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Satire and manners in Fanny Burney's *Evelina*

Satira a dobré způsoby v díle *Evelina* od Fanny Burney

Bakalářská práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci na téma Satira a dobré způsoby v díle *Evelina* od Fanny Burney vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucí práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V dne.....

Podpis

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INTRODUCTION

This bachelor thesis is concentrated mostly on the elements of satire and on the way in which proper manners are captured in the 18th-century novel *Evelina* by the English writer Fanny Burney. The novel is closely linked to the era in which it was written as it depicts moral norms and expected behaviour in the 18th-century England with a focus on the position of women in the society. It should be noted that satire was not considered to be a literary genre convenient for gentle female writers, therefore *Evelina*, which is written with an admirable combination of wit, apt criticism and mild humour, belongs to extraordinary novels of British literature.

Fanny Burney satirically criticizes the hypocrisy, folly and arrogance present in the society, points out the nonsensical rules and the difficult status of women at that time. I suspect that there are actually two kinds of satire in the novel: one with a rather mild tone and humour and another one, which refers to the society's harsh cruelty hidden beneath the surface.

The first part of the thesis informs about the notion of satire in general. I mention various aspects of satire according to Ruben Quintero and James Sutherland, shortly deal with the origin of satire and its development in the course of time. A classification distinguishing Horatian, Juvenalian and Menippean types of satire is described very briefly. Eventually, I state the phases of satire according to Northrop Frye.

The second part deals with the general description of the 18th-century society in England, especially with living conditions and social hierarchy.

In the third part I inquire into the role of women in the society. I try to outline the difficulties caused by the many expectations and the threat of possible public repudiation. I distinguish between the position of working-class, middle-class and aristocratic women and highlight their collective concerns. The rigid view of women as domestic creatures is discussed. Later I portray women's complicated access to education, their limited career opportunities and the issues entailed by the entrance into the literary market.

The next part is devoted to satire in the 18th century, focusing on some significant female satirists. The part about Fanny Burney follows, firstly, her personal life is

introduced and secondly, the circumstances in which she gradually formed herself as a writer are stated.

Utilizing the historical and social context, I examine satirical elements and conventional manners in the novel *Evelina*. Specific situations which refer to the society's flaws are studied, the analysis also concentrates on potential pitfalls such as both treacherously hidden and obviously evident violence or the loss of women's good reputation.

I summarize all the findings in the conclusion.

1. THE THEORY OF SATIRE

1.1 Aspects of satire

In order to understand satire properly the reader must comprehend not only the satirical purpose but also the reasons which lead writers to use satirical aspects in their work. Satirists are people who are concerned about the affairs surrounding them and who intend to voice their thoughts aloud, alarming others about the wrong aspects of the contemporary society. They do not want to dwell in desperation but feel a need to express their disapproval and criticism.¹

However, the reasons leading the satirists to write do not lie only in their own emotional unease, indignation, rage or worry. The writers are not entirely overwhelmed by their personal feelings, their aim is to bring the problems to people's attention so that the society changes for the good of all people. The main intention is not to reprimand people but to make them realize the society's imperfections. The satirists' unwillingness to accept detrimental behaviour and thinking maintains a certain level and quality of social values which could be otherwise unwisely lowered or damaged.²

James Sutherland draws attention to the problem of distinguishing the satirical and the comic. He talks about the similarities—authors of these two genres think and write about the same material. Nevertheless, writers of comedy tolerate people's imperfections, while satirists draw a critical attention to the society's flaws.³

It might seem that satirist's criticism is sometimes so sharp and determined that it does not allow hope for improvements. Actually, the opposite is true—the writers usually act as prophets who do believe in a better tomorrow, they may simply foresee what the future will look like without changes and refer to the absurdities happening in the contemporary society.⁴ The world is exposed in its own bareness and people's guilt is revealed, unable to stay hidden anymore, the hypocritical facade cracks.

It is not necessary for satirists to tell people about the right behaviour or to suggest a remedy of the society. 'The satirist's responsibility is frequently that of a watchdog; and no one expects a watchdog to do the double duty of alarming others that

¹ See Ruben Quintero, *A Companion to Satire: Ancient and Modern* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 1.

² See James Sutherland, *English Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 159.

³ See Sutherland, *English Satire*, 4.

⁴ See Quintero, *A Companion to Satire*, 2.

the barn is on fire and of putting out the blaze,'⁵ says Quintero. The writer ignites a spark in the reader's mind but other considerations are left to the reader's thoughts.

Satire might be seen as an art due to the fact that the writers have to use the right balance when hiding a message for the readers. If they complained about something explicitly, satire would disappear. They apply hidden meanings, demonstrate criticism on certain situations in the stories and combine it with unique wit and humour. This ingenuity gives the humour a special sense, humour is not used only to make readers laugh but also to point out more serious issues. The problems reflected manifest a kind of universality, in contrast to the genre of lampoon, which strikes against an individual.

A very essential note is that there must be a certain standard against which immoral behaviours can be compared. Both satirists and readers share the awareness of what the world should or should not be like, which enables the readers to assess some situations in the books as detrimental by confronting them with the ideal state of affairs. Moreover, the readers are supposed to expect there might be a concealed message in the text, to use their own judgement, experience and reason in general because no one will openly tell them the text indirectly criticizes and ridicules something.⁶

Northrop Frye claims that satire correlates with irony: '... satire is militant irony: its moral norms are relatively clear, and it assumes standards against which the grotesque and absurd are measured.'⁷ Satire ridicules in order to fight human foolishness.

1.2 Origin and development of satire

The origin of satire is rather problematic and unclear. A few theories emerged, explaining how the term came to being, yet none of them is proven. The first theory, supported by Renaissance authors, suggests that the origin lies in ancient drama—the term is derived from a Greek mythological creature called satyr, who was part human, part goat. Satyr as a wild creature may then be connected with the rough language of satire. Another theory sees the origin in Roman festivals called Saturnalia, which celebrated irresponsibility, indicating a link with the mockery apparent in satire as a genre.

⁵ Quintero, *A Companion to Satire*, 4.

⁶ See Quintero, *A Companion to Satire*, 3.

⁷ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, ed. Denham Robert D. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 223, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/j.ctt2tth1v>.

As satire evolved, it became known as *satura* or formal verse satire in the Roman period. At that time satire turned into a true art, rhythmically disciplined poetry elevated by famous poets such as Horace or Juvenal. In this type of satire, a poet criticizes people's arrogance, hypocrisy or pride. The Roman rhetorician Quintilian mentions other types of satire and speaks highly for example of Aristophanes or Varro.⁸

Thomas Jemieliety also refers to the influence of the Bible. According to him there is an evident continuity between satirists and biblical prophets—after all, the prophetic role of a satirist was mentioned above. He suggests that satirists and prophets are concerned about similar issues. The aim of a biblical prophecy is a certain kind of criticism, which is also the reason why satirists write and refer to the society's failings.⁹

Satire further progressed, new types appeared. The genre hugely flourished in the 17th- and 18th-century England, later it penetrated other areas apart from literature, for example visual arts, music and others.

1.3 Classification of satire

As for the general classification of satire, three main types are usually distinguished.

Horatian satire, named after the Roman poet Horace, is characterized by subtle, mild humour which is very tactfully implemented. It evokes smile instead of anger. It does not criticize or moralize harshly and does not offend anybody straightforwardly. There can be seen a bit of a paternalistic tradition in it.¹⁰

An active attack can be found in Juvenalian satire. Unlike Horatian satire, its aim is to strongly criticize, it is harsh, offensive and uses irony or sarcasm.¹¹

Menippean satire is probably not so unequivocally defined and less known than the first two types. It is very difficult to define its boundaries, therefore many various texts can be categorised here. What can be said about it is that it represents an indirect type of satire making use of narratives and dialogues to satirize.¹²

⁸ See Quintero, *A Companion to Satire*, 6–7.

⁹ See Thomas Jemieliety, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 84–85.

¹⁰ See J. P. Holoka, "Horace. The Satires of Horace." *CHOICE: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries*, 2009.

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=edsglr&AN=edsgcl.266631726&lang=cs&site=eds-live>.

¹¹ See "Satire," *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, 6th Edition, May 2019, 1.

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=a9h&AN=134492984&lang=cs&site=eds-live>.

¹² See Quintero, *A Companion to Satire*, 7.

1.4 Phases of satire

In his *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye classifies satire into three phases which correspond to the first three ironic phases of comedy.

The first phase represents satire of the low norm. One has to accept social norms here, however absurd or stupid they might be, in order to be able to live in this world. The society is full of injustice and nonsense, yet it cannot be fixed.

The second phase may be called quixotic phase. In this phase the author directly ridicules conventions. The pointlessness of set stereotypes is certain. Mockery is inevitable, still the ideal standard is not presented.

Satire of the high norm questions even our sense of ‘normality’ as there is a certain dogmatic principle in the nonsensical social conventions as well. One cannot think about an ideal state without some prejudice and distortion present in one’s mind. The reliability of such ideal vision may always be open to doubt.¹³

¹³ See Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 226–234.

2. SOCIETY IN THE 18TH-CENTURY ENGLAND

As it is always with history, many points of view exist describing English society in the 18th century in various ways. Still, all these views agree on the fact that the 18th century was an important period which significantly influenced England and contributed to the further development of English society.

Due to the impact of Industrial Revolution, the society became more rationalist, materialist, focused on gaining money and property, stressing order and traditions. Britain became very confident because of its success during the War of the Spanish Succession, the Seven Years' War and later in the Napoleonic wars. Roy Porter talks about English people as 'falling in love with themselves' and questions whether this pride is justified. The society was generally quite developed, however, this definitely did not apply in all aspects. Apart from London, English towns were not internationally significant. Many people worked in agriculture and were dependent on weather conditions. Overall, the population was quite small. Healthcare improved, yet no other anaesthetics than alcohol was available, thus coping with diseases was a horrible experience, as in the case of Fanny Burney's mastectomy.

Hierarchy in the society was crucial for all people. Rich and powerful people with connections and good reputation looked down on the poor ones and the difference between their status could be immediately recognized not only by contrast in clothing or obvious health conditions but also, or maybe especially, by contrast in manners, behaviour or way of speaking.¹⁴ The difference between the property of the poor and the rich was huge and the wealthy class basically included just a few chosen ones, comparing it with the lower class. Even though upwards mobility in the hierarchy was possible, only few people managed to make it.¹⁵

¹⁴ See Roy Porter, *English Society in the 18th Century* (London: Penguin Books, 1982), 7–16.

¹⁵ See Porter, *English Society in the 18th Century*, 48–50.

3. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE 18TH CENTURY

Women in the 18th-century England had to face struggles unimaginable and unacceptable for today's society. Their position was very intricate as they were supposed to behave, think or dress in a certain way and a breach of these expectations could cause their fall in the eyes of the society.

It is obvious that women were not supposed to express their opinions aloud, especially if these were too daring, unconventional and not ladylike. A lady had to share her husband's opinion or not to mention it if she had different views than him, as the world belonged to men. This worked on the presumption that men are simply more intelligent due to a bigger brain capacity and thus more appropriate for ambitious jobs. The public sphere was a man's world and that is why there was no place for women in the position of lawyers, politicians or scientists.¹⁶ Male superiority was generally accepted. According to this way of thinking, it was natural that women should obey some general rules and that moral norms should regulate and control their lives.

The main role of women was establishing a home as perfect and commendable as possible. The household was a place in which women should hold the position of decent wives, mothers and housekeepers. Nevertheless, they did not rule the household indeed, their legal rights were restricted, no matter how much stress was put on the role of the mother, the father always had a deciding voice.¹⁷ Women's possibilities were so limited that breaking the stereotypical notions of women as inferior was almost impossible. 'Few escaped. Such stereotyping created a kind of invisibility: women were to be men's shadows.'¹⁸ A shift from the periphery to the centre of attention was gradual and tough.

Apart from running a household, many women were forced to work hard in order to contribute to the family budget. The working-class women did the laundry, nursing, cooking, and later worked in agriculture or in factories. Their work was viewed as unskilled and was not paid very well, albeit it clearly demanded skilfulness.¹⁹

Talking about the middle-class women, the same one and only rule applied—decent middle-class women were primarily occupied with the household and domestic issues. They were supposed to be dedicated to their husbands' happiness,

¹⁶ See Porter, *English Society in the 18th Century*, 22–23.

¹⁷ See Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660–1800* (London: Virago Press, 1989), 109–113.

¹⁸ Porter, *English Society in the 18th Century*, 22.

¹⁹ See Susie Steinbach, *Women in England, 1760–1914, A Social History* (London: Phoenix, 2005), 10.

raising children and family issues overall. Marriage was a life-changing event marking the woman's transition from a girl into a woman and setting the conventional rules according to which women should behave in particular way, meaning to be a decent wife who looks after the household. At that time, even advice manuals and special texts existed which gave women advice about their marital responsibilities.

A middle-class woman working for a salary was not desirable because the public sphere was men's arena. Hence women novelists who earned money very often kept it secret if they did not want to stand out.²⁰

Aristocratic and royal women were distinguished from the previous two groups. There were not many of them, they had unusual rights and led quite different lives. These women were allowed to participate in public issues, in fact, their homes were usually places where public meetings and discussions took place. They could be involved in politics and own property, still, they were not equal to men.²¹

²⁰ See Steinbach, *Women in England*, 44–52.

²¹ See Steinbach, *Women in England*, 83–86.

4. POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE 18TH CENTURY IN LITERATURE

4.1 Education

What needs to be mentioned is that women's entrance into literature was hindered by their poor access to education. Although literacy rates were increasing during the eighteenth century, only few women were truly highly educated because their education options depended on their class, their family's position in the society and other factors.²² Women of aristocratic or middle-class backgrounds were educated at home by their mothers or by a governess. Working-class mothers did not have enough time to teach the children at home, so their education was even more complicated and usually provided by religious organisations, dame schools or Sunday schools.²³

One question arose in the 18th-century British society—what is the purpose of education for women? After all, women's primary goal was to run a household, so education could be rather useless, distracting or even harmful. A compromise was reached. Women were allowed to study but they should never forget that the domestic duties are more crucial, the main importance had to be put on the household, not on intellectual pursuits. This general belief about priorities was not to be challenged.²⁴

Women's access to books depended mainly on family libraries. However, other possibilities existed, sharing books was very popular and the 18th century witnessed a great success of circulating libraries.²⁵

4.2 Limited career choices

An expansion of women writers began approximately in the middle of the 18th century. Many women considered entering the literary market for very pragmatic and simple reasons. The career opportunities for women were very limited, thus, authorship gradually became more and more desirable. There were not many ways for women to earn their own money and when a woman found herself in a difficult financial situation, income from a book publication could earn her living. Not to mention other benefits—through writing, women could realize their potential, express their attitudes

²² See Catherine Ingrassia, *Women's Writing in Britain, 1660–1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 5.

²³ See Steinbach, *Women in England, 173–178*.

²⁴ See Todd, *The Sign of Angellica*, 120.

²⁵ See Ingrassia, *Women's Writing in Britain*, 24–25.

and let the world know that not only men had the right to decide, act and say their opinions aloud.²⁶ For Fanny Burney, writing meant not only earning money, rather, getting a certain respect in the society, especially among men.²⁷

Following the woman's decision to publish her books, quite a complicated negotiation began. Overall, the whole situation was intricate. Women could be either condemned or appreciated because the discussion whether the profession of a writer is acceptable for a woman or not was still ongoing. For that reason, many women writers resolved not to reveal their real names and used pseudonyms instead. Fanny Burney herself faced her father's disapproval and admitted *Evelina's* authorship only when the novel became popular and respected.

A good argument supporting women's involvement in literature might have been that writing was a natural activity for women as they were expected to write diaries, letters or family journals essential for the literary culture in the 18th century. Once private writings became progressively public, confidential manuscripts spread from the circle of the writer's friends to the public.

The easiest way to publish a novel was going directly to a publisher. New authors usually used their brother, father or godfather as a negotiator and the offered sum of money for the copyright was usually accepted.

It is necessary to emphasize that the literary market in the 18th-century Britain went through a great expansion in general and women contributed to it very much. Apart from publishing novels and reading novels, they were involved in the printing, editing and selling process, instigated literary styles and genres, organized movements, such as The Bluestockings, gathering ladies for the purpose of literary debates.²⁸

²⁶ See Ingrassia, *Women's Writing in Britain*, 6.

²⁷ See Ingrassia, *Women's Writing in Britain*, 40.

²⁸ See Jacqueline M. Labbe, *The History of British Women's Writing, 1750–1830* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 29–39.

5. SATIRE IN THE 18TH CENTURY AND FEMALE SATIRISTS

The 18th-century England brought an expansion of both satire and the genre of the novel. These two influenced each other and allowed quite a great deal of experimentation when in contact. At the same time, satire sometimes went against the novel and parodied it, as in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), which alludes to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

Female authors slowly began to play an important role in the genre of satire, despite their very complicated paths to publication due to the general position of women in the 18th-century England. Eliza Haywood satirically responded to Samuel Richardson's popular novel *Pamela* (1740) with her *Anti-Pamela* (1741).

Haywood's daring literary attempt was not exactly what was expected from female writers. Women in literature were supposed to write a bit differently than men, more gently, cautiously, perceptively. On that account, female satirists incorporated their criticism of the society very neatly. Such sensibility can be seen in the writings of the satirist Sarah Fielding. Charlotte Lennox was among significant female satirists, as well as Fanny Burney.

Quintero indicates that wit in women gradually became undesirable, thus, writing satire was even more difficult for women. Moreover, a lack of classical education made writing even harder for them.²⁹

Satire was considered to be a masculine genre because straightforwardness, frankness and critical approach were not compatible with the stereotypical idea of femininity. Satirists know the evil, immoral and despicable and owing to this knowledge, they can confront it with the morally appropriate norm. Therefore, women associated with purity and innocence could not easily fit the position of satirists.³⁰

²⁹ See Quintero, *A Companion to Satire*, 257–277.

³⁰ See Ingrassia, *Women's Writing in Britain*, 148, 158.

6. FANNY BURNEY

6.1 Personal life

Fanny Burney or Frances Burney, to be accurate, was born in 1752 as the fourth child of Esther Burney and an intellectual musician Charles Burney who lived in King's Lynn at that time. The family soon moved to the busy and pulsating London. More things in Fanny's life changed as her mother died when Fanny was 10 years old, which had an impact on her novels, as her heroines often mature without their mothers' supervision. Charles Burney remarried Mrs. Allen, with whom Fanny did not get on very well, and because Mrs. Allen had children of her own, a mixed family was created.³¹ Fanny Burney's debut *Evelina* was published anonymously in 1778, apart from that, she wrote three other novels and several dramas. Although she did not want to get married and lose her independence initially, in 1793 Burney did marry a French refugee, General Alexander d'Arblay, and became Madame d'Arblay. She lived with her husband and son Alexander alternately in England and in France. Burney underwent a mastectomy without anaesthetics and described the horrifying experience in her journal. She died in 1840 and is buried in Bath.

6.2 On her way to become a writer

The Burney family was apparently a very lively one. Charles Burney kept in touch with many famous and respected celebrities and intellectuals of that time and very often held meetings in his household. This influenced Fanny Burney a lot, as she was an attentive observer from early childhood. She examined people's behaviour, speech, expressions and was able to imitate and evaluate them very well. Burney realized the importance of one's public presentation and image. 'Life for Burney was to become a series of roles, public performances which concealed the true self beneath, allowing only aspects of her real personality to emerge unchecked.'³² A shy, short-sighted girl with dyslexia hid her observations and opinions in her mind, where these were safe, and allowed herself to express them through neat satire in her novels.

Fanny Burney surely did not want to become a striking rebel openly acting against contemporary social norms, as she was aware of the importance of women's reputation. The public condemnation was a threat that she feared very much—after

³¹ See Judy Simons, *Women Writers: Fanny Burney* (New Jersey: Barnes & Noble Books, 1987), 4.

³² Simons, *Women Writers*, 4.

Evelina's publication and her revelation as the author, Burney was concerned that people would criticize either herself or the novel and could not even eat for worry. She cared especially about the opinions of her father and of Samuel 'Daddy' Crisp, who was Charles Burney's friend and Fanny's supporter, and she dreaded to disappoint them.

Even though Fanny Burney never received any formal schooling, she grew up to be an erudite and astute woman. She had access to her father's library, read the books, educated herself and always scribbled whatever she was thinking about. All that gradually led her to become a writer.

Julia Epstein thinks that writing was an activity which allowed Burney to survive. She does not hesitate to call it an obsession accompanying Burney all her life, without it, Burney's life would be empty, unfulfilled and unbearable.³³

Fanny Burney was concerned about the lives of women in the 18th century. In her novels, she emphasises women's difficulties, the burden of expectations, fragility of female reputation and the issue of roles of women in the society. She highlights the significance of manners in her time, satirizes people's hypocrisy, folly and groundless superiority.

³³ See Julia Epstein, *The Iron Pen: Frances Burney and the Politics of Women's Writing* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 8.

7. *EVELINA*

7.1 *Evelina's plot*

The novel *Evelina* tells the story of Evelina Anville and her encounter with social norms, as the subtitle *The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* indicates. Evelina's uncertain position in the society was predestined even before she was born. Her mother Caroline Evelyn secretly married a fickle man, Sir John Belmont, who denied the marriage and left her when she was pregnant. Because of Caroline's death during childbirth, Evelina was raised by the clergyman Reverend Arthur Villars.

Evelina's grandmother Madame Duval expresses an interest in meeting her granddaughter and recognizing her as a relative. Afraid of Madame Duval's influence, Mr. Villars lets his ward spend some time with his acquaintance, Lady Howard, and the Mirvan family, with whom Evelina explores London.

Having grown up in a village and having been protected very carefully, Evelina is completely unaware of the pitfalls and the unwritten norms of the society. As naïve and unexperienced as possible, she experiences many misunderstandings and embarrassments as she encounters the society's expectations. She does not know the right code of conduct and she did not acquire appropriate manners, which causes her much trouble. Awkward and humorous situations arise, which also point to the absurdity of some social standards.

Evelina is brought together with her extended family, the Branghtons, and eventually with Madame Duval, who embarrass her with their arrogance and impoliteness. She also meets the intriguing Sir Clement Willoughby, who tries to fool her.

The protagonist gradually earns the love of the noble, virtuous and decent Lord Orville. Finally, she reunites with her father and gains back her rightful status, as Sir John Belmont declares her his daughter.

Written in the epistolary form from a young lady's perspective, the novel gives the impression of authenticity. It combines the popular form of letters with sincere narration and genuine insights.

7.2 *Satire in Evelina*

The novel deals with a conflict between the private and public spheres. Once the protagonist enters a public place, the others observe and judge her, and every slip means

a possible danger for her future position in the society. Women had to be cautious as they would be basically nobodies without the society's recognition.

Fanny Burney poses the question how to incorporate one's true private self into the public self. All Burney's heroines try to balance these two worlds, not to lose their personality and simultaneously to comply with the society's requirements. Burney herself coped with the issue, which proves that her heroines are forced to overcome a situation ordinary and natural for women in the 18th century. According to Judy Simons, Burney's solution was secrecy. The writer was convinced that a woman can survive only by hiding her true motives, feelings and convictions. That is why Burney was so afraid of people finding out compromising materials in her journals and why she kept them in secret or even erased some passages.

Making a good impression in the society is essential for Evelina if she wants to fit in. In fact, she has no other choice. However, her wit and brightness sometimes challenge the established social restrictions and norms, which brings her into faux pas situations.³⁴ There are so many norms required to follow that it is no wonder a young inexperienced lady struggles. Burney satirizes the limits which make women's lives very complicated.

Apart from the demands placed on women's behaviour, Burney satirizes people who belong to quite a high social stratum but behave utterly inappropriately and impolitely. The social power emerging from their fortune, family's position or connections corrupts them, these people show no scruples as they think that everything is allowed for people of their status.³⁵ A lot of vices are inherent to them. Fanny Burney's satire exposes people's foolishness, rudeness or snobbery. The vices are in stark contrast with Evelina's innocence and thoughtfulness.

In some cases, it was apparently impossible for Burney to satirize through the character of Evelina, therefore she put another female character into the story—Mrs. Selwyn. Satire can be presented very effectively when demonstrating the contrast of young innocent naïve Evelina and other corrupt hypocritical characters, such as the Branghtons, Captain Mirvan or Sir Clement Willoughby. Yet, when Burney wanted to use satire more explicitly and voice her opinions and criticism directly, she needed a more resolute and experienced character in the novel and Mrs. Selwyn served this

³⁴ See Simons, *Women Writers*, 42–52.

³⁵ See Penny Pritchard, *The Long 18th Century: Literature from 1660 to 1790* (London: York Press, 2010), 201.

purpose. She is a vigorous widow who says her opinions aloud without the fear of condemnation, almost in a masculine way, as she definitely does not fit into the contemporary notion of a refined lady. Sarcasm is evident in many of her utterances which might often seem rather daring, however, she can take this liberty as she has not much to lose, certainly not as much as Evelina, who is only entering the society for the first time. Even Evelina is sometimes astonished by Mrs. Selwyn's attitudes. 'She is extremely clever: her understanding, indeed, may be called masculine: but, unfortunately, her manners deserve the same epithet; for, in studying to acquire the knowledge of the other sex, she has lost all the softness of her own.'³⁶ Actually, Evelina disapproves of some of Mrs. Selwyn's utterances, she was not brought up to speak so openly. The inclusion of this character is very elaborated, clever and beneficial for the novel.

³⁶ Fanny Burney, *Evelina* (New York: Dover, 2015), 254.

8. SATIRICAL SITUATIONS IN *EVELINA* AND EXPECTED MANNERS

8.1 Pretence and dangers in the 18th-century society

The 18th-century society in England was so restricted by a large number of social norms that it necessarily resulted in a lack of credibility and the adoption of pretension. As people entered the public sphere, they became strictly self-controlled figures, actors on a stage. Everyone was well aware of what was generally considered to be appropriate behaviour and what was not. As social recognition was so desirable, people often preferred to hide their genuine attitudes and opinions in order not to break the expected norm and to remain respected in the eyes of the public.

Fanny Burney depicts women's fear caused by the awareness of the possible danger lurking beneath the surface. Hidden behind politeness and proper manners, it was even more difficult to identify the risks. Anyone's behaviour might easily change behind closed doors. An imminent threat pushed women into a corner, making them vulnerable to pitfalls. The veneer of polite society could be a disguise highlighting a contradiction between the codes of conduct and common practice. That is the reason why women had to be ceaselessly alert, living in deep concerns about their chastity. The dread of social humiliation accompanied women everywhere, the bigger the company surrounding them, the more treacherous the woman's position and the society's expectations.

Violence as one of the potential dangers distressing women appeared in diverse forms. Both physical and mental one, it could endanger any woman. Those who came into contact with it and whose intimate selves were exposed to the public could hardly defend themselves. Moreover, coping with difficulties in public was inappropriate. Julia Epstein believes that Fanny Burney managed to refer to the nonsensically strict setting of the society just through the demonstration of rudeness, violence or coarseness which women had to struggle with.³⁷

In the novel *Evelina* gets into uncomfortable and treacherous situations several times due to Sir Clement Willoughby. He acts really intrusively, harasses and chases after her, does not want to let her go, almost abducts her in the carriage. His deceptive disposition is most exposed after the affair with the fake letter. *Evelina* receives a

³⁷ See Epstein, *The Iron Pen*, 5.

presumptuous letter supposedly from Lord Orville which devastates her good opinion of the Lord completely. She is shocked and paralysed by it for a long time. Exchanging correspondence was definitely not allowed between man and woman who were not related or engaged and a gentleman knew that very well. A huge revelation puts an end to all the misunderstandings and exposes that the letter was written by Sir Clement Willoughby. A hidden danger and pretence could manifest themselves even like this.

The social constraints are a target for satire in the novel, apart from other things. Fanny Burney makes it obvious that the ostensibly perfect world was not perfect at all, on the contrary, the reality concealed many vices, vulgarity, aggression, injustice or threat and the writer did not want to reconcile with it. Besides other things, it might have been this paradox, tension between the pretended refinement and the cruel reality which ignited Fanny Burney's dissatisfaction with the society and the need to satirically expose the discrepancy.

8.2 Socially required proper manners

The first distinct situation exposing Evelina's ignorance of social standards is probably her faux pas at the ball. Unaware of the possible consequences, she refuses to dance with a man who seems theatrical, foolish and importunate to her and accepts Lord Orville's offer instead. She soon realizes what a blunder she made, writes about it to Mr. Villars and feels embarrassed about the whole evening. Evelina knows very well that after the awkward situation, people might form prejudice about her and harm her position by their unfavourable judgement. Even such a small accident would be enough for the others.

Satire in this scene appears even more as regards to Evelina's assessment and first impressions about the ball. On one hand, she perceives the London ball's glamour, on the other hand, she focuses rather on the nonsensical behaviour of the men. 'The gentlemen, as they passed and repassed, looked as if they thought we were quite at their disposal, and only waiting for the honour of their commands; and they sauntered about, in a careless indolent manner, as if with a view to keep us in suspense.'³⁸ Female dancer is expected to wait as long as any man mercifully comes and asks her to dance. Apparently, women are seen as inferior and only men can decide whether or with whom

³⁸ Burney, *Evelina*, 19.

a lady will dance. In addition, an invitation to dance actually cannot be rejected, as Evelina discovers. Burney's criticism of such practices is evidently present.³⁹

Later, Evelina tries to find a better solution when she does not want to dance. She invents an excuse that she is already engaged for the dance, even though it is not true. It certainly does not help Evelina, just gets her into more troubles—even Lord Orville looks down on her a bit in the beginning. The reader finds the scene humorous, yet the impact of Evelina's behaviour might be bad for her future.

Spending money on entertainment in the city was common, not only for the upper class but even for lower social classes, thus, people with different social status met. A great importance was assigned to public affairs, private life differed from them and was quite hidden and unappealing.⁴⁰

Judy Simons sees London as a theatre with people as actors on a stage. The public sphere was a very elaborate game which had its own goal and rules set to be followed. People did not act for themselves, they adopted artificial roles in order to comply with the coveted ideal. There is a visible contrast between the village and the city as regards to their morals. Rousseau's thoughts of person's natural innocence spoilt by the civilization's influence suggest that the social rules and norms in the city are paradoxical as the theory creates perfect, polished and gracious people, while the practice denotes just pretence and rudeness, for example, in the case of the Branghtons in *Evelina*.⁴¹ Burney satirizes the aristocratic decline and shows that wealthy people were not necessarily brought up to decency, often it was the other way around, they behaved rudely. The character of Evelina is maybe unexperienced and naïve but also unspoilt due to her growing up in a village, she is careful and she does not want to offend anybody.⁴²

The Branghtons are town people, supposedly they should know how to behave appropriately. Nevertheless, they embarrass Evelina several times by their discourtesy. When going to the theatre, Mr. Branghton behaves inappropriately and fusses about the tickets' prices, bargains for a smaller price and eventually buys cheaper seats in a box instead of the more expensive ones in the pit. The family constantly complains about everything, they cannot see the performance properly. Mr. Branghton demonstrates his

³⁹ See Kate Chisholm, *Fanny Burney: Her Life* (London: Vintage, 1999), 50.

⁴⁰ See Porter, *English Society in the 18th Century*, 214–229.

⁴¹ See Simons, *Women Writers*, 49–50.

⁴² See Pritchard, *The Long 18th Century*, 201.

simple-mindedness when he expresses discontent about the play being performed in a foreign language.

In another part of the novel, the Branghtons and Madame Duval embarrass Evelina even more. They want to borrow Lord Orville's coach without any previous arrangements and persuade the desperate coachman that Lord Orville surely would not mind, as he is Evelina's acquaintance. Without Evelina's permission, they use her name in a note for Lord Orville and fortunately, he is generous enough to lend them the coach without losing a good opinion of Evelina. Satire covers foolishness and coarseness of tactless people. Evelina writes to Mr. Villars: 'I was so much affected by this politeness, and chagrined at the whole affair, that I could scarce refrain from tears. Madame Duval and the Miss Branghtons eagerly jumped into the coach, and desired me to follow. I would rather have submitted to the severest punishment;—but all resistance was vain.'⁴³

8.3 Satire and violence

Violence accompanies satire a lot in the novel. 'Though no one is actually raped in Evelina, and no one is actually murdered, violence of a different sort erupts continually in the text, where greediness and other desires clash and explode.'⁴⁴ It is essential to view the violence from the perspective of readers at that time and not to perceive it in relation to our contemporary notion of violence. There is a scene in the book in which Sir Clement Willoughby takes Evelina into his coach and intentionally leads it in a wrong way. He does not want to harm Evelina, still he pressurizes her, gets her into a very uncomfortable situation when she cannot escape and feels imprisoned.

The thin line between safety and danger was clearly present. The potential peril for women in the 18th century was often very cunningly hidden behind a seemingly decent mask which covered the coarseness of its wearer. It is very startling how close the danger could be.

Violence is even more evident in the scenes with Madame Duval's humiliation. Firstly, on the way back home with Monsieur Du Bois, she slips and gets her dress dirty. Evelina feels sorry for her but the boorish Captain Mirvan laughs at her and ridicules her. His vulgar language might be the reason why many people initially believed that the novel was written by a male author. The second source of

⁴³ Burney, *Evelina*, 239.

⁴⁴ Janice Farrar Thaddeus, *Frances Burney: A Literary Life* (Chippenham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 44.

embarrassment for Madame Duval comes later when Captain Mirvan impersonates a thief, fakes a robbery and assaults her. The attack is cruel, both physical and mental. Not only does Madame Duval fall into a muddy ditch, ends up almost naked with her clothes torn, without a wig and covered in dirt head to toe, almost looking like a witch—she is also mentally undermined, humiliated as never before. Even though she is not a likeable character herself, Captain Mirvan is more heartless. He frankly despises Madame Duval for her French origin and for her being a female in general—Fanny Burney is not afraid to satirize a disrespectful attitude towards women and raises the theme of misogyny.

Evelina is again sorry for Madame Duval but on the other hand, she is not able to understand Madame Duval's concerns about her destroyed cap and other superficial worries about her clothes. Fanny Burney satirizes contemporary fashion and the importance which was attached to it in several of her books. She mocks the fashion of high wigs and the long-lasting processes of powdering and adjusting the hair.⁴⁵ When the wig falls from Madame Duval's head, it can remind one of an episode from Fanny Burney's life which her family remembered in the following years. When she was a little girl, her family lived next to a wigmaker, and Fanny played with his children. During a game, one wig fell into water and was destroyed, everyone went silent except for Fanny, who said: 'What signifies talking so much about an accident. The wig is wet, to be sure; and the wig was a good wig, to be sure; but it's of no use to speak of it any more, because what's done can't be undone.'⁴⁶ This became kind of a proverb for things which cannot be fixed and it is meaningless to moan about them in the Burney family.

On her visit of London, Evelina meets a calm Scottish poet, Mr. Macartney, who lives next to the Branghtons, and is immediately interested in his obvious melancholy. She finds him in a very uneasy situation with pistols in his hands when he plans to commit suicide. There is a demonstration of Evelina's courage, when she encourages Macartney to drop the pistols, and of her empathy and sensitivity, when she listens to Macartney's story about his financial stringency and despair because of a complicated romance. She gives Macartney her money and supports him by her kind words. In fact, the situation was probably inspired by a real-life model, according to her diary, Fanny Burney's brother Charles wanted to shoot himself as well when he had problems and

⁴⁵ See Claire Harman, *Fanny Burney: A Biography* (Glasgow: Flamingo, 2001), 68.

⁴⁶ Chisholm, *Fanny Burney*, 15.

Fanny discovered him with a pistol in his hand, fortunately, the suicide was not committed.⁴⁷

Some situations in the novel stand out with their harshness, especially because the book was written by a woman. A scene in which Lord Orville's friend Lord Merton and Mr. Lovel organize a race between two women aged over 80 counts among them. It might seem curious from the contemporary point of view that most readers in the 18th century found the scene rather comic and did not focus on the bitter satire which is hidden there. Fanny Burney stresses both physical and mental violence against women.

It may even represent the inferior position of women in general as they were left at the mercy of men—Lord Merton and Mr. Lovel unsensitively bet on the old women, treating them as if they were things, not people. As in the case of the prostitutes, the old women have no independent identity, they are presented as creatures used for men's entertainment.⁴⁸ Evelina sympathizes with them, calls them 'poor women'. 'When the signal was given for them to set off, the poor creatures, feeble and frightened, ran against each other, and neither of them able to support the shock, they both fell on the ground.'⁴⁹ When Evelina sees that one of them stumbles, she wants to help her—the men's reaction is terrible, they stop Evelina from doing so, Lord Merton calls it cheating and Mr. Coverley scolds the old woman.

Lord Merton and Mr. Lovel should be perceived as very imprudent because they are only interested in their distraction and do not care about the old women's feelings or state of health. Fanny Burney apparently refers to the popularity of gambling at that time, when very peculiar and insensitive 'freak races' were held in order to amuse the audience. In these cases, large sums of money were spent to wager on footraces.⁵⁰

Fanny Burney's father enjoyed reading his daughter's book, however, there was one scene at the end of the novel which he disapproved of. In this scene Captain Mirvan brings along a dressed-up monkey so as to ridicule Mr. Lovel's interest in new trends in fashion and his self-centeredness. Captain Mirvan claims that he thought the monkey must be Mr. Lovel's twin brother as they look so similar, by which he mocks Lovel's need to emulate others as regards fashion. The uncontrollable monkey bites off Mr. Lovel's ear, and the whole company, except for Captain Mirvan, is indignant.

⁴⁷ See Chisholm, *Fanny Burney*, 52.

⁴⁸ See Epstein, *The Iron Pen*, 114–115.

⁴⁹ Burney, *Evelina*, 304.

⁵⁰ See Thaddeus, *Frances Burney*, 47–48.

According to Fanny Burney's diary, Charles Burney stated that although he did not like the fop Mr. Lovel and perceived him as foolish, still his disapproval was not big enough to think that Mr. Lovel deserved such humiliation and suffering. Supposedly, Dr Burney was not delighted by it. J. F. Thaddeus asserts that Dr Burney did not comprehend the scene properly. Surely, Fanny Burney's aim was not to simply entertain the readers and demean the character. 'In some eighteenth-century satires... the pain is unmediated by laughter. Dr Burney wanted his laughter unmediated by pain. His daughter was unwilling to give him this simple fare.'⁵¹ The feelings and considerations which should be elicited by the scene are very intricate. It suggests that laughter and pain might be related somehow and that the line between dignity and disdain is a thin one, everyone can accidentally and easily cross it. It is true that satire mediated through this scene uses violence the most of all the scenes in the novel. Despite this controversy, the scene illustrated the third volume in the fourth edition and probably attracted the readers.⁵²

8.4 The importance of reputation

'Remember, my dear Evelina, nothing is so delicate as the reputation of a woman: it is, at once, the most beautiful and most brittle of all human things,'⁵³ writes Mr. Villars in a letter to Evelina. The key word reputation determined the lives of all women in the 18th century, thus, Mr. Villars' note, or rather warning, is a very reasonable one. Women's reputation was closely connected with their sexuality, which, in fact, became a public matter, however intimate and private issue it might seem to be. Susie Steinbach emphasizes that different criteria were applied for judging women and men. Unlike women, men were judged by their wealth, power, title or connections. Women were constantly reminded of the fragility of their reputation, as even a small slip from social standards could devastate their prospects for a secure future.⁵⁴ Marriage to a respectable man required a decent bride. It is necessary to add that marriage was actually a mutually advantageous agreement, far away from its contemporary status of a connection of people who love each other. Love was a privilege, not accessible to everyone.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Thaddeus, *Frances Burney*, 49.

⁵² See Thaddeus, *Frances Burney*, 49.

⁵³ Fanny Burney, *Evelina*, 156.

⁵⁴ See Steinbach, *Women in England*, 118–119.

⁵⁵ See Porter, *English Society in the 18th Century*, 26.

Fanny Burney was well aware of the risks endangering women's good name. In *Evelina*, she poses the problem of sexual pressure and degradation. After getting lost in Marylebone pleasure gardens, Evelina gets in contact with a drunken sailor and several crude men. She is truly terrified in the situation, realizes the insidiousness which women are forced to face, feels the danger and panics. A little suffices to become unchaste in the public's eyes. In this moment, Evelina is seen as a sexual object, her whole identity is reduced to her female gender attributes.⁵⁶

Her rescue by prostitutes, or 'fallen women', is unfortunate. Initially, Evelina is relieved that the women help her to find a way back to her accompaniment. Yet, when she spots Lord Orville's suspicious look, she realizes how dubiously the situation looks and that she found herself in a reprehensible company. The prostitutes are not described in detail. They are not seen as individuals with specific needs, concerns, individual appearances or names. Nevertheless, Julia Epstein points out that the prostitutes and Mrs. Selwyn are the only characters with a special independence. While the prostitutes' autonomy was caused by their breach of social norms and paid for by public condemnation, Mrs. Selwyn gained her status without the loss of her own personality or social recognition.⁵⁷

As for reputation, Evelina's own complication is her origin. Her father denied marriage to her mother and did not recognise Evelina as his daughter, which means that Evelina struggles to find her own identity. She uses the anagrammatic surname Anville, cannot talk about her family affairs too explicitly in public in order not to fall into disrepute.

⁵⁶ See Simons, *Women Writers*, 36–37.

⁵⁷ See Epstein, *The Iron Pen*, 112–113.

CONCLUSION

Being a female satirist in the 18th century required a lot of determination and courage, which Fanny Burney certainly had. There must have been a conflict inside her between the role of a polite shy young lady and a mature woman longing for a change in the society commanded by men. I believe this very discrepancy eventually compelled her to become a writer of the supposedly male genre of satire, even though at the same time, she did not want to stand out and attract the attention of the public.

One of the reasons why Fanny Burney's satire is so apt is that it is based on an authentic experience of an 18th-century Englishwoman—a huge advantage which none of the famous male satirists had. Fanny Burney was able to make use of it, on that account she could depict the true nature of faults in the society. She knew what it really meant to be a decent lady at that time, what obstacles had to be overcome and how many demands were placed on women. The instant pressure and fear of the loss of public esteem often prevented them from fulfilling their potential.

The assumption of two possible kinds of satire occurring in the novel proved to be correct. The first one entertains the readers, it ridicules the absurdity of social norms and people's foolishness. The second one poses much more serious issues, it warns of potential perils which might put ladies in tremendous danger, displays harshness, calculation and cunning of some men who pretended to be gentlemen, although in fact, they looked down on women and thought everything was allowed to them.

Satirical situations in *Evelina* indicate that Fanny Burney was very upset about the society's masquerade. An immense number of rules, required manners and demands on the right etiquette accentuated the conflict between appearance and reality. One's actual personality could prove to be different in public and behind closed doors. As a matter of fact, Fanny Burney demonstrates that women had to face quite a lot of violence which endangered them in various everyday situations. The society was far from polite, despite its public presentation.

The protagonist's innocence and ignorance of social norms enabled Burney to expose the absurdity of some rules which almost everyone accepted and obeyed but which were essentially ridiculous. *Evelina* did not know London's snobbish society before her first

visit presented in the novel, thus, she could form opinions and judgements from an unbiased point of view and assess the characters of people more independently.

The novel is written very cleverly. The author managed to point out serious defects of the society, people's hypocrisy, foppishness and superficiality. The critique is legitimate and accurate. Nevertheless, the novel is not excessively reprimanding, even allusions to serious issues are sparkling with humour and thanks to that, both the 18th-century and contemporary readers appreciate its qualities.

RESUMÉ

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje zejména na prvky satiry a na to, jak jsou zachyceny dobré způsoby v románu *Evelina* z 18. století od anglické spisovatelky Fanny Burney. Román je úzce spjat s dobou svého vzniku, jelikož zobrazuje morální normy a očekávané chování v Anglii 18. století se zaměřením na pozici žen ve společnosti. Nutno podotknout, že satira nebyla považována za literární žánr vhodný pro jemné ženské spisovatelky, a proto *Evelina*, napsaná s obdivuhodným důvtipem, výstižnou kritikou a jemným humorem, patří k jedinečným románům britské literatury.

Fanny Burney satiricky kritizuje pokrytectví, pošetilost a aroganci přítomnou ve společnosti, poukazuje na nesmyslná pravidla a obtížný status žen v tehdejší době. Mám podezření, že v románu se ve skutečnosti objevují dva druhy satiry – jedna nesoucí se v mírném tónu, s humorem, a druhá, která poukazuje na tvrdou krutost společnosti schovanou pod povrchem.

První část bakalářské práce obecně informuje o pojmu satira. Zmiňuji různé aspekty satiry podle Rubena Quintera a Jamese Sutherlanda, krátce pojednávám o původu satiry a jejím vývoji v průběhu času. Krátce je popsána klasifikace satiry vydávající typ satiry Horácovy, Juvenálovy a Menippovy. Nakonec uvádím fáze satiry podle Northropa Fryee.

Druhá část se zabývá obecným popisem společnosti v Anglii v 18. století, především životními podmínkami a společenskou hierarchií.

Ve třetí části zkoumám roli žen ve společnosti. Snažím se nastínit těžkosti způsobené velkým množstvím očekávání a tlakem z potenciálního neuznání ve společnosti. Rozlišuji mezi postavením žen z pracující třídy, střední třídy a aristokratek a zmiňuji jejich společné obavy. Probírám upjaté vnímání žen jako „domácích stvoření“. Později zobrazuji komplikovaný přístup žen ke vzdělání, jejich omezené pracovní možnosti a problémy, které s sebou nesl vstup na literární trh.

Další část je věnovaná satíře 18. století se zaměřením na některé významné ženské autorky. Následuje část o Fanny Burney – nejdříve je nastíněn její osobní život, poté okolnosti, za jakých se postupně zformovala jako spisovatelka.

S využitím historického a společenského kontextu zkoumám prvky satiry a konvenční způsoby v románu *Evelina*. Jsou zde prostudovány určité situace, které odkazují na nešvary ve společnosti, analýza se také zaměřuje na potenciální nástrahy jako násilí, zrádně skryté i očividně přítomné, nebo ztráta dobrého jména.

Všechny poznatky shrnuji v závěru.

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ANNOTATION

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Title: Satira and manners in Fanny Burney's *Evelina*

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Characteristics: This bachelor's thesis is focused on the matter of proper manners in the late 18th-century England, especially on the expected behaviour of middle-class women. This is examined in the novel *Evelina* (1778) by Fanny Burney, which was published as Burney's literary debut. I also detected satire hidden behind a thin veneer of politeness, satire which is hard to detect but it does exist to point out to the negative aspects of contemporary patriarchally organized society. Burney satirizes through the protagonist's exploration of manners which are supposed to be adopted by her as she enters the fashionable world of London society.

ANOTACE

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Charakteristika: Tato bakalářská práce je zaměřena na problematiku dobrých způsobů v Anglii ke konci 18. století, obzvláště na to, jaké chování bylo očekávané od žen střední třídy. To vše je zkoumáno v románu *Evelina* (1778) od Fanny Burney, který byl publikován jako její literární debut. Rovněž jsem detekovala satiru schovanou za tenkou maskou slušnosti, satiru, kterou je těžké detekovat, avšak existuje proto, aby poukázala na negativní aspekty tehdejší patriarchálně nastavené společnosti. Fanny Burney užívá satiru prostřednictvím hlavní hrdinky, která zkoumá způsoby, jež by si měla osvojit, když vstupuje do módního světa londýnské společnosti.