thoughts, emotions and behaviour, she presented a complex concept of femininity, and the acceptance or the rejection of dominant social ideals and attitudes.

The embodiment of the cultural taboo in *Pride and Prejudice* is undoubtedly seen in the character of Elizabeth Bennet. She is free-thinking, quick-witted, self-assured woman with keen critical mind. On the other hand, her friend Charlotte Lucas is emblematic of the then ideal, meek heroine of docile behaviour.

Charlotte's character and her decision to marry Mr. Collins on the grounds of ensuring her future and convenience, mirrors the general reality of women at the end of 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. It reflects their limited possibilities and choices constrained by the customs of their time. The fact is evident from the conversation of Charlotte and Elizabeth, shortly after the engagement:

"I am not romantic, you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage state." (PP, Chapter 22, p 26).

Elizabeth's criticism of such decision, her unconventional ideas and will to challenge standards of the society by refusing to marry without love, makes her in comparison to Charlotte a modern woman, far ahead of her time.

Austen's literary representations of femininity and the contradictions related to the ideology of female gender at the turn of the 19th century is altogether an authentic portrayal of conflicts between the socio-cultural customs and norms, and modern ideas and perceptions of the female gender.

2.3 Themes

2.3.1 Love, courtship and marriage

Magee (1987, p 198) stated that literary heroines of the 18th and 19th century novels were usually depicted as young women, entering the society in pursuit of getting a husband. Thus, she can achieve literally the only career then applicable for female gender- marriage.

The novel *Pride and Prejudice* depicts one of the most popular love stories in English literature. The courtship of Elizabeth and Darcy and their story about overcoming numerous obstacles, including social class differences, their initial bad impression of each other, the social pressure, etc. before they finally admitted their mutual feelings for each other, got married and achieved their "happily-ever-after". By creating such a storyline Austen introduced a rather unusual concept of relationship taken into consideration that marriages were merely about money and social rank at the turn of 19th century. It was rarely about sincere and genuine feeling of love. She expressed that marriage and rapport can be based on love and understanding, and love should not be restricted by social restrictions and

conventions. True love is a force separate from the hierarchical, judgemental and unequal society. Jane and Bingley's marriage was founded on this same, non-traditional principle of marriage. Creation of such characters was a product of the social changes at the end of the 18th century. As mentioned in the theoretical part, it was the time when the first voices calling for a new conception and perspective of women's roles and rights emerged, following the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft. The long-winded process of transformation of the female gender started in this period. In comparison with Wollstonecraft, Austen does not speak out strongly against the society, or directly criticize its conventions and perception of female gender. She used her characters to point out contrasts between the embedded and generally accepted women's role and the new concept of womanhood.

The new concept opposed to the more widespread traditional view on marriages that can be seen in the relationship between Charlotte Lucas and Mr Collins. In comparison with the chief motive-love- of Elizabeth and Darcy's or Jane and Bingley's relationship, Charlotte's behaviour is the product of unequal status of women. It portrays the limited choices that women had in this period. Charlotte gave preferences to financial security and elevation of her social status over the uncertain vision of her future. She sacrificed her own passion, desire, feelings, and her free will in order to ensure decent life prospects. Peter L. De Rose (1987, p 206) defined such type of marriage as "mercenary marriage". Matrimony was entered on the grounds of achieving various advantages (means of wealth, status as well freedom and liberation from social restrictions) rather than romantic reasons. Despite the fact, Charlotte is aware of lack of any romantic emotions, feelings or passion towards Mr. Collins, and is aware of his rather unattractive personality, she marries him anyway, because she might not get any other, not to mention better, opportunity. Her position is unenviable, in her late twenties, the social pressure to find a suitable husband is even stronger considering her age. Being aware of the status of spinsters in the eyes of society, she feels obliged to get married as soon as possible not to become a burden for her family. It reflects the limited options and strong importance of marriage for women in Austen's period. Courtship and advantageous marriages were a central focus of women's lives in the late 18th and beginning of the 19th century. The preoccupation of English society or nearly an obsession with marriage is manifested also in the famous opening line of the book: "*It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.*" (PP, Chapter 1, p 2) The ironic truth is revealed through the course of the book that the reverse is also true - single woman is as well in want of a husband- or rather accurately she is prescribed with this role since it was

basically their only chance to enhance their future prospects and ensure their financial survival. Marriage was the means to be recognised in the eyes of society, to gain social security. Women were in no position to decide freely, who they want to marry. They had to think about the bigger picture, they were supposed to appreciate that someone wants to marry them in the first place, taken into account the competition among woman to secure a husband. They should have been thankful to get rid of the label - single girl. The society in Britain simply worked that way in then time. Nevertheless, the couples Elizabeth/Darcy and Jane/Bingley can be considered to foreshadow the changes that are about to emerge fully in the next century, in the perspective of improvements in the perception of better equality in relationships between men and women, and a new point of view on the female gender in general regarding better opportunities for women, legal rights, etc.

According to Mary Poovey (1984), although Austen expressed the limitations society imposed on women at her time, marriage still remained for her "the ideal paradigm for the most perfect fusion between the individual and society". (The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer, 203)

2.3.2 Reputation, wealth and class

Next to love, reputation held a fundamental significance, especially the reputation of a woman. Considering the social and cultural background, the way a person is perceived by the society was a crucial factor in those times. Women were expected to behave at their utmost propriety and to fulfil the then standards ascribed to the female gender. Having a bad reputation, stepping outside the social norms of what is considered to be appropriate meant to be faced with fatal consequences. The seriousness of these aspects can be seen also in Mary Bennet's statement after her sister Lydia ran off with Wickham:

"Unhappy as the event must be for Lydia, we may draw from it this useful lesson: that loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable -- that one false step involves her in endless ruin -- that her reputation is no less brittle than it is beautiful, -- and that she cannot be too much guarded in her behaviour towards the undeserving of the other sex". (PP, Chapter 47,p 165).

If Lydia did not marry Wickham in the end, she would ruin her reputation. The fact, that she eloped with him and lived with him alone and unwed for two weeks was considered then immoral. This kind of behaviour, was unacceptable, it was even considered to be scandalous to marry someone without permission, not to mention live together out of wedlock. The

society laid emphasis on woman's chastity before marriage. Lydia's disgrace was also a threat to her entire family because it could destroy their reputation as well. Marriage was the only possibility that could prevent her and her relatives from being rejected by the society. Also the reaction of Mrs. Bennet regarding this couple is a proof of the priorities of then times. Upon the news of Lydia's actual engagement to Wickham, Mrs. Bennet's mood shifts immediately, she completely forgets the seriousness of the situation, the potential scandal and regardless the shameful circumstances, she celebrates the fact that Lydia, at such young age, has secured a husband, and she wants to spread these good news to her neighbours. These actions also highlight her bad parenting and negligence.

Not only reputation but also money was also the key factor in marriage market. It was desired by both genders. Men were seeking to marry women with large fortunes and women wanted well-off husbands with reliable income. Shining example was George Wickham who plotted to elope with woman of means, with Georgiana Darcy. Given her social status it was also a linkage to a high society. Also Mrs. Bennet was encouraging her daughters to marry wealthy men of high social rank.

Austen writes about how marriage and people are influenced by the matter of the social rank and vice versa. Though Bennets family serves as an example of gentry, both by property (2000 thousands a year), and general situation (they had servants who were employed at their household, which was revealed when Mr. Collins was praising the meal that was served in the dining room), in the eyes of members higher on the social ladder they rank was not enough. It went also hand in hand with the reputation of the family that was not considered to be directly proportional to their position. The behaviour of both parents and also Lydia and Kitty, and low connections of the family were indicating a lower social scale. When the prospects concerning marriage possibilities of Jane were discussed Mrs. Hurst remarked:

"I have an excessive regard for Miss Jane Bennet, she is really a very sweet girl, and I wish with all my heart she were well settled. But with such a father and mother, and such low connections, I am afraid there is no chance of it." (PP, Chapter 8, p 23).

Mr. Darcy also added that this matter materially lessens the chances of any of the Bennets daughters to find a respectable man with a reliable income and well-established position. This strongly proves that social position is closely bounded to behaviour, good manners and to moral aspects. These other factors noticeably influence the perception of the social status.

It was also Darcy's reason why he repressed his feeling towards Elizabeth in the first place. When he was proposing her, he mentioned that in order to love her, he had to overcome the obstacles of her social and economic differences, that his judgement had always opposed manners of her family. He let his prejudices against her family, to cloud his judgement about herself. He let his mind being occupied with such petty problems, so characteristic within his social circle and time period to almost ruin his chance for happiness.

Lady Catherine, Darcy's aunt later demonstrated how significant social status, manners, and reputation were when it comes to upper-class, with her particularly harsh statement, when she complained that Elizabeth's engagement to Darcy would mean a mortification and the memory of Pemberly would be disgraced.

Most of the characters depicted in the book were, more or less, deeply concerned with their reputation, wealth and class. How other people perceive them, what is their position in the society in the eyes of the general public. They were also often very judgemental themselves, when it came to judging the others.

2.3.3 Manners and society demands:

Reputation was bound to manners that also play a relevant role as regards the novel. Women had to abide by the simple rules of etiquette adequate to the moral principles and customs of the end of 18th and beginning of the 19th century. Manners were alpha and omega of the courtship.

Women had to abide by the simple rules of etiquette. The underlying principle was to exhibit proper manners, protect their good reputation and to show off highly regarded female qualities, demonstrating their knowledge and skills but also fidelity and commitment to their potential husbands-to-be. Courtship within the middle and upper classes was a social, public activity carried out in relation to fixed conventions. The principle was to display one's availability and interest in an appropriate way. The courtship was following a strict protocol: men and women were rarely permitted to stay alone together, nor could they openly display any intimate contact, dancing and walking apart. Young unmarried women from respectable families were accompanied by chaperones when they socialized with the opposite sex. These circumstances are the cause why couples have often their first private conversation during the proposal. Though arranged marriages were no longer legal in the 19th century, middle-class women often had no free will to choose their partner, as their choices

were regulated in order to gain a suitable marriage proposal. Parents often interfere with the martial affairs as it was seen the perfect opportunity to affirm or enhance the social status and rank of the family through marriage. (Mitchell, 152)

The interfering was clearly visible in actions of Mrs. Bennet. She devoted her life to gossiping and nearly an obsession to find eligible husbands for her five daughters in order to provide them and also herself support, following the death of her husband. In pursuit of marrying off her five daughters, she often acts insensible to their feelings. She would rather see her daughters in a loveless, unwanted marriage than to be single. Security means more than personal happiness of her own children. Ironically, her attempts to push them into marriage by all means, followed by her lack of social grace and awareness of her often vulgar conduct and foolish, noisy behaviour has often resulted in the fact that she drove the very same people, she was desperately trying to attract, away. This kind of behaviour was considered to be disgraceful for upper-class.

Mrs. Bennet repeatedly encouraged Kitty and Lydia's poor behaviour and judgement and embarrassed Jane and Elizabeth. When Miss Bingley invited Jane to dine with her in Netherfield, Mrs. Bennet refused to provide her daughter a carriage and encouraged her to go on horseback, because it seemed likely to rain, and she wanted to ensure, that Jane stays there all night, so she could meet Mr. Bingley later, as he was dining out with officers. As a result of Jane soaking wet on her way there, she felt unwell and had to stay there. *"Well, my dear,"* said Mr. Bennet, when Elizabeth had read the note aloud, *"if your daughter should have a dangerous fit of illness, if she should die, it would be a comfort to know that it was all in pursuit of Mr. Bingley, and under your orders."* (PP, Chapter 7, p 20) Mrs. Bennet replied without no fear that is simple impossible to dye of cold, and that as long Jane is staying in the company of Mr. Bingley, everything is fine. This is one of many examples that reflects the attitude of Mrs. Bennet, her actions and reaction to this particular situation show us how determined she was to accomplish by any means her life purpose.

In the eyes of upper - class society, for instance for Lady Catherine or Mr. Bingley's sister, Mrs. Bennet's manners and her impact on the upbringing of her daughters, were an object of ridicule, they were damaging the reputation of the whole family. She and her frivolous behaviour, showing the family's reputation in a bad light are, apart from their low social standing, the reason why Darcy interfered in the relationship of Jane and Bingley. He saw their match to be most ill-advised and warned his friend against entering into this kind of

marriage. Such indiscreet and undignified manners were considered déclassé, they were the counterpoint to the cultivated manners and exquisite taste of elite upper-class society.

The idea of marrying someone for love was also seen as more appropriate for lower classes. In the upper society, marriage proposals were more business-driven as it was mentioned already earlier. When it comes to the issues of proposals they were also subjected to a certain protocol. Following the decorum of Austen's times, it was naturally the role of the man to propose to a woman, but it was not sufficient, a parental approval of the engagement was also needed, since the father could withhold his daughter's fortune.

Refusal of a proposal was a rarely seen incident. By refusing both Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy for the first time, Austen showed a outside the box, progressive thinking of her heroine, dissimilar to conformal, traditional behaviour. The astonishment with Elizabeth's decision to refuse the then advantageous and tempting marriage proposal was visible particularly in Mr. Collin's demeanour related to this situation. After Elizabeth refused his loveless proposal full of practicality, he incorrectly assumed she was playing coy, as it is consistent with the female gender to act that way, and he went on and lists reasons demonstrating why her rejection could not be meant seriously. He mentioned his own worthiness, connection to the De Borough family and emphasised Elizabeth's own unfavourable position, small fortune and potential poverty and pointed out that she is not likely to receive another proposal. For a man the possibility of rejection of his proposal, after being sanctioned by both parents, it was something incomprehensible, taken into consideration the fact that by refusing him, Elizabeth put at risk not only her future, but also prospects of her own family.

As for the demands that the Regency Era imposed on women, it surely was not easy to meet all the requirements, as the standards were set high regarding the accomplishment of women. Mrs Bingley claimed:

“A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone other voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved.” (PP, Chapter 8, p 25).

We can see from the dialogue between Elizabeth Bennet and Miss Bingley, that it was nearly impossible to be abundant in all the anticipated areas, upper-class women were expected to excel at. Darcy also expressed the opinion that he hardly knows 12 women, who can be

considered to master all the various skills that women are supposed to handle. Elizabeth contradicts such a view by stating that she never met such a woman. By letting her heroine to state such an opinion, Austen expressed, to some degree, satirical attitude of hers, towards such requirements placed on women of the 18th and the beginning of 19th century.

The significance of the strict views on the issue of women's accomplishment is also evident and more importantly echoed by the attitude of Lady Catherine, who is shocked about the lack of formal education and negligence regarding the education and the upbringing of Bennets daughters. Moreover, she uses this matter as a reason to justify her uncompromising, ultimate disapproval of the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy. (Pride and Prejudice, Chapter 29)

3. The Bridget Jones's Diary

3.1 General information

Bridget Jones's Diary, the popular novel, written by an English author Helen Fielding, was published in 1996. However, the character of Bridget Jones was first brought to life in 1995 in a series of columns of the British newspaper *The Independent*. The novel is based upon the plot of *Pride and Prejudice* which the writer herself stated this fact in many interviews. According to a survey, conducted by *The Guardian* newspaper, the public feels that *Bridget Jones's Diary* is one of the ten novels that defined best the 20th century. It offers the mirror image of the society and culture in which this work has been produced and published. (The Guardian, 2007)

The story is written in the form of a personal diary and it revolves around the protagonist Bridget Jones, single woman around her thirties, living in London. It chronicles a year in the life of this independent woman on a quest for self-improvement, who is determined to shape up and improve her personal and professional life. Bridget is struggling to lose weight, quit smoking, drink less alcohol, to develop a functional relationship with a responsible adult. She also writes about her career, family, friends (docile Jude, feminist Sharon and appearance-obsessed, homosexual Tom). Her friends are more or less her surrogate family, who is unconditionally supporting her throughout the novel when it comes to both, everyday problems or relationship advices. Throughout the novel, Bridget is romantically involved with two men. The first half of the book concentrates on Bridget's flirtation and sort of relationship or affair with her commitment-phobic boss Daniel Cleaver only to find out in the end that he has been cheating on her. After this heartbreaking discovery Bridget starts to pursue her career instead, she quits her work at a publishing house and she finds a job in a television, as a researcher and presenter. The second man in Bridget's life is Mark Darcy a successful, recently divorced, barrister with whom Bridget's mother Pam has tried to set up her daughter with. Despite the first poor impression these two characters have experienced, in the course of the time Mark and Bridget start to develop an attraction for each other. The story is also framed by the complicated relationship of Bridget's parents.

Over the years, the novel became a worldwide success and led to equally successful film adaptation and its sequels. Helen's Fielding fictional character "Bridget Jones" was in December 2016, included on the Woman's Hour Power List to be one of seven most influential women, having a great impact on lives of British women over the last seven

decades. She was accompanied there by such powerful names as Margaret Thatcher, Barbara Castle, Helen Brook etc. (BBC, 2016)

3.2 Themes

3.2.1 Love, relationships and marriage

The theme of love and relationship are once again key elements of this narrative. Not only Bridget but also other characters are in a search of this magic, genuine feeling of love. Though for everyone love and relationship means and represents something else. For some it is purely physical, the pure attraction, the delight of sex and fun, as we can see in the character of Daniel. For others, namely for Bridget it is more. It is also the feeling to be loved and cared deeply by the other half, to spend time together, to be equal in love, not to be just someone's toy that can be cast-off when it served its purpose.

Their different attitude towards relationship can be seen in their interaction when Daniel was trying to seduce her, and told her, for him it is just fun, he was not encouraging her to take it seriously, he was emphasizing they should not get involved. As a reaction to this Bridget stated: *"How dare you be so fraudulently flirtatious, cowardly and dysfunctional? I am not interested in emotional "fuckwittage" ³Goodbye."* (BJD, Chapter Friday 27 January, p 23)

In spite of the fact, she was aware of their different perspective, when it comes to rapport, and she did not accept being mistreated, she still could not resist Daniel's sex-appeal and wanted to have a relationship with him. Thanks to advices of her friends, she develops sort of a game that she plays with him, in order to change his attitudes and get what she wants.

Although their relationship does not end well, we can see that Bridget was nothing like a character from Jane Austen, she did not want to settle for a relationship that was not according her believes. We can see that she has chosen rather to be single than to be part of a relationship that would harm her. The importance of marriage or securing a boyfriend/husband is not so strong and emphasised here. Bridget is after all an independent young woman, who is living on her own and has a steady income thus she does not need any man to secure her financially. Nor should she feel scared of becoming a family's burden. The end of the 20th century opened up much more opportunities compared to the limited options women once had at the beginning of the 19th century, the time when *Pride and Prejudice* originated.

³ A mind games men play when dating. (Urban Dictionary, 2004)

Another revolt of Bridget Jones's diary's character, against a relationship or more precisely against the marriage, can be seen in the character of Pam Jones, Bridget's mother. After decades of living in a marriage, she realised, she was feeling oppressed. She stood up for herself and expressed that being married, meant to live a solely domestic life. It was an unfulfilling, thankless role. She felt like she has wasted her life, all those years serving to the needs of her family, like a slave. She did not have an opportunity to build a career, neither was she able to experience to live an independent, self-sufficient life. Throughout the book she rebelled against her domestic role. She wanted to enjoy the rest of her life and make the most of it. Suddenly she wants to be perceived as an attractive woman, not only mother and wife, she also found herself a job and experienced different forms of relationship than being in matrimony.

As a woman living in the modern 21st century society, she does no longer feel to be bound to the domestic domain only. In the past women had no voice, they were silenced by the dominant society, which pushed them to accept and settle for the single role in their lives, marriage. Marriage reassured them the consent in the eyes of the general public and provided them with a financial security. On the other hand, it enabled the possibility to eliminate women's role in society and preserved and strengthen their dependency on men. It represented a vicious circle. The only way out of this rut, is to defy the ingrained, restrictive and biased traditions. And that is exactly what Pam Jones did.

The outcome of her revolt might not look successful, at the first look, but it is possible to look at it also from another point of view. It is true that the reader has sometimes the feeling like she is lost in the modern world of the end of the 20th century. Confused with all these new attitudes, choices, opportunities, but the fact is that she stood up for herself. When she felt that she is on a wrong path in her married life, when her domestic duties felt like they were suffocating her, she did not surrender. She proved that she is a woman of choice. She chooses to find a new perspective, a new direction, to figure out what to do with the rest of her life. Although her liberation might seem debatable, as she started a disastrous relationship with a con man Julio and got involved in his criminal activity, it was still a brave step. Step out of her comfort zone, taken into account her age, and the social background and ideas of the time in which she grew up in. She opposed her fixed role as mother and wife, liberated herself, and searched for her own identity. It gave her a new perspective on life in general and also herself. Although she reunites with her husband in the end, it does not necessary mean she has settled for her old, familiar, safe way of life. On the contrary we can understand it as she took the

best from her old life and now she can combine it with the new one. She can utilize the newly acquired experiences and self-confidence, and set a new balance in the re-established relationship with her husband.

Bridget's friend Magda, who belongs to the Smug Married, is not completely satisfied with her life. She pointed out, that Bridget should be in fact happy, she is single and actually enjoy it. In the Chapter Tuesday 17 May, she told Bridget: "*Once you've got kids and you've given up your job you're in an incredibly vulnerable position.*" (BJD, p 71). She also complained that it is a hard job to look after the children all day, she misses having a job, it was fulfilling and fun at the same time. It shows that marital life simply does not guarantee happiness. It is not the only and most importantly correct way to live. Both married and single lives have their advantages and disadvantages, people should live according their own beliefs and opinions, not blindly follow someone else's standards.

3.2.2 Sex, dating and flirting

As far as the physical intimacy, the characters depicted in Bridget Jones's Diary are much more open-minded when it comes to their sexual life and their needs regarding this area. Throughout the book there were many sex allusions or even open references to sex. The relationships were more intimate and loosened compared to *Pride and Prejudice*. Bridget, having no scruples, has often portrayed her sexual life: "*The second we were inside his flat we fell upon each other like beasts: shoes, jackets, strewn in a trail across the room.*" (BJD, Friday 27 January, p 23)

From Bridget's attitude towards sex, it is visible that for a woman towards the end of the 20th century it is now quite common to talk about sexual experience and moreover to have one. Women are not pressured to preserve their virginity until marriage. It shows that sex is seen as a natural part of an ordinary life of a person. The sexual revolution in 1960s (mentioned already in the chapter 1.7.2) removed the taboos and restrictions regarding sex, so Bridget is enjoying her sexual freedom, when it comes to her encounters with men

The courtship or rather a more convenient expression-flirtation- is surely affected by the more open-minded attitudes of the society of 20th century and also by the technology of that timeline. Bridget lives in the late nineties which means she is liberated from once strict manners regarding the courtship. Also the advanced technology plays a significant role in relation to seducing the object of interest. As we can see on Daniel and Bridget, their affair

started via flirtatious email conversation, concerning Bridget's absent/non-absent skirt. Their conversations are full of dirty jokes and remarks. It is now pretty common to show off the feelings towards the second party more openly or even publicly display the affection.

As an example of this electronic conversation, here is the first message addressed to Bridget from Daniel, which started their whole affair:

“Message Jones

You appear to have forgotten your skirt. As

I think is made perfectly clear in your

contract of employment, staff are expected

to be fully dressed at all times.

Cleave ” (BJD, Chapter Thursday 5 January, p 17)

Not only emails, but also the TV offered single people a possibility to make acquaintance with someone. In the course of the novel there were a few remarks that mentioned the British dating game show *Blind Date* which Bridget was regularly watching.

Another form of conversation is realized by using phones. There is also a special line, where Bridget is checking if she missed any calls from her suitors, and from the content of the book it is evident, she is doing it quiet often. We can see that the 90s offer quite lots of possibilities how to approach another person.

The fact with dating, nearly at beginning of the second millennium is that when someone shows affection towards the other person, it does not necessarily mean that they are being serious about the relationship. It can be either man or woman, as it is possible for both genders to approach the person of interest. This is most evident in the character of Daniel, who takes the relationship with Bridget more casually. He has neither the intention to marry her nor to be loyal, as it turns out in the course of the time. Bridget was often getting lost in her romantic fantasies regarding Daniel which ultimately lead to a disappointment when the reality caught up with her.

The places for rendezvous of people with potential interest in each other, has also changed since *Pride and Prejudice* was written. It is actually possible to meet everywhere as it is not

needed to wait to be introduced to another person through mutual friends and also since it is not considered to be inappropriate to spend time alone with the other person, the options to meet someone and get to know this person, are pretty much easier now. Bridget and Mark and Daniel were meeting at parties, in pubs, at work. Bridget and Daniel spent together also a weekend in a country house hotel.

3.3.3 The outside pressure of society

Even though, the pressure of the society and its interfering regarding the civil status of women of certain age is still evident. Nevertheless, it is mostly the older generation who is bothering Bridget with curious questions of marriage. This is an example of a gap in thinking between the old and modern generation at the dawn of a new millennium. Bridget's love life often comes under scrutiny at social events like Una and Geoffrey Alconbury's New Year's Day Turkey Curry Buffet and other parties. "*How does a woman manage to get to your age without being married?*" (BJD, Chapter Sunday 1 January, p12). Such perennial inquiry accompanied by emphasis on Bridget's biological clock, alarming her it is the highest time to start to build a family, puts her in an uncomfortable, embarrassing situation. It makes her anxious and uneasy, to be constantly reminded that she is single, thus is failing to live up to the expectation of society, to achieve something, that is the aim for everybody, and what society perceives to be a norm, commonplace. According to Bridget's behaviour in the course of the time, depicted in her diary she often seems to be caught in the middle between her own will, values and norms and the outside pressure to live according to what is expected.

Bridget's mother would prefer to see her daughter in a thriving relationship than being single. That is why she is trying to set her up with Mark Darcy a respectable top-notch barrister, a son of Bridget's parent's friends.

In spite of the fact that Bridget felt like spending life with one significant other would make her life happier and she would not feel lonely, and despite the unceasing interference of the society, still stressing the importance of not being single, she did not want to give up her identity and to lose her freedom and independence. As a woman living in a modern western society she enjoys her rights and believes in equality. Many times in the book she reassured herself that she does not need a man in order to feel complete. In chapter Sunday 15 January she remarked: "*However, one must not live one's life through men but must be complete in oneself as a woman of substance.*" (BJD, Sunday 15 January, p 22)

Not only the generation of Bridget's parents and their friends, but also those friends of Bridget, who are already married, were highlighting Bridget's age and the urgency to find a boyfriend/husband. Bridget had a nickname for this type of friends, she called them Smug Married. Her feminist friend Sharon was of the opposite opinion. She supported her friend and believed Bridget should be proud of who she is and not to feel embarrassed for her life style. She advised her to tell such people that she is not married, because she is "Singleton". That there is not one and only right way to live, that there is a whole generation of single and independent, young women who are self-sufficient. These women are not sad and desperate. They are having fun and are not forced to spend their lives trapped in a household, occupying their minds with cooking, washing and caring for their unhelpful husbands. In fact she expressed that those friends are questioning Bridget's way of life on the grounds of their own jealousy. (BJD, Wednesday 1 February, p 27)

Sharon is not the only friend who is giving Bridget encouragement and lifting her spirit and moral, also Tom and Jude are always there for Bridget and vice versa. Their relationship is very strong they support each other, and are there for each other. They understand their needs, and feelings. They all rank themselves as "Singletons" and together face the still small-minded society.

Bridget together with her friends is refusing the domination of the society, and its, still persisting, social standards concerning some areas of women's life style. "*Tom has a theory that homosexuals and single women in their thirties have natural bonding: both being accustomed to disappointing their parents and being treated as freaks by society.*" (BJD, Chapter Sunday 8 January, p 20) Despite the possible social criticism, they chose to live independently according to their own principles.

Bridget's apparent obsession with self-help book and advice manuals that should help her solve her personal problems is also a product of the society driven by the idea that the blind reliance on the norm is good. It is creating the idea that following popularly held beliefs can ensure people happiness and good public impression. On the contrary, these books overflowing with advices on issues like how to find a husband, how to be a success with one's career and much more, prevents her to see things clearly, to think independently, to do things her way. Bridget herself sometimes doubts the actual help provided by such books. She was wondering if it is in fact not causing harm to her generation.

3.3.4 Body and visual aspects

Closely related to the pressure of the society undoubtedly is Bridget's own acceptance of her body and appearance. The heroine of the novel is obsessively counting her calories and is placing demands on herself. She is affected by the ideals of beauty socially constructed concept of attractiveness imposed on women. The society, media namely the TV and magazines they all exert pressure on women, emphasising the perfect appearance and body as models. Bridget herself highlighted this point in Chapter Thursday 23 February:

“Wise people will say Daniel should like me just as I am, but I am a child of Cosmopolitan culture, have been traumatized by super-models and too many quizzes and know that neither my personality nor my body is up to it if left to its own devices.” (BJD, p 35)

The fact that she believes in these fabricated ideals is the cause and effect why she lacks self-confidence in the first place. She wants to become an ideal woman in order to become attractive and sufficiently interesting for other people, but also to be satisfied with her own body and identity. She naturally wants to live up to expectations of the society so she is devoting a considerable amount of time to beautifying her body. She waxes her legs, shaves her underarms plucks her eyebrows, cleanses spots, and all the other single beauty grooming standards that society values that much. The process of these grooming rituals performed by Bridget has an ironic undertone, as she is depicting it as a really hard, nearly exhausting work. She compared herself to a farmer, and is referring to this activity as harvesting and crop spraying. It more or less mocks and degrades the effortless idea of femininity, so natural to women.

Another negative aspect of social pressure is the already earlier mentioned struggle of the protagonist with diet and calories counting. After years of striving for an ideal weight, Bridget does not get suitable reactions full of praise of her body, as she reaches her goal. The result she got was nothing what she expected, instead of everyone noticing how gorgeous her figure is, they were concerned that something is going on with her. They noticed she looked tired and nothing like herself. This outcome itself is questioning the beauty standards. Nevertheless, the fact is that in spite of Bridget's disappointment with such result, she did not free herself from this diet obsession. It leads me to the conclusion that the reason behind her dieting is to act in accordance with the cultural beauty norms. In my opinion, her behaviour is the result of the social pressure on women to have a perfect body. The act of being on a diet

represents a habit or a standardized hobby of the female gender, something that the western society approves, rather than a real effort and desire of women to lose weight. Thin equals perfect and beautiful, it misguides women to believe that the secret of happiness lies in their body image and their appearance.

3.3.5 Career, occupation and feminism

Although the book deals mainly on the problematic issue of relationships and areas related to it, there also instances when the career is in the centre of focus. Not only Bridget but also most of the other female characters are portrayed as employed especially the main one, and re depicted to live independently. These female protagonists are no housewives taking care of household, and bringing up kids. They are an embodiment of modern women breaking down the traditional roles of female gender in the society. Bridget as a woman living in the 1990s has without any doubt more career possibilities, than women at the beginning of the 20th century, thanks to the changes which both wars and feminist movements brought. She is pretty much aware of her opportunities, as she was trying to enhance her CV in order to accomplish a career improvement.

On one hand, Bridget appears to be a woman living life full of opportunities, free in relation to her choices and duties due to her economic independence. She is a prototype of a modern woman- single, feminist, independent, having her own place. She was referred also to be a careerist at a party of friends of her parents: "*You career girls! I don't know! Can't put it off for ever, you know.*"(BJD, Chapter, Sunday 1 January, p 12) By "putting it off forever" was meant finding a partner/husband, emphasising it is a highest time to think about babies. When Bridget first encounters Mark Darcy, she is introduced to him as Bridget, who has a job at a publishing house. Fielding also explores women's characters with attributes such as their employment, for example in case of Bridget's friend Jude: "*Jude is Head of Futures at Brightlings*" (BJD, Wednesday 4 January, p 15)

On the other hand, Bridget is often captured between the opposites of being a feminist or a docile, male-dominated woman. While she upholds all the modern feministic values like importance of the career, independence and despising the embarrassing biological clock references, simultaneously she is denying them, judging by her behaviour. Her unflagging desire for a relationship, her exaggerated focus on her appearance and weight, her lack of self-confidence, her desire to change all her habits, that are reckoned as inappropriate for women, even unfeminine like drinking, smoking, etc., her participation in an inappropriate sexual

harassment with her boss and also her obsessive dialling of 1471 to check if he or Mark called. All these and more of such Bridget's traits leads to a fact that many critics argue whether Bridget is not in fact anti-feminist character. In the article Contextualizing Bridget Jones both Ginia Bellafante and Michiko Kakutani are of the opinion that Bridget with her fixation on trivialities, mainly her personal life and finding a partner so she does not have to live alone, and also preoccupation with self-perfection, diet and self-help books at the expense of more meaningful issues, makes her a current embodiment of a female character that contradicts and undermines all the hard work and efforts that feminist movements have achieved. (Marsh, 2004)

As a reaction to such discussions and the point of view Bridget being disgrace to feminism, the writer of the novel, Helen Fielding, stated: "If we can't laugh at ourselves without having a panic attack over what it [Bridget Jones's Diary] says about women, we haven't got very far with our equality." (Ferriss and Young, 2006, p 9) In my opinion Bridget's thoughts revolving around her look and love life and her contradictory and ambiguous actions were also often exaggerated for a comic effect and satire. Fielding also claims that it was important for her to portray Bridget as an authentic representation of women in 1990s. (Ferriss and Young, 2006, p 9) From Fielding's statements I came to the conclusion that Bridget's character provides the insight into the life and struggles of women during 1990s in Britain and it shows that even though the conditions of women have changed considerably, it is still difficult to be a woman. Bridget represents a bridge between the old-new kind of woman. Without denying all those remarkable changes the late 20th century has brought (mentioned in the theoretical part) the life of the heroine was still complicated as the equality of both genders remained rather superficial. Even now in the 21st century we cannot claim that the equality was fully achieved. The society nowadays is beyond all doubt, more perceptive towards women's independence, rights and their needs but yet reluctant towards it.

4. Comparison of the literary heroines, their life and society

It is generally known that Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* is based on its predecessor *Pride and Prejudice*, written by Jane Austen in 1813. Although these two exceptional novels full of humour are separated by a time span of nearly 200 years, there can be found lots of similarities to connect them. Fielding borrowed the plot of *Pride and Prejudice* and used it as a framework for her own story, set in a modern environment of the 1990s in London. She also named her main male protagonist Mark Darcy. By utilizing the archetype of *Pride and Prejudice* in a novel written at the turn of the millennium, Fielding, in my opinion, carefully indicated that even though the time has passed and the society has changed noticeably, yet the equality has not been achieved completely. Some of the former restrictions and ideas have been preserved others have been reshaped to suit the modern world. Among the still current and problematic areas in general, vividly discussed even now in the 2017, over ten years after publishing BJD, surely are issues like better chances of men for being hired, the chances of male gender to get promotion are higher and they also get often higher wages. Concentrating on the issues stated in the book, I would like to mention the persisting emphasis on not living a single life, marriage, biological clock, giving preference to rising children over pursuing a career, matters highlighted mostly by the older generation as a reminder of the preceding era. The female obsession about their body image, beauty standards and the social pressure in general can be seen, to some extent, as a stagnation of women's right as it is still on the front burner.

Although there are still traces of the past, haunting the modern society even nowadays, it is important to bear in mind that the two centuries between origination of both of the novels have brought real, crucial changes. The life of both protagonists is the shining example of it. I will comment on this issue later on. By comparing the contents of the books and its themes and the behaviour, struggles and role of the female heroines a reader can notice the progress that has been made. Also in the analysis, provided in the previous chapters, the transition and the change in attitudes and standards of the society were demonstrated.

The protagonists, Elizabeth and Bridget are shaped by the rules of their society as they reflect the differences of both ages. Taking into consideration both of them, we can notice some big differences between them, not only in the way they behave or present themselves but also in their attitude towards life. For instance, Elizabeth is noticeably dignified, quick-witted and spirited, but in a respectable way. Although she occasionally rebels against the social norms

and doctrine, and surprises her family and her vicinity with unconventional ideas, questioning the social standards, she does not cross the border, and openly rebels against the society, lobbying for female rights. After all it was not even a real option for her to act in such way, as it would be a radiant example of social suicide. The result of such actions would dash not only her prospects, but the future of her entire family. Elizabeth's biggest revolt is when she declines Mr. Collins' marriage offer and also the first proposal of Mr. Darcy followed only to accept his second offer. Although she marries him for love, her personal revolt is over and when she fulfils the voluntary-compulsory duty of every woman, to enter the matrimony. Elizabeth, but mostly the society was not ready for revolutionary actions and disagreements with restrictions of women's liberty and independence yet. That is why she expresses her progressive attitudes and ideas mainly verbally. Naturally, that already can be perceived as bravery and progress considering the atmosphere of the beginning of 19th century.

Oppositely Bridget is unrestrained, loud and frequently behaving in undignified manner, she is more or less loose cannon. Her lax moral is displayed in her partiality for alcohol consumption and immoderate smoking, etc. Although some critics pointed she is a disgrace to all feminist, I think this is not quite truthful opinion. I believe that such criticism is exaggerated. On one hand, she sometimes seems desperate in her pursuit of a soul mate, glaring hours or even the whole weekend at the phone, waiting overzealously for a guy to call. Not to mention her obsession with self-improvement of her, body, appearance, behaviour etc. so that it would correspond the social concepts and norms. Nevertheless, it is important to realise that the novel was written in the form of diary, where Bridget is sharing her most internal feelings and thoughts that often are a product of her anxiety, often resulted in her overstated dramatised statements.

The fact is that even though Bridget fears the thought of ending up single for her entire life, she is not afraid to stand up for herself when she feels mistreated by a man, as in the case with Daniel. Neither did she overlook the fact, he cheated on her. She doesn't want to end up alone, but not at any cost. On top of that I am of the opinion that her desire to find a partner does not make her necessarily antifeminist. It does not mean she is not able to manage to live on her own, on the contrary, it simply means she would like someone to share her life with, without losing her independency.

The same goes for her efforts to have a perfect figure, appearance and character traits. Although she is often talking about it and trying to accomplish this ideal, she is certainly not

completely determined to the idea. When she feels like drinking and smoking she does, she is also often cheating her diet and she is not heavy-handed with exercising. Thus, it is evident that despite the fact she is frequently talking about the goals and accomplishments and all the other things that are considered to be shameful for a woman towards the end of 20th century, she is rarely fulfilling them. I think Bridget exaggerated thoughts related to her appearance and body and her actions are used ironically, a satire on our society but most importantly to reflect the contemporary issues and problems women face in this era. As it was already mentioned, Fielding herself stated that she was trying to demonstrate the situation in her era and to provide an authentic image of the life and struggles of women.

Another fact is that Bridget is a working woman, she has a job, she is economically independent, and she does not need a man to secure her financial prospects and her entire future. Thanks to the efforts of feminist activist and the impact of the World Wars that brought the development of women's rights Bridget has, in contrast to Elizabeth Bennet and other Austen's heroines, the advantage to pursue her career. That is a huge step forward since Austen's times. At the beginning of the 19th century, marriage was broadly speaking the only option for a woman. Nearly 200 years after, women are not forced to get married on the grounds of financial security, it is no more the question of life and death. Thanks to such progress, women now have much more possibilities, they enjoy a greater freedom. Marriage is no longer used as way to be recognised in the eyes of society either. Women can now freely decide who they want to marry, or if they want to get marry in the first place.

Another change in the times of publication of both novels can be seen in the fact that Mark Darcy is divorced. The fact that he was married already once and he is not seen as disgrace in the eyes of the society, and that the other way round, he is considered to be a good catch, is of crucial significance, since it was not really common or typical in the era of Austen's Mr. Darcy. Moreover, Fielding's Mark Darcy is considered to be a man of a good social status because he has a prestige job of a barrister, he worked hard and that is why he is quite rich. In contrast to Mr. Darcy who inherited his fortune from his father as well, the same applies to his social rank.

Other changes are visible in the field of courtship. The rules in the 1990s were less strict. People can meet everywhere they want to, and they do not have to follow the accurate rules of etiquette. Woman can also express her interest first, there is no need to wait for a man to do it. People are more open minded regarding physical intimacy, sex, public expression of

affection. In *Pride and Prejudice* this was not a standard. The options were much more limited, and taboos and restrictions predominated this era. The sexual tension between the characters in *Pride and Prejudice* was not depicted explicitly as the society then would consider it to be vulgar. The mutual attraction was portrayed by gestures like glances, and dance proposals, conversations, walks. Bridget can on the other hand fully enjoy sexual freedom in her encounters with men. The sexual liberation of 1960s has brought a new perspective and view regarding the sexuality. The society close to the end of the 20th century is more tolerant and unbiased towards sexual life, also in terms of sexual orientation. After all Bridget's best friend Tom was described to be a homosexual character. The mere existence of such kind of a character is a proof of more liberal and sensitive attitudes of people. Although it was visible that this problematic was not overcome entirely. The generation of Bridget's parents are still influenced by the era when they were born. This less tolerant period has a great impact on them, thus they still have preconceived ideas about homosexuality. Bridget's mother thinks that homosexuality is laziness to relate to the opposite sex and talks about it as a ridiculous "friend" nonsense.

The courtship manners are also closely connected with progress of the technology. The society of Bridget Jones is technologically more advanced than the world of Elizabeth Bennet. Bridget is using devices like phone, email and computer in order to make progress with her suitors, to get to know them, to arrange appointments, while Elizabeth had to make do with letters only. Such conveniences that Bridget is using, or even the dating show in the TV, she is watching that all is only a beginning of the upcoming advanced technology at the outset of the 21st century, and its possibilities and power when it comes to dating.

As for the issue of reputation, it still an important aspect, but the consequences of stepping outside the social norms are not that fatal as in the case of the beginning of the 19th century. The society is now more relaxed when it comes to manners, etiquette and reputation. But a scandal is still something that is better to avoid, people do still enjoy rumours and gossips and with better technology, the act of doing so is far quicker. As far as the matter of social class is concerned, the society of Elizabeth Bennet was much more class-based, and the position of people in the society, their wealth and estates played a key role. They were judged by these aspects and their personality was a secondary factor. In Bridget's world the situation was much better, the social ranks are not that essential. Naturally people with a high social rank have a more prestigious status in the society but it is not against any rules or principles to date or marry someone standing lower on the social ladder. More or less it is pretty common.

In general, in the 19th century society the class differences were more evident, polite manners were much more emphasised and the social status of women was not determined by their accomplishments but by the social status of their family and then by their husband. Speaking of accomplishments, the emphasis to be considered accomplished, was put on women in both centuries. In the 19th century it was crucial to meet the requirements imposed on women of then time in order to enhance their marriage prospects and in the 20th century and even nowadays, they are products of the consequences of feminism. The demands have increased because women are overwhelmed with the responsibilities like being loving wives and caring mothers and at the same time the responsibilities that the feminist movement placed upon them, such as pursuing their careers. Women find themselves in a difficult, ambiguous position as it is hard to live up to the expectations of both roles and balance both family and career. They are caught between the competing demands of the modern age. They struggle to retain their femininity, have a family and fulfill their domestic chores, while at the same time they want to be accepted as strong and independent women carrying out careers.

The contemporary view on women emphasise also much more than earlier the concept of their beauty. A great extent of insecurities and lack of self-confidence of female gender are caused by the pressure of media and the society in general, who lay stress on female beauty. The advertised conception of women's beauty is built on physical appearance, body, face, hair, clothes. As well as Bridget mentioned her worries regarding these trivial concerns, many other woman all over the world are struggling with these issues. Despite the fact that women have nowadays more money, bigger power, freedom, equal legal rights, better jobs and educational opportunities, and their position and equality in general is at the highest point in relation to the history, they still have some problems to face and overcome.

In conclusion, much has happened since both novels originated. Through their literary work and the everyday life of their heroines, both writers Austen and Fielding, have accurately described the society of their time, and also emphasized the social demands and struggles of women that have over the time changed but still exist. By borrowing the plot of *Pride and Prejudice*, and reconstructing it into a modern version of the story, Fielding showed her readers, how similar or different our society is in certain aspects, in relation to the previous times. Although both books have the same framework, and lots of the topics and concerns might seem similar, I think the differences have outweighed the resemblance.

I am of the opinion that most of the issues have rather shifted, evolved, or transformed into new, not less complex areas due to the progress and change of the position of female gender in the course of the two centuries. It portrays the role of women in the society and the development of female rights, freedom and enhancement of their life as well as some sort of stagnation and new current problems it has brought.

5. Using literature as a teaching material in the EFF/ESL4 classroom

The novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *Bridget Jones's Diary* can serve as teaching materials in English lessons. It enhances not only the pupils/students critical reading skills, but the themes of the books can also serve as a source of interesting information. Throughout the content of the novels, students can learn about the society, customs, traditions and the way of life of women in general, at the beginning of 19th and the end of 20th century. The themes and issues covered in both novels are illustrative of the progress that has been made in the field of women's rights, independency and equality.

It is important to discuss the issue of female rights and liberation from the inequality and long term oppression of female gender, so that students can realize that current status of women was not a standard. It was a hard-won achievement and people should not take it for granted. Having a discussion about this topic will raise students' awareness of the issue of female rights and the changes and progress regarding the improvements of the position of the female gender.

1. Lesson Plan:

Pride and Prejudice as a Reading Activity in English Lessons

Age group: students of secondary schools

Class: maximum of 16 students

Length: 90 minutes

Tools: extract from the book, board, dictionaries

Methods: pair work, whole class discussion, group work

Main goals

- reading comprehension, acquisition of new vocabulary (cognitive domain)

⁴EFL means English as a Foreign Language and ESL means English as a Secondary Language. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2017)

- students discuss and form opinions about the type of life in England at the beginning of 19th century (affective domain)
- students try to write their own ending of the scene (psychomotor domain)

Pre-reading activities:

- Students should respond to the following statements. Then a class survey is going to be conducted to see how students responded. It will lead to a class discussion in which they are going to share their reasons, beliefs and expectations.
 - a) First impressions are often wrong.
 - b) Parents should have some say about whom their children marry.
 - c) Family members should do everything in their power for the joint benefit of the family.
 - d) Love at first sight is nonsense.
 - e) Courtship in the 21st century is much easier than in the 19th century.
 - f) People should always act according to the social manners of their time.
 - g) According to Charlotte: “Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance.” (PP, p 21)
- The novel brings up many issues, to understand the type of life in England at the beginning of the 19th century, students are going to work in groups of 4 and they try to come up with what they now about England at that time and to portray differences or similarities between the society at the beginning of the 19th and the 21st century. In the end they are going to share their ideas and with help of the teacher they gain a basic knowledge of the life at the turn of the 19th century. They should take into account the following points: *The importance of family and manners, marriage versus career, educational opportunities, common way of life, traditions, customs, etc.*

Reading:

- Introduction – students are given an extract from the novel (see appendix A: *Material for Reading Activity –Pride and Prejudice*)

- Students are provided with dictionaries to look up unknown words – these words are then written on the board.
- Based on the text, in pairs students try to depict the character of Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet. What kind of behaviour and attitude does Mr. Bennet have towards his wife.
- In groups of 4, students discuss the meaning of the first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*, and they are going to decide whether they agree or disagree with the statement:
“It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.” (PP, chapter 1, p 2)
- Students write a paragraph stating their opinion what they think is going to happen next. Will Mr. Bennet introduce his wife and daughters to Mr. Bingley, will they go alone, etc?

Post-reading activities

- Students work in pairs, their task is to create a list of qualities on which people judge others. As the pairs share their ideas with the whole class, the most occurred qualities are written on the board, and it leads to a whole class discussion concerning the items on the board.
- Students answer the following questions and discuss them with the whole class.
 Have you ever watched a film version of *Pride and Prejudice*? Which one?
 Which characters did you feel most close to?
 Imagine, you could produce/direct a film production of *Pride & Prejudice*, what actors and actresses would you choose to play the main characters? Why? Which scene/scenes would you choose for the trailer.

2. Lesson Plan:

Bridget Jones's Diary as a Reading Activity in English Lessons

Age group: students of secondary schools

Class: maximum of 16 students

Length: 90 minutes

Tools: extract from the book, board, dictionaries

Methods: pair work, whole class discussion

Main goals

- reading comprehension, acquisition of new vocabulary (cognitive domain)
- students discuss and form opinions about New Year's resolutions (affective domain)
- students try to write their opinion on importance of marriage and career (psychomotor and cognitive domain)

Pre-reading activities:

Students should work in pairs. First, they read the following questions and answer them. Subsequently, they read the resolutions list and questions related to the topic and later, they share all ideas with the whole class.

- The film adaptation of Helen Fielding's novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* was a commercial success and people all over the world love this movie. Have you seen the movie? Do you know what the story is about? Do you know which famous celebrities were in it?
- The story of the novel tells a story of a single woman Bridget in her thirties living in London. The main protagonist is writing a diary where is depicted 1 year of her life. Below are listed some things she decided she must do or on the contrary stop doing –her New Year's resolutions-
 - a) Stop smoking
 - b) Limit the amount of alcohol

- c) Stop wasting money on unnecessary things
- d) Be kinder and help other people
- e) Go to the gym three times a week
- f) Develop a functional relationship with a responsible man
- g) Stop flirting with boss

Questions: Which of these resolutions do you think she will keep? Which are the easiest/most difficult? Do you have any advice how could she achieve them? What kind of person is Bridget? What do you think is her character like? Do you make your own New Year's resolutions? Do you keep a diary?

Reading:

- Introduction – students are given an extract from the novel (see appendix B: *Material for Reading Activity –Bridget Jones's Diary*)
- Students read through the story, and then they try to retell the story in their own words in pairs. Some chosen pairs then retell their version of the story to the whole class.
- Afterwards the students are provided with dictionaries to look up unknown words – these words are then written on the board.
- Then they answer the questions:
How does Bridget feel on the 1st January?
What are her plans?
What happens on the way there?
What types of questions irritate Bridget?
What is Una's Tick-tock-tick-tock in the text referring to?
- In the end the answers are checked with the whole class and the students, now familiar with the unknown vocabulary, rework their stories to be as authentic as possible. The original story of the extract is then revealed to them by the teacher.

Post-reading activities:

- Whole class discussion related to issues of marriage, single life, pursuing career

What are the good qualities of a partner in marriage?

Are money, appearance, accomplishments, and family key factors?

Does social pressure play an important role?

What is the average age to get married in The Czech Republic?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of being single?

Is it common for women in their thirties to be single and live alone in the Czech Republic?

At what age women usually have a first child.

- Students write a paragraph stating their opinion and reasons about the importance of marriage. Can career be as important as marriage and family, or even more important?

CONCLUSION

The aim of my diploma thesis was to depict the status of British women throughout the centuries and portray the significant changes regarding their position in the society, and most importantly to demonstrate how the role of female gender, together with the stereotypes and restrictions was reflected in literature.

The theoretical part serves as a basis for a thorough insight into the issue of women's role in the society and their rights, and it also lays the foundations for the analysis of the novels. It focused on life and the status of women since the prehistoric time until the present day. In contrast to the current perceptions of female gender, the position of women was since time immemorial predestined by a patriarchal society, and for long centuries women were somehow oppressed and marginalized. The first significant changes started at the turn of the 19th century and continued in the 20th century, as the majority of crucial and determining events took place in this period. Many generations of women and men have devoted their whole lives in order to promote women's rights and to oppose the traditional ingrained roles that the male driven society prescribed to the female gender. It was a demanding and lengthy process. For decades, activists were struggling to achieve the rights, the liberties, and the level of equality women in Britain enjoy nowadays. Their fight for rights that rightfully belonged to them, and the social conditions after both World Wars, determined the development and enhancement of the present-day status of women. The fact is that in the present day women have the right to vote, or to be elected, better educational opportunities, they have the same legal rights as men, they are allowed to own property, it possible for them to get a divorce, they can choose to marry or not, they are more self-sufficient and independent. Another big victory is that they can pursue their careers, yet this field is still under constructions as there are still problems with unequal wages and a frequent preference of a male applicant over a female one often due to the issue of maternity leave.

The issue of the oppression of the female gender and the long-term process of the progress concerning the gender equality, women's rights, and independence in relation to literature is dealt in the practical part. I focused on two novels, Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Bridget Jones's Diary* written by Fielding. First of all, I analysed these novels and portrayed how accurately they both depict the society and the life of women in the period in which they originated. Secondly, I compared the novels in relation to their themes, the position of the

literary heroines, and their everyday life, struggles, way of thinking, independency etc. in the context of the changing position of British women in the society since the beginning of the 19th century until the present day. Although both novels showed some resemblances, the crucial changes that brought the enhancement of women's right, independence and equality during the time span of 200 years which divide both books are strongly evident. The changes brought not only a higher level of freedom of female gender in general, but they also liberated them from the necessity of marriage. It is no longer the only option to secure their future prospects. It enabled them to pursue their career which goes hand in hand with more independence. The social manners have also changed, they are no longer that strict, people have more choices and possibilities as they do not have to follow and act according to precise principles when it comes to the issue of courtship, reputation, dress code, etiquette, social rank and many other areas. Women have much more freedom in relation to choosing partners and their sexuality. Women nowadays have bigger power and they influence the public sphere more; their ideas are of the same importance as the opinions of men.

I have also depicted new problematic fields that the enhancement of female right's gave rise to, whether directly or indirectly, for example the insane obsession with beauty standards, and the concept of beauty itself, also the insecurity that comes from the fact that they are caught in between the old and new concept of being mothers and wives or ambitious modern women climbing up the corporate ladder. The role and position of women is still under development, it has already undergone an important evolution most noticeable during the last two centuries. Both writers Austen and Fielding have portrayed their era authentically and by comparing their novels we witness how these two literary works have reflected the particular issues and limitations women faced at the dawn of the 19th and by the end of 20th century and we can see the progress that has been made.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Material for Reading Activity –*Pride and Prejudice*

Chapter 1

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters. "My dear Mr. Bennet," said his lady to him one day, "have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?" Mr. Bennet replied that he had not. "But it is," returned she; "for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it." Mr. Bennet made no answer. "Do you not want to know who has taken it?" cried his wife impatiently. "You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it." This was invitation enough. "Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs. Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England; that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it, that he agreed with Mr. Morris immediately; that he is to take possession before Michaelmas, and some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week." "What is his name?" "Bingley." "Is he married or single?" "Oh! Single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!" "How so? How can it affect them?" "My dear Mr. Bennet," replied his wife, "how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them." "Is that his design in settling here?" "Design! Nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he may fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes." "I see no occasion for that. You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better, for as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr. Bingley may like you the best of the party." "My dear, you flatter me. I certainly have had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be anything extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown-up daughters, she ought to give over thinking of her own beauty." "In such cases, a woman has not often much beauty to think of." "But, my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr. Bingley when he comes into the neighbourhood." "It is more than I engage for, I assure you." "But consider your daughters. Only think what an establishment it would be for one of

them. Sir William and Lady Lucas are determined to go, merely on that account, for in general, you know, they visit no newcomers. Indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for us to visit him if you do not." "You are over-scrupulous, surely. I dare say Mr. Bingley will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying whichever he chooses of the girls; though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy." "I desire you will do no such thing. Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good-humoured as Lydia. But you are always giving her the preference." "They have none of them much to recommend them," replied he; "they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters." "Mr. Bennet, how can you abuse your own children in such a way? You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion for my poor nerves." "You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these last twenty years at least." "Ah, you do not know what I suffer." "But I hope you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a year come into the neighbourhood." "It will be no use to us, if twenty such should come, since you will not visit them." "Depend upon it, my dear, that when there are twenty, I will visit them all." Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three-and-twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. Her mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news. (PP, Chapter 1, p 2-4)

Appendix B: Material for Reading Activity –*Bridget Jones's Diary*

Chapter: Sunday 1 January

11.45 p.m. Ugh. First day of New Year has been day of horror. Cannot quite believe I am once again starting the year in a single bed in my parents' house. It is too humiliating at my age. I wonder if they'll smell it if I have a fag out of the window. Having skulked at home all day, hoping hangover would clear, I eventually gave up and set off for the Turkey Curry Buffet far too late. When I got to the Alconburys' and rang their entire-tune-of-town-hallclock-style doorbell I was still in a strange world of my own — nauseous, vile-headed, acidic. I was also suffering from road-rage residue after inadvertently getting on to the M6 instead of the M1 and having to drive halfway to Birmingham before I could find anywhere to turn round. I was so furious I kept jamming my foot down to the floor on the accelerator pedal to give vent to my feelings, which is very dangerous. I watched resignedly as Una Alconbury's form — intriguingly deformed through the ripply glass door bore down on me in a fuchsia two-piece. 'Bridget! We'd almost given you up for lost! Happy New Year! Just about to start without you.' She seemed to manage to kiss me, get my coat off, hang it over the banister, wipe her lipstick off my cheek and make me feel incredibly guilty all in one movement, while I leaned against the ornament shelf for support. 'Sorry. I got lost.' 'Lost? Durr! What are we going to do with you? Come on in!' She led me through the frosted-glass doors into the lounge, shouting, 'She got lost, everyone!' 'Bridget! Happy New Year! said Geoffrey Alconbury, clad in a yellow diamond-patterned sweater. He did a jokey Bruce Forsyth step then gave me the sort of hug which Boots would send straight to the police station. 'Hahumph,' he said, going red in the face and pulling his trousers up by the waistband. 'Which junction did you come off at?' 'Junction nineteen, but there was a diversion 'Junction nineteen! Una, she came off at Junction nineteen! You've added an hour to your journey before you even started. Come on, let's get you a drink. How's your love-life, anyway?' Oh God. Why can't married people understand that this is no longer a polite question to ask? We wouldn't rush up to them and roar, 'How's your marriage going? Still having sex?' Everyone knows that dating in your thirties is not the happy-go-lucky free-for-all it was when you were twenty-two and that the honest answer is more likely to be, 'Actually, last night my married lover appeared wearing suspenders and a darling little Angora crop-top, told me he was gay/a sex addict/a narcotic addict/a commitment phobic and beat me up with a dildo,' than, 'Super, thanks.' Not being a natural liar, I ended up mumbling shamefacedly to Geoffrey, 'Fine,' at

which point he boomed, 'So you still haven't got a feller!' 'Bridget! What are we going to do with you!' said Una. 'You career girls! I don't know! Can't put it off for ever, you know. Tick-tock-tick-tock.' 'Yes. How does a woman manage to get to your age without being married?' roared Brian Enderby (married to Mavis, used to be president of the Rotary in Kettering), waving his sherry in the air. Fortunately my dad rescued me. (Fielding, 1996, p 11-12)

RESUMÉ

Diplomová práce pojednává o statusu žen ve Velké Británii a změnách a vývoji jejich postavení v průběhu staletí, a také o tom, jak se jejich postavení promítlo v literatuře. V teoretické části bylo popsáno postavení ženského genderu od nejstarších do až do současnosti. V minulých staletích se byl život žen orientovaný převážně na rodinný život. Toto společenské postavení zůstávalo víceméně nezměněno po dlouhá staletí. První názory a pokusy o změnu nastaly v 19. století, avšak největších změn bylo dosaženo až ve 20. století. Jak následky obou světových válek, tak snaha feministických hnutí a dalších aktivistů přispěli k tomu, k významným změnám a pokroku týkajícího se práv a postavení žen ve společnosti. Díky těmto snahám mají ženy v dnešní době rovnoprávné postavení, přestože stále ještě není dořešena problematika nerovnosti platů apod. V praktické části bylo zobrazeno, jak se tyto změny odrazily v literatuře. Na základě analýzy a porovnání románů *Pýcha a předsudek* a *Deník Bridget Jonesové* byla zobrazena změna ve vnímání žen společností a jejich postavení v průběhu necelých 200 let. Přestože knihy jsou si tematicky podobné, na základě rozboru života hlavních hrdinek, jejich smýšlení a počínání, a také na společnosti, která je obklopovala, bylo nastíněno, jak se život žen změnil. Pokrok byl patrný ve větší možnost volby, možnost věnovat se povolání a budovat kariéru, uvolnění zažitých, předpojatých názorů ve společnosti, větší míra svobody, nezávislosti. Byly však nastíněny i některé negativní aspekty, jako například nynější medializované nároky na ženy ohledně standardů krásy. Zmíněn byl i vnitřní rozpor žen, jenž ženy prožívají v souvislosti se snahou skloubit koncept minulých století- rodiny a práce v domácnosti a novodobý- povolání a kariéry. Součástí práce jsou také přípravy na využití zmíněné literatury ve výuce.

ANNOTATION

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Rok obhajoby:	2017

Název práce:	Komparace postavení literárních hrdinek a genderových stereotypů v minulosti a současnosti
Název v angličtině:	The Comparison of the Role of Literary Heroines and Gender Stereotypes in the Past and the Present Time
Anotace práce:	Tato diplomová práce se zabývá postavením žen v Britské společnosti v průběhu staletí a zachycuje, jak je jejich role odražena v literatuře. V teoretické části jsou zahrnuty všechny historické období a je zde vyobrazena změna i vývoj v postavení žen v jednotlivých obdobích. Praktická část je soustředěna na dvě knihy, <i>Pýchu a Předsudek</i> a <i>Deník Bridget Jonesové</i> . Témata obou knih, analýza i porovnání života protagonistek Elizabeth Bennet a Bridget Jones odráží genderové stereotypy a omezení s ohledem na měnící se postavení žen v Britské společnosti.
Klíčová slova:	Práva žen, Pýcha a předsudek, Deník Bridget Jonesové, postavení žen v průběhu staletí, promítnutí statusu žen v literatuře, ženské literární hrdinky

Anotace v angličtině:	This diploma thesis deals with the status of women in the British society throughout the centuries, and the reflection of their position in literature. In the theoretical part all historical periods are covered, and the change of the position of the female gender and the progress is outlined, with regard to the centuries. The practical part focuses on two selected literary works - <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> and <i>Bridget Jones's Diary</i> . The content of the novels as well as the analysis and the comparison of the life of the protagonists, Bridget Jones and Elizabeth Bennet, serve as a reflection of gender stereotypes and oppressions in the context of the changing position of women in the course of British history.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Women's rights, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> , <i>Bridget Jones's Diary</i> , reflection of women's status in literature, position of women throughout centuries, literary heroines
Přílohy vázané v práci:	Appendix A: : Material for Reading Activity – <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> Appendix B: Material for Reading Activity – <i>Bridget Jones's Diary</i>
Rozsah práce:	79s
Jazyk práce:	Angličtina