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Bakalářská práce

Women Writers during the Romantic Era with Respect to the Victorian Tradition

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Anotace: Předmětem zkoumání bakalářské práce je dílo a myšlenkový odkaz ženských autorek převážně první poloviny 19. století, jejichž literární tvorba nese prvky romantismu a zároveň je psána v duchu odkazu viktoriánské literární tradice období kritického realismu. Úvodní teoretická část práce podá přehled literárního období britského romantismu, jeho hlavní znaky, představitele a literární tematiku ve srovnání s charakteristikou viktoriánského období a přínosem kritického realismu v literatuře. Jádrem práce bude literárněvědná analýza stěžejních románů anglických spisovatelek zmíněného období (Jane Austenová, sestry Bronteovy) s cílem porovnat romantické prvky a tendence vybraných románů (Na Větrné hůrce, Pýcha a předsudek) a prvky kritického realismu. Závěrečná kapitola práce se pokusí zhodnotit význam britských ženských autorek v období 19. století v literatuře a ve společenském kontextu viktoriánské Anglie.

Klíčová slova: Jane Austenová, Emily Bronteová, viktoriánské období, význam ženských spisovatelek

Abstract: The aim of the thesis is to characterise the work of contemporary British women writers and their legacy during the 19th century whose literary work conveys elements of Romanticism and elements of critical realism typical for the Victorian literary tradition. Firstly, the thesis focuses on the description and background of the literary period of British Romanticism, its key features, representatives, and its contribution to literature. The core of the thesis focuses on literary analysis of Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* and the novels of the Brontë sisters, particularly Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. The emphasis is on comparison of the romantic and realistic elements found in the novels. In the end, the thesis tries to evaluate the impact of British female writers on the contemporary society and the shift towards equal rights in the context of Victorian England.

Key words: Romanticism, Realism, novels, Jane Austen, Emily Brontë, women rights

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Monika Malá

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Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Romanticism	2
2.1	The origins of British Romanticism	2
2.2	Main features of British Romanticism	3
2.3	Byronic Hero	4
2.4	Key Women Representatives of the Victorian period.....	5
2.4.1	Jane Austen (16 December 1775 – 18 July 1817)	5
2.4.2	Brontë sisters	5
2.4.3	George Eliot (22 November 1819 – 22 December 1880)	6
2.5	The Impact of Realism on the Victorian tradition.....	6
3	Jane Austen	9
3.1	Biography and early career	9
3.2	Style of writing	10
3.2.1	Pride and Prejudice	12
3.2.2	Sense and Sensibility	13
4	The Brontë sisters	15
4.2	Emily Brontë.....	17
4.2.1	Wuthering Heights	17
4.3	Charlotte Brontë.....	18
4.3.1	Jane Eyre- The portrayal of an independent heroine	18
5	Literary analysis of Pride and Prejudice and Wuthering Heights	21
5.1	Pride and Prejudice as a domestic novel.....	21
5.2	Wuthering Heights as a realistic novel	23
5.3	Realism in the work of Jane Austen	25
5.4	Romance and Romanticism in Wuthering Heights and Pride and Prejudice	26

5.5	Gothic influence	28
5.6	Settings	30
5.7	The Institution of Marriage.....	32
5.8	Heathcliff as The Byronic hero and Austen’s Romantic Mr Darcy.....	34
5.9	Elizabeth Bennet versus Catherine Linton.....	36
6	The role of Women in Victorian society	38
6.1	The rights of women.....	39
7	Conclusion.....	43
8	Bibliography	45

1 Introduction

In my bachelor thesis, I will deal with an analysis of two novels from the classic British female writers, Jane Austen, and Emily Brontë. The analysis will focus on their most notable works, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and *Wuthering Heights* (1847) with reference to other 19th century novels. In the beginning of my thesis, I will shortly introduce the Romantic period, its primary features and some of the other famous writers whose work had significant impact in the Victorian era of 19th century.

In the first chapters of my bachelor thesis, my main concern will be the description of key women representatives with focus on their lives, inspiration, style of writing and their other famous works. Namely, I will describe the lives of George Eliot, Jane Austen and the Brontë sisters and how they overcame the struggles in a male dominated literary world. These chapters will also deal with basic outline of the plot of the novels and the heroes and heroines portrayed in them with respect to the literary tradition of Romanticism and Realism.

The core of the thesis will focus on the literary analysis of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. Throughout this chapter, I will concentrate on the characteristics of key features of the novels and their respective genres. I will also deal with the Gothic genre which had some influence on the novels, particularly on *Wuthering Heights*. The role of different settings will also be described since the two authors differ in their choice of environment and their take on the issues of space. I will also try to describe the main protagonists or antagonists in the novels and how they are portrayed in the novels. Last point of the literary analysis will include a description of the institution of marriage which will show two different views on the prospect of marriage and will give the reader an idea of how women were viewed in the 19th century.

At the end of my thesis, I will focus on the role of women in Victorian society and how women were perceived in comparison to men. The chapter will include the rights of women in the 19th century, the development of women rights movement and its main protagonists, namely Barbara Bodichon, Mary Wollstonecraft, or Josephine Butler. The thesis concludes with a reflection on the progress which women made in their pursuit of equality and what other necessary steps need to be taken to achieve an equal position that women desire and more importantly, deserve.

2 Romanticism

Romanticism played an especially significant role in the literary world and its legacy runs through many works of present-day literature. The basic themes of Romanticism include the reflections of feelings in nature, romantic wanderings or feelings of unbearable passion and misery. Romanticism is considered one of the most culturally enriching eras of literature and with names like Mary Shelley, Jane Austen or the Brontë sisters, it is to no surprise.

2.1 The origins of British Romanticism

The 'nineteenth' century might be seen to begin in 1789, when the French revolution pointed out the social and religious problems in society.¹ With this new concept of thinking, common life, childhood, and emotions became the essence of the Romantic movement. Throughout the Romantic period, the society started comprehending the power of reading and being a writer was regarded much higher than before.

The predominant form of the Romantic movement was poetry. One of the main improvements during this period was that women engaged in writing more frequently and the central role of women within their works shaped the ways of life and thinking of the new middle classes in the Victorian period.² Women in the middle class were expected to take up education, help in the family business, and try to get married into nobility.³ This pattern can be seen in Jane Austen's characters, namely Jane Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* or Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*. Austen's novels became bestsellers for their descriptive nature of 'real-life' situations and because of the undeniable power of love which made women hope that there is 'the one' for them somewhere. But despite her amazingly written novels, Austen was not the most popular women writer during the movement. This role belongs to Charlotte Brontë followed by her sister Emily. They both created a heroine whose life is in her hands and not controlled by men and society expectations. This groundbreaking concept raised questions about the role of women and this change of perspective influenced the Romantic movement in England in a powerful way.

¹ D. D. STONE, *The Romantic impulse in Victorian fiction* (1980)

² JAMES, Louis. *The Victorian Novel*. Blackwell Pub., 2006. Chapter: *Introduction*

³ [cit. 21.3. 2022] retrieved from

<<http://victorian-era.org/victorian-poor-and-middle-class.html>.>

The British Romanticism went through many stages during the 18th and 19th century. Passionate authors like Byron and Shelley focused on feelings and childhood sensations which dominated the first phase of the movement. Then after 1824, the year of Byron's death, everything changed. The Victorian era came to prominence and with that a change of style. Victorian novel focuses on social forces and human feelings. *The essence of Victorian novels lies not in what happens, but in the complex structure of emotions that the story evokes in the reader at specific key moments.*⁴ After this change, realism became the most prominent style of the 19th century with George Eliot leading the way and just like that, British Romanticism became the past.

2.2 Main features of British Romanticism

At the beginning, it is necessary to point out that the Romantics would not use the term themselves, the label was applied retrospectively from the middle of the 19th century. Therefore, writers we now call Romantics had no idea that they were going to become part of something called British Romanticism.⁵

During the Romantic period, major changes took place in society because of English people's dislike for the Establishment and its values. Citizens were not treated properly and that reflected on the mood of the society. People needed encouragement, something to hold onto and they found it in the works of Romantic authors like Walter Scott or Jane Austen who gave the readers passion and love they longed for.

The main essence of works of Romantic authors was the importance of the individual self and desire for liberty. We can also see this aspect in the works of Charlotte Brontë, particularly *Jane Eyre (1847)* where the main heroine is trying to break from the Victorian family stereotype and find her own path to happiness. Romantics also highlighted the healing power of imagination above reason because they truly believed that it could enable people to transcend their troubles and circumstances.⁶ During the 18th and 19th centuries, people needed hope and something to look forward to and imagination allowed readers to get into a

⁴ JAMES, Louis. *The Victorian Novel*. Blackwell Pub., 2006. Chapter: *Foundations*

⁵ [cit. 21.3. 2022] retrieved from

<<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-romantics>.>

⁶ [cit. 20.2. 2022] retrieved from

<<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-romantics>.>

fictional world where there are no diseases, financial problems or equality issues which troubled them in real life.

Another feature of Romantic literature is the description of childhood thoughts and experiences as unique and precious. "Childhood, for the Romantics, came to be seen as the time when we see things as they really are, before education, prejudice, and habit blind us to the truth."⁷ The importance of childhood is seen in the works of Emily Brontë, particularly in *Wuthering Heights* where the plot is affected by childhood memories that Heathcliff and Catherine cannot forget, and which bind them together. Another Romantic aspect that the Brontë sisters use is the power of symbolic dreams. The Romantics were first to recognize the significance of dreams and how they can influence our lives. In *Wuthering Heights*, Emily presents this idea when Lockwood stays the night at the Heights and 'sees' the ghost of Catherine whom he speaks with. Many writers or even psychologists produced different theories to explain the symbolic dreaming but what all these theories share is the Romantic fascination with dreams and their meanings.⁸

2.3 Byronic Hero

What many Romantic works have in common are the figures which represent the Byronic heroes. This literary term first arises from Byron's *Childe Harold Pilgrimage (1812)* where the author presents a young man who is a melancholy, solitary wanderer with an empty way of life.⁹ The heroic rebel is also called the Romantic hero and it is a character that rebels against social injustice or tyranny. In *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff rebels against all the laws, because he goes against everything that people in his surroundings stand for. He is merciless on his way to revenge, and nothing is too immoral for him. Nevertheless, what makes him heroic despite all his abominable behaviour is the motive of his actions. He is driven by a great love for Catherine that in his mind justifies every sin. This figure became a role model for young readers because Romantics distrusted the social institutions and valued the individual's right over society's needs. Emily Brontë constructed her own Byronic hero against the literary norms and conventional models of realistic characters in the form of Heathcliff in *Wuthering*

⁷ THADEN, Barbara. *Student companion to Charlotte & Emily Brontë*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ [cit. 20.2. 2022] retrieved from

<<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-romantics>>

Heights and by doing this her novel leaves the reader torn between hating or admiring the main protagonist.¹⁰ It also came as a shock for the Victorian readers since this type of antihero was unmatched in the 19th century literature.

2.4 Key Women Representatives of the Victorian period

During the Victorian period, there were many women who influenced the literary world and created novels that impacted society and challenged its standards. On the other hand, there were many great women who helped the society to flourish. Then there were women like Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters or George Eliot who did both and became culturally known figures.

2.4.1 Jane Austen (16 December 1775 – 18 July 1817)

Born in Steventon, Hampshire, a clergyman's daughter and second-to-youngest of eight children-six boys and two girls; she was educated at home. On her father's retirement, the family moved to Bath. She died at the age of forty-one of Addison's disease and is buried in Winchester Cathedral. She was not married, nor had any children, and during her life she received no special recognition. Her literary reputation has grown with decades and now the plots of her novels are being made into extraordinarily successful movies around the globe. She is the female pioneer of a new type of novel called the novel of manners. Her most famous works include *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Persuasion*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Emma*, and *Mansfield Park*.

2.4.2 Brontë sisters

Both Charlotte (21 April 1816 – 31 March 1855) and Emily (30 July 1818 – 19 December 1848) refused to imitate any previous novelist, and they purposely tried to develop an original approach to literature. Before the Brontë sisters, the novel focused mostly on experience in the world, not feelings but with the arrival of a heroine embodied in Jane Eyre who described her own feelings throughout the novel, this characterization altered. The genre of the novel was now prone to new aspects and because of this change, the novel became a highly respected literary genre. On top of their innovation of the novel, they also stirred up a debate about female education and how women should have equal opportunities to study as their male counterparts. With so many new literary and cultural additions, it is no wonder that

¹⁰ THADEN, Barbara. *Student companion to Charlotte & Emily Brontë*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001.

the Brontë sisters, and their works, especially *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* are considered the high point of the 19th century literature.¹¹

2.4.3 George Eliot (22 November 1819 – 22 December 1880)

George Eliot née Mary Ann Evans is one of the most celebrated writers of the Victorian period. She is sometimes referred to as the most known ‘women sage’ because of her engagement in pressing social and political issues of her day. Eliot presented herself as an English realist and she believed that the writer’s responsibility is to represent only the objective truth and that novels should be faithful reproductions of ordinary human existence.¹² The Victorians felt attached to their world and wanted to understand all its aspects, particularly the connection to nature. Eliot herself wanted to connect with the nature and in many of her works she is visualising some aspects into written form. For example, she recreates the light, warmth and even the scents of the summer afternoon. She had gone as far as to say that ‘all truth and beauty are to be found in the study of nature.’¹³ Her most prominent works include *Daniel Deronda* (1876), a controversial novel because of its focus on Judaism and its unpopular role in Victorian era¹⁴. Next there is *Middlemarch* (1871), a study of every class of society in the town of *Middlemarch*, which confirmed her status as the greatest 19th century English realist.¹⁵

2.5 The Impact of Realism on the Victorian tradition

Realism was a central concept in the Victorian period. The main idea of realism was to represent life as it is without any imagination like Romantics did before. One of the reasons of the novel’s popularity was the change in class structure. The middle class enlarged, and more people became literate. Also, during the Queen Victoria reign, the Industrial Revolution expanded and the access to books or magazines rapidly increased.

Authors of realistic novels wanted to separate imagination and emotions from their works. They put emphasis on the here and now and framed their novels within strict

¹¹ THADEN, Barbara. *Student companion to Charlotte & Emily Brontë*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001. Chapter: *The novel as a genre*

¹² JAMES, Louis. *The Victorian Novel*. Blackwell Pub., 2006. Chapter: *WAYS OF SEEING*

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ [cit. 22.8. 2021] retrieved from

<<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2009/feb/10/zionism-deronda-george-eliot>>

¹⁵ SAGE, Lorna. *The Cambridge Guide to Women’s Writing in English (1st Paperback Edition)*. Cambridge University Press. 1999.

chronology. By doing this they separated themselves from the Romantics for whom the concept of time and place could be overcome. The realistic Victorian novel focused on characters and themes such as the struggling situations of the poor which can be seen in Charles Dickens works or the class issues found within many realist novels. Writers of the realist novel also paid more attention to detail, and they created such interesting characters that the plot was surpassed by the complexity of the protagonist's feelings and emotions. Realism also emphasizes the importance of the ordinary person and the ordinary situation. It does not elevate the iconic Romantic hero but instead it focuses on embracing the ordinary working-class citizen.¹⁶ For the authors of Victorian literary realism, the ideal hero or heroine is somebody independent and emotionally and financially autonomous.

There is both continuation and change. At the beginning of the Victorian period, Romanticism dominated literature but throughout the century the tendency slowly regressed and was replaced by realism. Every author had its own realistic or romantic perspective, but some authors tried to combine both, and they succeeded. Among those successful writers are the Brontë sisters who combine elements of the romance with elements of a realistic novel. In *Jane Eyre* (1847), Charlotte Brontë depicts the life of a lowly governess who is not transformed into a queen but instead she goes through ordinary situations and problems. Throughout the novel, there are some romantic elements like castles, ghosts, or symbolic objects which at the same time also represent the heritage of the Gothic tradition. At the end, Jane stays true to herself and lives an ordinary life. Charlotte's sister and fellow writer Emily has even more unusual blend of the romantic and realistic elements in her novels. Her description of the abuse and violence at *Wuthering Heights* left many readers and critics speechless. She has no filter as to the description and realistically depicts the relationships of the characters. On the contrary, Heathcliff is described as a representative of the combination of the two genres and the supernatural events such as seeing a ghost at *Wuthering Heights* even give the novel a Gothic touch.¹⁷

¹⁶ TUCKER, Herbert F. *A Companion to Victorian Culture and Literature*. Blackwell, 1999.

¹⁷ THADEN, Barbara. *Student companion to Charlotte & Emily Brontë*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001. Chapter: *Romantic or Victorian*

The course of literature had undergone a lot of changes during the Victorian era and produced some of the most famous novelists of all time. By the end of the century, Modernism slowly took over and turned the tide of literature into different direction.

3 Jane Austen

Jane Austen has become an important figure of British literature over the decades and her extraordinary style of writing still fascinates critics and readers to this day, but this popularity was not always prominent. Back at the beginning of the 19th century, when Queen Victoria came to power, society was flourishing, but only the male sphere. Being a woman and being a professional writer was almost impossible. Yet, Jane Austen never gave up and published her works against all odds. Owing to her determination and pursuit, her strong heroes and heroines have entered the literary world and have been influencing generations of readers for more than two centuries.

3.1 Biography and early career

Having been born on 16th of December 1775 in Steventon to a Reverend George Austen and educated daughter of a rector Cassandra Leigh, Jane was 'assigned' to gentry which at that time meant power within the social hierarchy and a prosperous future. She had seven siblings with whom she had a close relationship since all of them were home-schooled, but the strongest bond she had with her only sister Cassandra. At the age of seven, her sister was being sent to Oxford to be educated by a governess, but Jane refused to stay alone without her sister. To fulfil Jane's wishes, both girls moved to Southampton and attended school in Reading. After 4 years, her family could not afford to pay for this high standard education and both sisters moved back home.

After her formative years at various schools, Jane decided to remain home and started preparing for future. Being a woman during the Victorian period meant two future options, either get married to a rich gentleman or become a governess. Jane refused both and secretly wrote, hoping that someday, she would publish.¹⁸ Sometimes dreams come true and in Jane Austen's life, which became the case.

In 1811, she finally published *Sense and Sensibility* and it immediately gained attention of the readers. Despite the novel's tremendous success, Jane decided to write anonymously so she could be fairly judged as an author like her male counterparts and not to be discriminated for being a woman.

¹⁸ MALETZKE, Elsemarie. *Jane Austenová: životopis*. Praha: H&H, 2009

3.2 Style of writing

Austen was one of the first women who “broke the glass ceiling” and became famous at the turn of the 19th century. Her subtle, crafted novels repay close and repeated attention to vocabulary, syntax, and punctuation as much as to irony and allusion; yet the reader can take immediate and intense delight in their plots and characters. As a result, Austen has a unique status among early English novelists – appreciated by the academy and the public alike.

Jane Austen is sometimes described as impersonal to some readers, but that is overruled by most readers who can see her iconic personal style of writing which is intertwined by the usage of satire. She forms characters like Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Darcy’s aunt, who epitomizes snobbery and is the classical rich stereotype which the author herself cannot stand and therefore makes a great satiric target. It is also clear that through Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen comments on the society which scrutinizes those who do not possess such wealth. She intends to show that even lesser social classes should be considered equal, and this works well in her works since everybody sides with the main women characters and wants them to succeed in the male world.¹⁹

What is interesting about Austen is that even though her novels are typical examples of a domestic novel, she never really described the home itself. It was always about the people, dialogues and situations that happened inside. Austen paid little attention to description of buildings, houses, and landscapes. She assumed that the reader would be familiar with the surroundings, so she focused more on complex dialogues. With this attitude she distinguished herself from other 19th century writers who, in some cases, immensely relied on the description of surroundings. Austen also did not write much about the characters’ physical appearance. All we know about Elizabeth Bennet is that she is the second most beautiful sister of the Bennet family and that her figure lacks perfect symmetry but is still pretty, according to Darcy. Same goes with the male protagonists, Mr Darcy is described only as tall, noble man, admired by many. Austen writes no explicit analysis of the

¹⁹ *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen 9 Volume*, *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen (2006–07-27). Cambridge University Press.

characters, but by-passing details, she fills in the large social picture and provides indirect commentary.

Austen cares about representing people, their social roles, and the differences between them. The importance of class distinction is the source of much of her comedy and irony, as of her social satire. Some main characters who pride themselves on their elevated position in the social hierarchy like Darcy or Emma, must learn the error of their ways and that being rich does not equal being satisfied. Austen brilliantly dramatizes these essential matters of personal identity in her novels, and we come to know her people and the individual feel of them as intimately as we know any in fiction.²⁰

*"Austen was no snob, though she knew all about snobbery."*²¹ With this in mind, Austen's novels, rich in detail of status symbols become cultural markers of the society. She was herself present in the society so when describing how the number of houses, carriages, or necklaces you own can determine your class, she speaks from her own experience. It is clearly visible in *Pride and Prejudice* where Darcy is initially sceptical about Elizabeth's status but eventually reconsiders. Moral of the story is that even though we might be the same, we still focus on the things that divide us. Austen seizes these details and shows us how such things can matter. However, she also shows us how they should not.

From her youth, Jane Austen was a woman of the highest intelligence committed to a clear moral vision and a stern moral code. She could not compare herself to the extraordinarily successful intellectuals who grew up in aristocratic families nurtured by money. Despite that, she had something intellectuals lack and that was direct contact with the characters she was writing about. She knew what the pseudo-gentry attitude towards proud and pompous nobility was, she was one of them and she never looked down on her peers. Austen graciously uses her native wit and inner observation to describe these cultural and class differences in her novels giving them a realistic hint. Even though Austen tried to describe the class and social problems in her works, she is sometimes criticized for being too passive about events happening in the outside world. She never felt the need to address them in her

²⁰ *The Cambridge companion to Jane Austen* / edited by Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, c1997. Chapter: CLASS

²¹ *The Cambridge companion to Jane Austen* / edited by Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster.

works. Although, recent findings suggest that she and her brothers had ties to the anti-slavery movement which means she did care about the outside world after. Only she had no intention to be praising about it like the proud nobleman, whom she disliked, did.²² Austen remarkably described the British nobility and anyone who desires to gain insight should read her works.

3. 2. 1 Pride and Prejudice

It is no wonder that *Pride and Prejudice* remains the most successful work of Jane Austen even to this day. Austen started working on the novel back in 1796 -1797 when she titled it 'First Impressions'. Her father attempted to sell the first manuscript to a London bookseller, but he declined. Austen then started rewriting the book and made significant revisions to the original manuscript. There are only rumours of how she changed the latter from the first attempt since nothing remains from the original. Nevertheless, her revisions turned out to be fruitful and her work now carrying the title *Pride and Prejudice* was published in 1813. Many critics reviewed the work and names like Lord Byron or George Henry Lewes, brilliant English novelists, considered it an excellent piece of writing. The plot of *Pride and Prejudice* might seem like a typical love story but that is a common misconception. Its focus is not solely on love, but Austen combines satire, love and breaking the conventional rules of society into one plot making it much more plausible to the reader.

The story opens with the Bennet family whose main concern is to marry off their daughters into prosperous families. One day, a new wealthy gentleman Mr Bingley arrives to his estate and invites the Bennet's oldest daughters Jane and Elizabeth to attend. At the ball, Jane and Mr Bingley are attracted to each other while his friend Mr Darcy shallowly shuns Elizabeth based on his prejudice of her family situation. Elizabeth notices his behaviour and even though her initial intrigue of Darcy she does not want to associate with a person who sees her as someone subordinate.

After this encounter, Mr Collins arrives to visit the Bennet's with an intention to marry one of their daughters. Elizabeth is to become his wife, but she declines his offer which results in Collins marrying her close friend Charlotte. During this time, Elizabeth meets an army officer Wickham, and a mutual attraction is evident between the two. This connection intensifies when Wickham tells Elizabeth about Darcy and how he denied his inheritance. Meanwhile, Mr

²² MILES, Robert. *Jane Austen*. Tavistock: Northcote House Publishers Ltd, 2003

Bingley abruptly departs from his mansion and Elizabeth thinks that Darcy is the reason of his departure. However, Darcy is slowly falling in love with her. He confesses his feelings and proposes to Elizabeth. She refuses his offer and accuses him of separating Mr Bingley and her sister Jane, and that her sister's happiness is more important than her own's. Darcy is taken aback and later writes a letter explaining why he thought that Jane is not suitable for Mr Bingley, but he regrets his actions. Elizabeth also accused him of denying Wickham's inheritance as to which Darcy writes that she falsely accused him because Wickham tried to marry Darcy's younger sister in attempt to gain possession of her fortune. Elizabeth surprised to read his letter is slowly changing her attitude towards him and when visiting his mansion, she realises that she loves him too.

Meanwhile, the situation at home escalates because the youngest Bennet sister, Lydia, elopes with Wickham. Considering new discoveries, Elizabeth worries about her naive younger sister. This affair could ruin the reputation of the Bennet family and thus ruin the relationship between Mr Bingley and Jane. Elizabeth tells Darcy and he persuades Wickham to marry Lydia, offering him money. Darcy wants his actions to be a secret, but nothing is sacred between Jane and Elizabeth, and she eventually finds out. At the end, Mr Bingley also comes back and is set to marry Jane whom he loves from the first meeting. Darcy returns as well and again proposes to Elizabeth who, after learning all about Darcy's actions and steps to make her family happy, this time accepts.

Pride and Prejudice is a classic example of a love story but the relationships between the nobility and the Bennet family raise more critical issues like class and money which Austen wants addressed. So not only does the reader receive a love story, but Austen also gives an important insight into the society and its values.²³

3. 2. 2 Sense and Sensibility

Sense and Sensibility is considered Austen second best work but in the initial stages she was struggling with publishing it but eventually anonymously published in 1811.

The plot of the story focuses on two sisters Marianne and Elinor who are more interestingly alike than they are different. Marianne has sense as well as sensibility, and Elinor has

²³ *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen 9 Volume: Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen (2006–07-27). Cambridge University Press.

an excellent heart, and strong feelings as well as prudence. Opposing values of romance and practical realism are characteristic for the sisters. Marianne believes in first and passionate love, a meeting of tastes and minds, she trusts her feelings to guide her conduct. Elinor is more circumspect, more aware of how the self-interacts with others, in her view, convention is necessary and even useful.²⁴

Throughout the book, both sisters are trying to find their right match which would suit their behavioural patterns. They experience many disappointments and at one time even lose interest in love at all deeming it impossible. However, like all Austen's novels, *Sense and Sensibility* is a comedy that ends in marriage, and which affirms the social expectations that women must find a man to enter the society and thrive in it.

²⁴ *The Cambridge companion to Jane Austen* / edited by Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, c1997

4 The Brontë sisters

Maria Branwell and Patrick Brontë, a Church of England clergyman, are the parents of famous sister duo, Charlotte, and Emily Brontë. Charlotte was born on April 21st, 1816, in Bradford and Emily on July 30th, 1818. Being just two years apart from each other and having lost their mother in 1821, they became inseparable and created a world of imagination that was far more real than the harsh reality.²⁵

Their father was an educated and religious man who desired to raise the girls properly and adjusted to their social status, therefore he prohibited them from seeing other children. The household ran under their authoritative Aunt Branwell who also stepped into a role of the girls' stepmother. When Emily was six years old, she and Charlotte enrolled at the infamous Cowan Bridge School founded by clergymen. The sisters suffered there due to cruel treatment of the teachers and the principal, but sanitary conditions were even greater problem. Both her sisters, Mary and Elizabeth died in 1825 because of the school's poor treatment and this had a traumatizing effect on both Charlotte and Emily.²⁶

In 1831, Charlotte started studying at Roe Head where she returned to in 1835 to start working as a teacher. Since the sisters were close, she took Emily with her as a pupil. Emily felt restricted and longed to leave. She loved being free and enjoyed the countryside surrounding her home where she could escape to the secret world of imagination. Then the sisters took up jobs which unmarried women could take up without losing social status. Charlotte became a governess and Emily started teaching, both found their positions dreadful and dreamt of opening their own school. To gain experience, Charlotte and Emily left for Brussels in 1842, to study French and German, and to teach English and music, at the Pensionnat Heger, a girl's boarding school.²⁷ There it was the same school scenario, Charlotte being liked, and Emily considered eccentric. After a year, in Brussels, Emily returned to Haworth and stayed there until her death. Meanwhile, Charlotte had fallen emotionally in love with M. Heger, a professor at the Pensionnat but he was a married man, made her desperate and broke her heart, emotions which Charlotte poured into her last novel, *Villette*.

²⁵ THADEN, Barbara. *Student companion to Charlotte & Emily Brontë*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001.

²⁶ THADEN, Barbara. *Student companion to Charlotte & Emily Brontë*.

²⁷ THADEN, Barbara. *Student companion to Charlotte & Emily Brontë*.

In the meantime, Emily hid herself at home surrounded by moors and uninterested in society outside her family. The dream of opening their own school failed due to their abusive and alcoholic brother who eventually drank himself to insanity and prevented them from leaving the house. The connection of events at home and Emily's future works, particularly *Wuthering Heights* is evident. After enduring the events at home, the sisters decided to try entering the literary world and invented their own pen names; Currer Bell and Ellis Bell, so to be judged more fairly if they were thought to be male.²⁸

Being daughters of a poor man, the girls were left in an unfortunate position in 19th century. They were not raised to work in a factory or a mill, therefore an only way to support themselves was to find a husband. However, this turned out to be an uneasy task for the sisters, since Charlotte and Emily could not offer any money into marriage and on top of that, Charlotte would not marry anyone she was not in love with, and Emily enjoyed her solo existence. The only way to earn money was to be a governess or a teacher, positions that both sisters hated and never wanted to do again. The last possibility of making a living was to write novels, and Emily and Charlotte did that perfectly.

In October 1847, *Jane Eyre* was published and became an immediate best-seller because of Charlotte's modern conception of the main protagonist. After receiving that kind of praise, Emily's *Wuthering Heights* entered the stands a month later. Readers enjoyed both novels, but found themselves concerned about the brutal, and coarse nature of Emily's novel. Soon after publishing in September 1848 their brother Branwell died unexpectedly and was followed by Emily who declined with tuberculosis and refused to seek a doctor. Emily had died on December 19, 1848, at the age of thirty. Only five months later, her sister Anne died with the same disease.²⁹ Charlotte lost all her remaining siblings and her dearest sister and was devastated. A year after these tragic events she finished her third novel *Shirley* and moved out of London back home to remain alone at Haworth. In 1853, she published her fourth novel *Villette* in which she described her Brussels experience and unrequited love. However, there was a silver lining in the form of her future husband waiting for her. Charlotte married Arthur Bell Nichols who was her father's assistant curate and instantly became her soulmate.

²⁸ THADEN, Barbara. *Student companion to Charlotte & Emily Brontë*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001.

²⁹ THADEN, Barbara. *Student companion to Charlotte & Emily Brontë*.

Unfortunately, this state of happiness did not last long because Charlotte was becoming more ill and just nine months after her marriage, on March 31, 1855, she died, and her unborn child along with her.³⁰

Patrick Brontë, who had survived his wife and all his six children, set up a household with Charlotte's husband Arthur and thanks to Charlotte's good friend and novelist Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Professor* was published in 1857.³¹ The Brontë sisters influenced the novel's future development and to this day their home at Haworth is visited by fans who appreciate their literary talent.

4.2 Emily Brontë

The talent of the Brontë family was apparent and Emily was no exception. She was considered a social outcast because she did not want to engage in many social activities of the period, but she did not need that because her novel still gained everyone's attention. The savagery in which the main protagonist is portrayed was so unorthodox, yet so alluring that Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* quickly became a cultural phenomenon of immense impact.

4.2.1 Wuthering Heights

"Reading *Wuthering Heights* is like peeling off the layers of an onion, only to find that once all the layers are gone, there is no satisfying solution or "core" to the story."³² This violent, but powerful novel is concerned with the relationships between two generations of two families. It starts with Mr Earnshaw bringing Heathcliff, a mysterious gypsy, into his family. Heathcliff falls deeply in love with his daughter Cathy, and she reciprocates these feelings, but Cathy's brother Hindley humiliates Heathcliff and hates him for taking his place as their father's favourite. Heathcliff and Cathy wander around the moors surrounding their house and on one of their walks they encounter Thrushcross Grange, home to the wealthy Linton family. While spying on the family, Catherine is attacked by one of Linton's dogs and taken to Linton's home to heal. There she befriends the master's son, Edgar Linton, and Heathcliff is left behind and becomes a target for Mr Earnshaw son's abusive behaviour. After the death of his father, Hindley Earnshaw, now master of Wuthering Heights, returns

³⁰ THADEN, Barbara. *Student companion to Charlotte & Emily Brontë*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001.

³¹ THADEN, Barbara. *Student companion to Charlotte & Emily Brontë*.

³² THADEN, Barbara. *Student companion to Charlotte & Emily Brontë*.

with a wife, and continues to mistreat Heathcliff. Meanwhile, Cathy agrees to marry Edgar Linton, leaving Heathcliff in despair and fleeing Wuthering Heights.

In the second section, Heathcliff returns mysteriously educated and wealthy, and he seeks revenge. He ruins Hindley through gambling and drink and mistreats Edgar's sister Isabella whom he afterwards marries just to anger Edgar. Cathy is sick and thanks to her household servant Nelly, Heathcliff is admitted seeing her alone. They share a passionate moment that leaves Cathy trembling and prone to death. Before she dies, her daughter Catherine is born and Isabella bears Heathcliff a son, Linton. Hindley dies, leaving Heathcliff owner of the Heights and guardian to young Hareton whom he manipulates and purposely avoids educating.

The last part concerns the third generation, and reconciliation. Heathcliff forces his son Linton to marry younger Cathy. Then a narrator, Mr Lockwood enters the story again when he visits the Heights and must stay overnight. During the night, he sees the ghost of the first Cathy crying to enter the room. Heathcliff is desperate to see the ghost at least and runs to the window, but she is already gone. The next day he is found dead, and nothing stops Catherine, the daughter of Edgar Linton from marrying Hareton. In the end, the novel represents a beautifully twisted love story.³³

4.3 Charlotte Brontë

Charlotte Brontë was a remarkably interesting woman during the 19th century and her revolutionary ideas about the main heroine embodied by Jane Eyre inspired multiple women and became the symbol of women empowerment in the Victorian period.

4.3.1 Jane Eyre- The portrayal of an independent heroine

To be a governess was among the least happy occupations for a Victorian lady, and a woman of good family. Charlotte Brontë, who worked for a time as a governess, wrote in 1839: "I can now see more clearly than I have even done before that a private governess has no existence, is not considered as a living and rational being, except as connected with the

³³ JAMES, Louis. *The Victorian Novel*. Blackwell Pub., 2006.

wearisome duties she must fulfil.” She was to depict the position in an even worse terms in *Jane Eyre*.³⁴

In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte started writing about a new kind of heroine who is struggling to find her place in society governed by men. Jane’s story takes the readers throughout various places such as Lowood, Thornfield, or Gateshead where she endures physical and mental pain. Then she enters a horrible school in which typhus epidemic breaks out and kills almost half the girls in the school, including her best-friend Helen Burns. Even after this trauma, she stays loyal to the school and becomes a teacher there. At the age of eighteen, she decides to see more of the world and hires herself out as a governess. Her first pupil is Adele Varens whose father is Edward Fairfax Rochester, a master of Thornfield, and her mother Celine Varens, a French opera dancer, whom Edward loved passionately but who had betrayed him. This part of the novel combines two literary genres since the plot starts to include Gothic elements such as: a spooky mansion, haunted, with dangerous inhabitants.³⁵ The gothic and romantic tension heightens when Jane hears a doorknob being tried one night and hears a strange laugh outside her door. When she opens the door, she sees smoke billowing out of her master’s room and finds Rochester asleep on his burning bed. Jane saves him and at the same moment she realises that she loves him. Some time passes and another guest of the house is injured by this mysterious person, a madwoman in the attic whose nature and relationship to Rochester is a mystery to Jane.

After spending several weeks at Thornfield, Rochester proposes marriage. But as soon as Jane accepts, a huge thunderstorm breaks out and the next morning Jane finds a chestnut tree under which they were sitting had been cleft in two by a bolt of lightning. This tree cleft has been variously interpreted as predicting Jane’s separation from Rochester, warning Jane about the destructive nature of electrifying passion.³⁶ With that in mind, Jane still agrees to marry Rochester. On the day of their private wedding ceremony, an attorney tells Jane that Rochester’s insane wife has been living in the attic. Jane flees Thornfield.

³⁴ TUCKER, Herbert F. *A Companion to Victorian Culture and Literature*. Blackwell, 1999; Chapter: *MOVING OUT: ADOLESCENCE* by Chris R. Vanden Bossche

³⁵ JAMES, Louis. *The Victorian Novel*. Blackwell Pub., 2006.

³⁶ JAMES, Louis. *The Victorian Novel*.

She is taken to Marsh End by a local minister St. John Rivers whom she accompanies on his travels. He proposes marriage and Jane finds herself in the same position as before. She does not want to be engaged to a strong-willed man whose initiative is to own her. Jane declines and leaves for Thornfield where she finds that the house burned down and Rochester moved to Ferndean, blinded and maimed. Jane finally finds peace and starts taking care of Rochester who could not believe that Jane has come back to him in his state. But Jane is satisfied because they are equals now and he needs her.

Throughout the novel, Charlotte is trying to point out the ideas of marriage in the 19th century. She describes the circumstances under which women must live when married. In *Jane Eyre* she is trying to show that marriage based solely on financial, or class considerations cannot be happy.³⁷

³⁷ TUCKER, Herbert F. *A Companion to Victorian Culture and Literature*. Blackwell, 1999; Chapter: *MOVING OUT: ADOLESCENCE* by Chris R. Vanden Bossche

5 Literary analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Wuthering Heights*

When it comes to describing the most successful works of these two extraordinary writers, we discover that despite Jane Austen dying a year before Emily Brontë was even born, their novels share many similarities. Both writers believe in the power of love and how much it can affect the main characters and their behaviour, but both authors also have a different conception of what love ought to be. Jane Austen depicts the kind of love that everyone would want in their life, the undying chivalry of the main heroes when pursuing the women of their dreams and then the happy-end characteristic of the genre of romance. In the 21st century these notions could be compared to romantic comedies popular in Hollywood productions, only without the old-fashioned language and tight corsets. This “too good to be true” sentimental kind of love may also be the reason even now Jane Austen’s popularity is on the rise, and her novels can be found in bookstores everywhere around the world. People love romance and Austen can satisfy those needs with brilliance and original style. However, not only Austen can deliver such powerful stories filled with love. Emily Brontë successfully continues the tradition of Romanticism, but she does it in a unique way. Her story of Heathcliff and Catherine shows that loving somebody is sometimes not enough and can lead to immense dissatisfaction with life and your own self. Brontë’s idea of love is flawed but she still manages to persuade the reader to root for the atypical love heroes and is taking the reader on a quest that leads to discovering that even if love hurts, it can still be the most beautiful emotion within our lives. This unique portrayal of love by the Brontë’s shocked the contemporary society, which was nourished on Jane Austen’s notion of love, but it should not be shunned because of its uniqueness. Love can take on many forms and both Austen and Brontë are aware of that, and their works are the reflection of their inner image of love and society values. Nevertheless, they differ in approach which can be explained by their preferred style and core genre foundations.

5.1 *Pride and Prejudice* as a domestic novel

In the 18th century, the accessibility to books is changing and literature is entering homes of middle-class women longing for stories to which they can relate.³⁸ That’s when Jane Austen starts noticing this need for novels describing daily lives problems and social notions that these

³⁸ *The Cambridge companion to Jane Austen* / edited by Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, c1997

people may encounter. Since women were always the side characters in the past, the author decides to create female heroines that would fight social notions and would be the central power of her works. This exposure of the female is evident in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility* or *Anne Elliot* where the female protagonists are met with stereotypes related to their gender and economic status. They struggle to break the misconceptions that women are only good for marriage and their strenuous effort to fit in society is manifested in their distrust to men. Elizabeth Bennet, the main protagonist of *Pride and Prejudice*, represents a notable example of these problems. She is a young, beautiful woman and her family reproaches her with questions of marriage on every occasion, to support the stereotype that women without husbands cannot stand a chance. For Elizabeth, life does not revolve around finding a husband, instead, she focuses on education and well-being of her family. By deviating from socially set principles, she is considered arrogant and strange. Austen purposely makes her main protagonists elude from the social conformity to show that being different from the norm is not a deviancy, but something to be proud of. Eventually, the women in her works find happiness in the form of marriage, but if they did not find it, it would not mean their life was less. Nevertheless, Austen fixation on marriage and home undoubtedly puts her to a category of domestic novel writers.³⁹

The concept of domestic fiction suggests belonging to the home, house, or household. It portrays the social relations and daily life of a contained community-house, village, urban parish.⁴⁰ For Jane Austen, family is the centre of her novels and in *Pride and Prejudice*, family plays a key role in the lives of its members. For Elizabeth Bennet, family means the most important support system and she is willing to sacrifice her own happiness to make her sisters happy. This can be seen in the refusal of the first proposal of marriage by Mr Darcy in the middle of the novel. Elizabeth declines his offer because he hurt her sister Jane and was the main reason Jane Bennet's suitor, Mr Bingley, suddenly started avoiding her and treated her with utter disregard. Another situation that proves the importance of family values to Elizabeth Bennet is when Mr Darcy pays Mr Wickham money so that her sister Lydia can have a proper life even with her relentless behaviour. This act of kindness and respect for

³⁹ AUSTEN, J., & Rogers, P. *Pride and Prejudice (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen)*. (Annotated ed.). Cambridge University Press. 2013.

⁴⁰ SAGE, Lorna. *The Cambridge Guide to Women's Writing in English (1st Paperback Edition)*. Cambridge University Press. 1999.

family shows Mr Darcy in different light and becomes one of the reasons why Elizabeth starts being fond of him.

Domestic fiction, as the title suggests, revolves around domestic setting and conditions in which people live. *Pride and Prejudice* is no different in this matter. Austen describes the family heirloom and the differences between the 'landed gentry,' a category to which her family belongs, with the bourgeois aristocracy manifested in Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy. Not only does Jane Austen describe the social classes and their properties, what she masterfully creates are connections between estates and social class. Landscape improvements can help with climbing up the social rank ladder and even Elizabeth Bennet, the strong-hearted female hero, is eventually mesmerized by Mr Darcy's assets. In the novel, the situation happens when she first sees Pemberley and realises that if she were to marry Mr Darcy, she would be called head of household of Pemberley which suggests that even the wittiest and the strong-willed heroines can be persuaded by money and social class betterment.⁴¹

The role of family radiates from Austen's novels, and this corresponds to her real life. For her and for many other popular domestic fiction authors, the domestic ethos was the Victorian family and the nature of reading. Reading was a family affair, and it brought the novel into the heart of the family. From Jane Austen's family at the beginning of the century to many authors after that, reading by the fire made the domestic novels come to life.⁴²

The top layer of domestic fiction contains writers of the calibre of Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen.⁴³ Despite many other women creating their works in compliance with the domestic attributes, Jane Austen is still regarded the most successful writer of these types of stories, and many literate critics would go as far as to say that she was the founder of the domestic fiction.

5.2 Wuthering Heights as a realistic novel

When trying to characterize *Wuthering Heights*, a lot of genres must be taken into consideration. *Wuthering Heights* is not only a realistic novel, but it also combines elements

⁴¹ DUCKWORTH, Alistair M. *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971. ISBN 0-8018-1269-0.

⁴² JAMES, Louis. *The Victorian Novel*. Blackwell Pub., 2006. Chapter: *FOUNDATIONS; AFFAIRS OF THE HEART*

⁴³ WU, D. *A Companion to Romanticism*. Wiley-Blackwell. (1999a).

of gothic horror story, domestic novel, and the love story of romance, with mysticism and supernatural traces.⁴⁴ Due to this blend, the novel is highly symbolic and consists of many hidden meanings that may all not have been uncovered yet. However, one of the main concerns of realistic novel is the relationship between the characters and social background. In *Wuthering Heights*, this social and human interaction eludes from every sentence in the novel. Characters like Heathcliff or Catherine create inseparable bonds with their home at Wuthering Heights and only a thought of leaving the place fills them with dread. The adherence on location, particularly associated with Wuthering Heights can also be seen throughout the books when following the story of Heathcliff. What Emily Brontë does confirm are the realistic motifs which are not only social background but also moral issues, family relations and the relationship between society and individual self.⁴⁵

The essence of realism lies in avoiding romantic elements and providing the reader with realistic description of the characters' actions and behaviour. What distinguishes realism from romanticism is also the definition of the main hero. In realism, there are not supernatural heroes, but ordinary people who struggle through their lives and encounter problems that people from the middle class normally do.⁴⁶ In *Wuthering Heights*, Brontë exaggerates the problems to an extreme with Hindley being an excessive drunk and abusive partner, Heathcliff eventually becoming the master of Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights only because of his manipulating methods and all women characters including Catherine, Cathy or Isabel being persuaded by men into situations they oppose. Emily Brontë took realism and pushed its boundaries even more when she explicitly wrote about Heathcliff opening graves to look at his lost love or when describing the disturbing and off-putting situations happening at Wuthering Heights. Despite realism clear in her novel, the author does not constrain to only one genre and her novel comprises of the elements of realism and romanticism making it an unusual blend of those two oppositions.

⁴⁴ THADEN, Barbara. *Student companion to Charlotte & Emily Brontë*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001. Chapter: *THE NOVEL AS A GENRE*

⁴⁵ GÜLTEKİN, Lerzan. *A Short History of English Literature; A Companion to The History of English Literature*, Cumhuriyet University Press, Sivas. (2000).

⁴⁶ GOLBAN, Petru. *A Student's Guide to English Literature: Romantic Movement and Victorian Age* EASTWEST For You Ltd. Chişinău. (1998).

5.3 Realism in the work of Jane Austen

The influence of realism is evident in the works of Emily Brontë, but even Jane Austen had her share of this genre, and many experts suggest that some elements of realistic fiction can be found in her novels. Jane Austen, one of the major novelists in English literature, was born in 1775. Chronologically she belongs to the Romantic Period, but her take on realism is something to be considered. Despite being born in the “Romantic” time of Walter Scott or Wordsworth; she defies the romantic notions and adapts new narrative style that is now characterised as realistic.⁴⁷

The realism may be seen in the issues of status and class, particularly when she describes the upper-class conditions in which Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy lived, in contrast to a ‘rural’ and modest environment in which the Bennet’s daughters grew up. In the novel, bourgeois Lady Catherine de Bourgh disagrees with Mr Darcy’s decision to marry a girl from lower class because it could undermine his social status. By doing this, Austen realistically depicts the social issues on the brink of 18th and 19th century where being at the top in social status was the only way to achieve success and live a worthy life. These issues closely relate to marriage and to women’s role in a society dominated by men. Austen was not considered a female right’s advocator but even she could not avoid seeing that women’s only chance of living a fulfilling life would be through marriage. In *Pride and Prejudice*, marriage becomes the centre topic and Ms Bennet’s only goal in life is to marry off her daughters to whoever is financially worthy and can advance her daughters status. This need for financial security is why Elizabeth Bennet was to marry Mr Collins despite her apparent dislike of him. Austen knew how realistic these suited marriages were in her contemporary society thus giving the readers elements of social realism. The realism she implies is not merely in the narration or characters’ personalities but also in the hidden narrator which is Austen herself—Austen’s life, her spinsterhood and the reality of life she experienced.⁴⁸

A clear sign of how well she was describing the real-life situations can be found in the comments of the readers of her work. Many of them said that the characters in Austen’s

⁴⁷GÜLTEKİN, Lerzan. *A Short History of English Literature; A Companion to The History of English Literature*, Cumhuriyet University Press, Sivas. (2000).

⁴⁸ BROWN, Julia P. *Jane Austen’s Novels: Social Change and Literary Form*. England: Harvard University Press, 1979. Print.

novels resemble people they encounter in their daily lives. This idea comes from her excellent ability to point out the realistic features and include them in her novels. She was amused by these comments of her work because the resemblance is only fictional, and she was making it up; but she is making it up from the observable ingredients of real life.⁴⁹

Without a doubt, features of realism can be found throughout her novels but to put her in a category of writers of realistic fiction would be an overestimation. She loved romance and her novels are built on romantic foundations. Therefore, even if realistic features are present, Jane Austen was a romantic author and, in her novels, romance eventually always wins.

5.4 Romance and Romanticism in *Wuthering Heights* and *Pride and Prejudice*

Although similar in root, both categories carry a vastly different meaning in terms of literature and consequently in the context of the analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Wuthering Heights*. The genre of literary romance literature predates Romanticism, and it portrays the medieval stereotypical plot where ‘the knight in shining armour’ saves ‘the damsel in distress.’ Before they find each other, the hero must overcome great difficulties but when he succeeds, the woman is his. The plot often depicts the feelings that occur in love relationship or courtship, and the idea of secret or impossible love is quite common. On the other hand, Romanticism refers to a literary movement in the 18th century, led primarily by literary giants like Wordsworth, Keats, Byron, Coleridge, and Shelley, advocating freedom of expression and emotion, and the wonders of Nature. The genre of romance literature is not a literary movement led by literary poets, but simply a genre of literature one might find in novels written by latter day novelists, stressing romantic love within the melodrama of human relationships.⁵⁰ Historically, one of the perfect examples of impossible love is Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. Although the story falls under the category of tragedy, the romance underlying the story should not be overshadowed. In this play, Shakespeare brilliantly plays with the evolving relationship of the two main characters and portrays them as ‘rebels’ fighting the system. Their love knows no bounds and they would rather die than to be separated from each other. Although a tragic end is inevitable, it only supports the idea of romance. Romeo and Juliet, when still alive, struggled because of their family’s unresolved

⁴⁹ [cit. 14.3. 2022] retrieved from
<<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/jane-austens-social-realism-and-the-novel>.>

⁵⁰ [cit. 16.3. 2022] retrieved from
< <https://www.britannica.com/art/Romanticism>.>

issues but their strong love and consequently tragic death united the two feuding families. Romeo and Juliet are a fitting example of a love story and Shakespeare brilliantly captured the essence of romance. Nevertheless, there were many authors who tried to imitate his approach. One example that should be considered is *Wuthering Heights*. In the novel, Emily Brontë borrows some elements of romance and employs them in her work. She depicts lovers, Catherine, and Heathcliff, who both come from diverse backgrounds and have complicated relationships within the family. In many ways, they resemble Romeo and Juliet's story of two individuals helplessly in love against all odds. Similarly, the end of *Wuthering Heights* represents the Shakespearian ending, Catherine declines in the arms of a different man whom she never fully loved and soon after, her true love Heathcliff dies as well. Other similarities may include the reconciliation of the two families. At the end of *Wuthering Heights*, Cathy, a daughter of Linton and Catherine, and Hareton, a son of Heathcliff's stepbrother Hindley, eventually fall in love with each other and a bond is created between them. The bond, that her mother Catherine and Heathcliff were so desperately looking for. As surprising as it may sound, even Emily Brontë gives the reader a happy ending in her own unique way.

Emily Brontë's take on romance is undoubtedly remarkably interesting, but what her predecessor Jane Austen did in terms of romance is up to this day considered the epitome of love. In her novel, *Pride and Prejudice* she introduces many separate love stories but the ultimate one includes Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy. She, a girl from not so wealthy environment, he, an aristocrat used to higher social circles. Their first meeting happens at a ball where they exchange opinions and Mr Darcy condemns Elizabeth for being fairly tolerable. Gradually, they start meeting more often and their relationship strengthens, and they start to have mutual feelings for each other. It is to every reader surprise then when Elizabeth refuses Darcy's proposal of marriage on the account of his history with Wickham. The story turns out to be completely different, but Elizabeth's pride hinders her from seeing the truth. She soon realises where the truth lies and condemns herself for being too prejudicial in her vision of romantic love. Their love is like hourglass, when one of them feels something the other one is unsure and otherwise. Eventually, they meet in the middle and realise that despite their pride and prejudice, true romance always prevails. Jane Austen's characters are not desperate lovers like Romeo and Juliet or Catherine and Heathcliff, their love is not about unrestrained passion and fighting everyone who would stand in their way. The idea that Jane

Austen wants to portray is that even romance can be based on reason, practicality, and self-control over emotion. Although sacrificing yourself in the name of love is what makes Shakespeare's and Emily Brontë's works so readable, Austen proves that sometimes nobody must die to find true romance.

5.5 Gothic influence

Jane Austen and Emily Brontë became brilliant authors who combined multiple literary genres thus creating unforgettable masterpieces. Therefore, features of Gothic can be found in the novels of these two extraordinary women.

Jane Austen is one of the best writers of romantic fiction, so it may be surprising to find out that even she used some Gothic elements in her novels. Most notable example of such usage is the novel *Northanger Abbey*. Austen was inspired by Radcliffe's novel "*The Mysteries of Udolpho*" (1794) which is considered the most popular Gothic novel of the eighteenth century. Austen wrote *The Northanger Abbey* (1817) at a time when the Gothic popularity was declining, so she mocks the genre and satirizes the main characters. Despite the satiric nature of the novel, Austen still works with typical Gothic motifs. Her main character, Catherine, is a lonely female hero who is terrified and often shows outbursts of pent-up emotion leading to immense suffering. The plot of the story concerns a non-existent "crime" that Catherine creates from her delusional thoughts.⁵¹ By creating this imaginary crime, Jane Austen tries to ridicule the unreasonable fear and vivid imagination that Gothic novels usually bear. Notwithstanding her satiric style of the novel, Austen still uses Gothic features and as Claudia Johnson points out: "*Northanger Abbey* 'domesticates the Gothic,' showing how its dangers are not comfortably distant but shockingly close to the English reader."⁵²

Apart from *Northanger Abbey*, Jane Austen stays loyal to her preferred genre. Therefore, *Pride and Prejudice* is far from any Gothic inclination. The same thing, however, cannot be said about Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights*.

⁵¹ [cit. 14.3. 2022] retrieved from

<<https://romantic-circles.org/pedagogies/commons/austen/pedagogies.commons.2015.eisner.html>>

⁵² ARMSTRONG, Nancy. "*The Gothic Austen.*" *A Companion to Jane Austen*. Ed. Claudia L. Johnson and Clara Tuite. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009. 237-47. Print.

Wuthering Heights is a classic example of the Gothic romance. Brontë uses mysteries, often involving the supernatural and the novel depicts typical Gothic characteristics such as multiple narration, ghosts, revenge, nightmares, and excessive cruelty demonstrated by the main antihero Heathcliff.⁵³ Apart from Heathcliff, all the characters in the novel struggle in their lives. Mr Lockwood, one of the narrators, suffers from an existential crisis and his escape from town leads him to Wuthering Heights. There he meets the prototype of a Gothic hero, Catherine. These heroines are traditionally placed in a conflict situation between a dark seducer and a fair lover, in the novel represented by Heathcliff and Edward Linton. The main heroes struggle to choose one side and this inner conflict may lead to grave suffering. Every heroine needs a hero and *Wuthering Heights* is no exception. Yet, in *Wuthering Heights* it would be better to address the hero as a villain because Heathcliff certainly is one. He behaves in an extremely immoral manner and his transgressive and fearful actions could be classified as typical Gothic features. All these characters from the novel share one underlying principle, madness. Emily Brontë presents various forms of madness in the characters and shows how this insanity affects not only the characters themselves but also those close to them.⁵⁴ This can be perfectly demonstrated in the case of Hindley. He becomes addicted to alcohol and his behaviour at Wuthering Heights knows no bounds. His mad behaviour turns Heathcliff crazy, and, in many instances, there is a physical struggle involved. By making Hindley a doomed character who is going to die eventually, Emily is using yet another Gothic feature. No Gothic-like novel would be completed without the occasional “sightings” of ghosts. In *Wuthering Heights*, the first sighting of a ghost is when Mr Lockwood sleeps at the Heights and during the night, he sees the ghost of Catherine Linton. The next instance of seeing ghosts happens at the very end when Mr Lockwood is told by a young boy that he saw Heathcliff and Catherine walking along the moors. Whether it is true or not is left to the reader to decide.

Emily shocked the public with this unconventional masterpiece and from the facts, her novel can be partly categorised in the Gothic spectrum. Nevertheless, Emily Brontë combines

⁵³ THADEN, Barbara. *Student companion to Charlotte & Emily Brontë*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001. Chapter: *THE NOVEL AS A GENRE*

⁵⁴ [cit. 15.3. 2022] retrieved from

<<http://knarf.english.upenn.edu/Articles/hume.html>> Chapter: ‘Gothic versus Romantic’ Hume.

elements of Romantic tales or the developing Victorian tradition of Domestic fiction creating a novel that even after three centuries later challenges the society norms.⁵⁵

5.6 Settings

In terms of settings, both authors hugely differ. Jane Austen never concentrated on descriptions of surroundings. She assumed that mansions and landscape were perfectly known to the reader thus giving any additional info would be pointless. Still, she makes some references to the houses in which the characters live. She mentions the Bennet's house and there is a surprisingly rich description of Darcy's mansion. However, her reason for such description has deeper roots. By describing these two contrasting types of settings, she is trying to create an idea about the characters that live in them. The Bennet's living in a small village house in contrast to Mr Darcy or Mr Bingley mansions point out to social differences and hierarchies and that is where Jane Austen becomes the strongest and, for some people, even the greatest.⁵⁶

On the other hand, Emily Brontë loved detailed description and she made it clear in her greatest novel. The main setting of *Wuthering Heights* is on the moors of England or Scotland and is described as dark, wide, and full of unknown mystery. Scenes depicted in the book are often painted as gloomy or foggy. This description resembles Emily's family house, a place where she grew up, where she spent most of her life and from which she drew her innovative ideas. She loved walking by herself and getting lost in nature and she made *Wuthering Heights* place just like that. A place, where if not careful, you get lost and you might never find your way back.

Emily, however, did not depict only dreadful places. In contrast to *Wuthering Heights*, there is Thrushcross Grange which is the Linton's house and represents the social nobility. It is a place of happiness and when Catherine first encounters the place with Heathcliff, she is warmly welcomed and falls under the impression that she could live like this. Heathcliff, on the other hand is met with weird looks and scorn and in this moment his disdain for Thrushcross Grange starts. The two houses, Thrushcross Grange and *Wuthering Heights* represent opposite poles of society and there are numerous differences between the two

⁵⁵ PYKETT, Lyn. (1993). *Gender and Genre in Wuthering Heights: Gothic Plot and Domestic Fiction*, New Casebooks. Ed., Macmillan, London

⁵⁶ AUSTEN, J. (2007). *Pride and Prejudice* (Oneworld Classics). Oneworld Classics.

places. One of the first noticeable differences are the names of those two estates. Wuthering Heights represent a windy and stormy environment, whereas Thrushcross Grange represents a calm and soothing place. Additionally, Wuthering Heights is set on the moors and moors have always been known as a place where no good things happen, whereas Thrushcross Grange is set in a green valley oozing with peace. Lastly, the inhabitants of those estates differ in their social attitudes and manners. Wuthering Heights corresponds to the working class and at Thrushcross Grange, the Linton family is respected and has the ideal position on social ladder. By contrasting these two settings, Emily is trying expose her real-life world where such opposing worlds and values dominated the Victorian England. Despite being like the Sun and the Moon, complete opposites, these two places are paradoxically so intertwined in the novel that it feels more like a yin-yang situation, where one without the other would not function.⁵⁷

Emily Brontë brilliantly plays with weather in the novel and her description makes an impact in the main characters lives. Stormy weather always corresponds to some upcoming negative events or behaviour. Take for example the first time Mr Lockwood was forced to stay at Wuthering Heights. It was a windy and stormy night and the ghost of Catherine appeared leading Heathcliff to act like a lunatic. This weather and characters behaviour correlation is most predominantly seen when Heathcliff leaves Wuthering Heights. After his action, a terrible storm breaks out and it seems like even nature does not think that Heathcliff departure can bring any good.⁵⁸

The world of *Wuthering Heights* is strangely narrow. There does not seem to be any place other than “home.” Where Heathcliff came from, or where he was during his three-year sojourn, is never described, and Isabella’s residence in London is similarly left a blank. Even the village of Gimmerton, which lies below the Grange and Wuthering Heights, is left strangely without concrete features. Emily only focused her attention on the two main houses and the relationships the characters have with them. Every important plot-altering event happens at Wuthering Heights and the reader can almost feel attached to the place in the last chapters of the novel. Emily must have felt the same attachment in her own life. She loved being at her home in Haworth and when she was away from home, she felt overwhelmed

⁵⁷ [cit. 15.3. 2022] retrieved from
<<http://knarf.english.upenn.edu/Articles/hume.html>.>

⁵⁸ MACAULAY, Thomas B., (1985), *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* Oxford University Press, New York.

by feelings of anxiety and dread. As much as the novel can be influenced by her real-life surroundings and feelings, Emily Brontë undoubtedly created an intensely original novel that should not be overlooked because of its gruesome yet realistic nature.⁵⁹

5.7 The Institution of Marriage

To get married or not to get married. These types of questions had no place in the lives of 18th and 19th century women. For them, not to get married would only lead to pitiful positions on the social ladder which women given their gender had already lower than men. Jane Austen is aware of these social implications and the theme of marriage is stressed throughout the whole novel. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen creates two types of women; Jane Bennet, a romantic soul whose main goal is to find a wealthy and good-looking husband to secure her future, and Elizabeth Bennet who is looking for a man who is going to be her equal in manners, character, and love. Elizabeth does not intend to marry because of convenience like her family would like her to with Mr Collins and by declining his marriage proposal, Elizabeth stays true to herself and deviates from the social conformity. In the novel, Elizabeth's moral standards are challenged again when it is Mr Darcy who proposes. Despite being an ideal partner, she refuses his proposal because of his entanglement in breaking off her sister's Jane relationship with Mr Bingley. This behaviour is unprecedented and her parents, especially her mother strongly disapproves her actions since refusing marriage was not an ordinary thing to do. Women were waiting for somebody to marry them for a long time, and she would not like her daughters to struggle for a good and secure place among the novelty.⁶⁰

In *Pride and Prejudice*, the need for marriage is made apparent since the beginning. It is no coincidence that the first sentence of the novel starts like this: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife."⁶¹ As the novel suggests, to remain alone was not proper for young ladies and Jane Austen is aware of the fact. She makes marriage a crucial point of the novel and every character's concern apart from Elizabeth Bennet. Even she realises the power of marriage, but she acts unconventional during the search of it. As already mentioned, she does not want to comply

⁵⁹ THADEN, Barbara. *Student companion to Charlotte & Emily Brontë*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001. Chapter: *THE NOVEL AS A GENRE*

⁶⁰ AUSTEN, J. (2007). *Pride and Prejudice* (Oneworld Classics). Oneworld Classics.

⁶¹ AUSTEN, J. (2007). *Pride and Prejudice*.

with stereotypes set by society and especially her parents who typically took care of the future of their children and their prospective husbands at that time. To marry was to marry for money and financial stability. However, Jane Austen challenges these established values by making Mr Darcy fall in love with less socially ranked Elizabeth Bennet. By creating this relationship, she implies that love should be the main variable in the marriage equation as it provides a happier future life. Austen was a romantic and she started writing in the age of Romanticism, contrary to the rising popularity of realism in the 19th century. Therefore, the idea that women can marry for love and not for convenience was a mere fantasy. Throughout the whole Victorian period, women, and their choices in terms of marriage were still pretty much controlled by men and their superior position in the society. This becomes noticeably clear

in the novel written by Emily Brontë where she takes the Austen's romantic notion of ideal marriage and almost destroys it.

Emily Brontë and her novel *Wuthering Heights* adopts a different stance in terms of marriage. She focuses more on the material decisions women make in terms of marriage than on the prospect of marrying of love. In *Wuthering Heights*, she makes this explicitly clear when her main heroine Catherine chooses Edgar Linton over Heathcliff. Choosing financial security over love represents the situation women were in during the 19th century. For them, finding a secure husband should lead to happiness and satisfactory life. However, that does not happen in Catherine's life. Her decision leads to feelings of despair and the neglect expressed towards Heathcliff leads to great suffering for him and everybody around him as well. Catherine should be happy now because she secured a prosperous future for her and for her future children, but it is the complete opposite. Her marriage is a disaster, and she feels miserable for obliging with the society norms of marriage rather than opting for a relationship built on love. Catherine is only feeling happy when Heathcliff comes back home and visits her at Thrushcross Grange, and the notion of happily married union is non-existent in her case. Brontë here shows how insignificant money should be when it comes to marriage and that social rank should not play the leading part in such decisions. Catherine is the vivid example of even though one can have all the money in the world, if you do not have someone that you love next to you, life can be miserable.

Nevertheless, as suggested above, Emily Brontë does not destroy the notion of love completely and a form of this emotion is found between the daughter of Catherine, Cathy and Hareton, a son of Heathcliff's stepbrother. Her mother thought that marrying someone like Heathcliff would only diminish her and made her unworthy in the eyes of the public. A reasonable decision for her future, but a damning one for her heart. Her daughter Cathy does not think that marrying Hareton would degrade her, and she helps him with learning and his attachment issues. They eventually fall in love and the problems in the first generation are resolved in the second one by showing that nothing can tear love apart once it is strong enough. Thus, Emily Brontë eventually ends her novel with something slightly resembling a happy ending and she gives the reader hope that even after such hideous actions throughout the whole novel, there is always a chance for a silver lining.⁶²

5.8 Heathcliff as The Byronic hero and Austen's Romantic Mr Darcy

Despite being the most known loved or hated heroes of the 19th century, Jane Austen, and Emily Brontë give their main protagonists quite unique features.

The first of these heroes that entered the literary world is Mr Darcy, the main protagonist of *Pride and Prejudice*. When he is firstly presented to the reader, he undoubtedly does not make the best impression. He is described as reserved, fastidious and although having been raised with high manners, his behaviour is not inviting. He even insults the main protagonist which does not seem like a great start for him. Throughout the novel, his behaviour changes but he still presents himself as superior to other characters and pride still rules over him. Although his actions sometimes do not correspond with the ideal romantic hero, his sincerity does. Even when he is being mean, he stays honest and that makes him an admirable man. Darcy might not be the best romantic hero, but Austen forms him into one by making other men seem less in the eyes of the readers. Perfect example of this strategy would be Mr Wickham. When he is firstly introduced, he represents the best that army officers have to offer, his great looks, good figure, and the way he speaks to women. Many would consider him the perfect example of a romantic hero, but Austen defies these notions by stating that true nobility is not based on looks and ingratiating behaviour, but on staying true to yourself. Darcy, despite his countless mistakes, does exactly that and becomes

⁶² BRONTË, E. (1997). *Wuthering Heights (Wordsworth Classics)* (Reprint ed.). Wordsworth Editions Ltd.

a worthy and admirable hero. At the end of the novel, all his initial bad behaviour is forgotten, and the reader is rooting for him.⁶³ He becomes the epitome of a man who is more at ease at home in the country than in drawing rooms surrounded by people.⁶⁴ Austen portrays Darcy as this antihero at first, but his kind actions turn him into a great man whose behaviour is undoubtedly honourable and true in nature. This change, however, cannot be found in one of the most ambiguous and interesting characters of the 19th century literary canon, Heathcliff.

Emily Brontë creates Heathcliff, a character so unique that when reading *Wuthering Heights*, one moment the readers want him dead and the next one they admire him. To know Heathcliff and to find justification for his later actions, his origin must be mentioned. He is found wandering the streets when he is young by Mr Earnshaw. He is described as a gypsy in appearance with dark eyes, hair, and skin. This portrayal might symbolise the darkness hidden beneath. Throughout the novel, the reader never knows his parents or what he had done before he was found, and this fact intensifies the dark and mysterious side of him. During his childhood at Wuthering Heights, he is met with many difficulties and his only consolation is his love for Catherine. He hates to love her because she treated him so badly but eventually, they grew closer to each other and become inseparable. Catherine loves his attention and Heathcliff freely gives it to her. From the beginning of the novel, everything seems to be going perfect but that changes when Mr Earnshaw dies, and his son Hindley takes over the Heights.⁶⁵ Hindley despises Heathcliff for having a very close relationship with his father and his sister and tries to make his stay at the Heights insufferable which trigger the dark side in Heathcliff. On top of that, Catherine starts distancing from him in pursuit of a better life. He feels like an outcast, a somebody who is not worthy of love and disappears for almost three years. What he did during those three years remain a mystery, just as his true origin. However, despite his unknown history and his rebellion against society and its laws, he is a highly intelligent individual, skilled manipulator, and deceiver and when he comes back to Wuthering Heights, he seems to have earned a lot of money and is set on achieving his goals. His all-consuming passion and love for Catherine never ceased and

⁶³ *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen 9 Volume: Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen (2006–07-27). Cambridge University Press.

⁶⁴ WU, D. *A Companion to Romanticism*. Wiley-Blackwell. (1999a).

⁶⁵ MACAULAY, Thomas B., (1985), *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* Oxford University Press, New York.

reached enormous proportions. He is a vengeful character and torments everybody that prevents him from being one with her. If in the first half of the novel, readers could sympathise with him, he destroys this notion of sympathy in the second half where he goes to extreme lengths to make people suffer. His passion for revenge stems from the loss of his only true love and by the end of the novel he goes crazy to fulfil his need to be with Catherine. He even digs up her grave to see her and bribes the men in charge of her body to put him his body next to her when he dies. This relentless passion and ignorance of social laws make him a fitting example of a Byronic hero and as though his actions were appalling at least, many youngsters considered him a role model in their eyes, he was the cool antihero that is not understood by society and is only trying to find his place within it. Even more interesting is the fact that women found Heathcliff enticing thanks to his unrestrained love and passion for Catherine. If what Emily Brontë wanted was to create a character that can provoke discussion, with Heathcliff, she exceeded her expectations.⁶⁶

5.9 Elizabeth Bennet versus Catherine Linton

As much as stories need great heroes, their female versions cannot be forgotten. They play a crucial part in the novels and sometimes, it is the woman who makes the man either a hero or a villain.

In terms of *Wuthering Heights*, it could be said that Catherine Earnshaw, the heroine of the novel, makes the main protagonist Heathcliff, a villain or at least partially. From her early childhood, she is brought up at Wuthering Heights and her life is ordinary. That changes with the arrival of Heathcliff, an orphan boy whom her father finds on his travels. At first, she despises the boy but eventually they become close and that is where the suffering begins. They spent time together on the moors, share secrets and their feelings towards each other strengthen. This trust is broken when Catherine chooses Edward Linton over Heathcliff. Heroines like Catherine were traditionally placed in a conflict situation between a dark seducer and a fair lover, and this inner conflict makes a significant impact on their lives. Catherine chooses comfort over passion, and she is deeply affected by her decision. At first, she enjoys her new life with all its benefits, even has a daughter with Edward but her past decision is looming over her like a storm cloud. She never was an independent heroine who could make

⁶⁶ MACAULAY, Thomas B., (1985), *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* Oxford University Press, New York.

her own decisions and when Edward was presented to her, she opted for the uncomplicated way out of her ordinary life at the Heights. However, she starts to regret her decision and these feelings of regret become more obsessive when she is visited by her former lover. From that moment, her health and mind deteriorate, and Edward takes care of her. When she dies, both of her lovers are devastated and Heathcliff sets on a war path of revenge against Edward and those close around him to make him pay for Catherine's death. Catherine's story represents a typical storyline of Gothic heroines who suffer throughout their lives in secluded homes under the scrutiny of their family and their only escape is to find a suitable marriage that would move them up the social ladder. Emily Brontë's heroine is seen as a fragile woman in search of herself and under the influence of men. This principle cannot be any more different from her predecessor's Jane Austen who refuses the idea of oppressed heroine and creates a strong one instead. She tends to focus primarily on one character and in *Pride and Prejudice* that character's name is Elizabeth Bennet. She is a heroine of the story and a beautiful woman. However, that might be the first and last information in the novel about her looks. Jane Austen never cared about physical appearance, she wants the reader to know her heroine's feelings, thoughts, and reasons for her actions because Elizabeth is a strong-willed individual who can make her own decisions that do not have to conform to socially accepted rules. As a woman at the beginning of the 19th century, her only concern should be finding a man who will marry her. Nevertheless, when such a man in the form of Mr Collins comes, her obstinacy to loveless marriage prevails and she stays true to her morals. The tendency to make Elizabeth this witty, rules-bending character stems from Austen's longing for a strong female heroine that would embody the women's need for more than just marriage within the social hierarchy. Throughout the novel, Elizabeth evolves and is faced with many tough decisions that could alter her future life, one being the refusal of Mr Darcy's first proposal of marriage. By making this decision, Jane Austen, in the form of Elizabeth Bennet, is not only refusing Mr Darcy but men's superiority in general. To whom she will be engaged should depend on her own decision and not on the one question uttered by a man who does not see her as his equal, yet. At the end of the novel, Elizabeth's actions change, and she accepts the second proposal, but only because Mr Darcy's behaviour showed her that she would be taken as equal in their marriage. Jane Austen, through the voice of Elizabeth Bennet, demonstrates that women should speak up if they want to change something because as history showed, nobody else will do that for them.

6 The role of Women in Victorian society

The position of women throughout the past centuries has always been difficult and this struggle continues up till now. Nevertheless, what we now can do as women is not in any way comparable to what women were allowed in the 19th century. Paradoxically, even when the most important person in the kingdom was a woman, the position that women had in the Victorian period was very humiliating. According to the society, which was dominated by men, the purpose of women was expected to be limited to childbearing and becoming a housewife. Marriage stood in the centre of women lives and voluntarily choosing not to get married was considered a deviation from socially conforming norms. For some women, marriage fulfilled their ideas of perfectly lead life, but considerable number of women only married because of pragmatic reasons. If a woman preferred spinsterhood, her economic conditions could never compare to a married woman. Nevertheless, there were rules in marriage, and they were not in favour for women. At the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign, women had no legal rights to children and property. If they divorced, they could lose their children and end up penniless since they had no legal possession of their own under the law of coverture.⁶⁷ Not many women choose to divorce their partners because even if they wanted to. They would not only have to prove adultery but also some form of dissertation, bigamy, or cruelty, otherwise there would be no legal ground for it. Marriage is not always seen as a positive thing, but sometimes it can be understood as the only way to get away from the woman's parents and opting for marriage was therefore more bearable than living with parents their whole life. The women's sphere was subordinate to men because men generated the income, could decide what needs to be done and had voting rights. Women were stripped of all these advantages and to be a working woman was not ordinary. Despite their conditions, women did take up work and mostly worked as teachers, governesses or writers under neutral pseudonyms. By working on their own, they achieved partial independence from husbands and could devote at least a part of their life to something different than bearing children.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ TUCKER, Herbert F. *A Companion to Victorian Culture and Literature*. Blackwell, 1999. Chapter: *Women's rights*.

⁶⁸ [cit. 15.3. 2022] retrieved from

<<http://victorian-era.org/roles-of-women-in-the-victorian-era.html>. >

It might be easier to define what women could do in the Victorian era. Nevertheless, the situation was slowly progressing throughout the century and many brave women were adamant in their propositions and achieved better representation of women at the turn of the 19th century and 20th century. The Victorian period was only just a beginning of this long-lasting battle for equality, but it was this moral boost that women needed to find their inner voice again.⁶⁹

6.1 The rights of women

A married woman's lack of legal rights or general rights of women whatsoever was a great concern to many politically or socially active women, scarcely even men, in the patriarchal Victorian era. Women never liked to be oppressed or taken for granted by the public but accepted their role and never tried to speak up. That started changing in the second half of the 18th century when one of the first women's rights advocates Mary Wollstonecraft drafted her famous philosophical essay, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). In this essay, Wollstonecraft criticises the decision that women should only receive domestic education and that their education should be suited for marriage duties. She also suggests that women must get equally enhancing education if they are to become suitable companions to men and to be competent enough to bring up children. Paradoxically, men wanted women to only get domestic education to spend more time with the children and devote their whole life, but Wollstonecraft attacks this argument by proposing that it is the other way around. If the society wants the next generation to be educated, it is in the hands of women who are the educators of children and if they are not given the same amount of knowledge as men, it is impossible to achieve this goal. Wollstonecraft understood these issues and is considered one of the first instigators of women's rights movement and legal rights equality.⁷⁰ However, her efforts were just the beginning.

In the beginning of the 19th century, the efforts for equality continued and many famous writers pointed out these issues even in their famous works. For example, the Brontë sisters were aware of the inequalities, and it was no trifle for them. Charlotte Brontë's efforts were most prominently seen in her novel *Jane Eyre* where Jane fights against the limitations

⁶⁹ TUCKER, Herbert F. *A Companion to Victorian Culture and Literature*. Blackwell, 1999.

⁷⁰ TUCKER, Herbert F. *A Companion to Victorian Culture and Literature*. Chapter: *Victorian attitudes to women*

of female education and constrained roles for women.⁷¹ Even in her personal life, Charlotte Brontë despised the fact that when she married at the age of 38, already making a good income, all her copyrights and income automatically became the property of her husband upon marriage.⁷² This fact was nothing new in the middle of the century because of coverture, a law that gave everything that women own to their husbands after marriage. As much as men favoured this legal notion, there were a few male writers that thought otherwise and helped with making women's inequality issues more visible. One of them was John Stuart Mill, an astute politician, philosopher, and a great essayist. In *The Subjection of Women*, his most famous essay advocating the rights of women, he writes that there should be the same legal and social equality between men and women. Women thought to be more emotional than rational, but Mill suggests that this is only the result of insufficient education they get when they are growing up. He also points out that unless women are treated the same as men, the society will never know the full power of what women can achieve. It is suggested that many of his notions were influenced by his wife, Harriet Taylor Mill, who is known as one of the leading female rights advocates and died before the publication of her husband's work. Mill admits that may be true and regards his wife as one of the most influential forces on his conception of life. Nonetheless, even though men did take part in helping with the Woman Question, it was always about extraordinary women putting in the work and changing the minds of lawmakers.⁷³

The first wave of the women's rights movement originated in the Langham Place Circle in the 1850's, led by Barbara Bodichon and Bessie Rayner Parkes. They campaigned for improved female rights in the law, employment, education, and marriage. Over the course of the century, they met Caroline Norton, whose husband had unreasonably deprived her of access to her children and that became a driving force for her to come up with the Infants and Child Custody Bill of 1839.⁷⁴ This bill would allow women to petition for custody rights

⁷¹ TUCKER, Herbert F. *A Companion to Victorian Culture and Literature*. Chapter: *Feminism activism*

⁷² THADEN, Barbara. *Student companion to Charlotte & Emily Brontë*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001. Chapter: *The Brontës and the Novel*

⁷³ [cit. 15.3. 2022] retrieved from

<<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-subjection-of-women-by-j-s-mill>.>

⁷⁴ [cit. 15.3. 2022] retrieved from

<<http://victorian-era.org/feminism-victorian-era.html>.>

after divorcing their husband and oriented more on the needs of children rather than the rights of either parent.⁷⁵

This Bill was only just a start and writers like Catherine Norton, Harriet Martineau, Barbara Bodichon and Bessie Rayner Parkes influenced parliamentary debates throughout the 19th century. Norton and Bodichon instrumental role in the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 changed the way women were treated after divorce. Thanks to this Act, they were able to recover their own property and enter contracts under their own name. Divorce and their own earnings were possible, however, under this same Act women had not only had to prove adultery but also desertion, cruelty, or bigamy to obtain divorce while men merely a single act of a wife's adultery.⁷⁶

Women's social position was intimately connected to educational reform and employment opportunities in that field. This was clear for Elizabeth Wolstenholme and Josephine Butler who became crucial organisers for legislation affecting women in the 1870s and 1880s and they helped in forming the 'North of England Council for Promoting the Higher Education for Women', a group representing schoolmistresses around the country. This act inspired Bodichon and Emily Davies and they formed the Girton College, founded in 1869. Though women could not take degrees at Cambridge, those at Girton took the same examinations as male students, moreover, they provided a site for women's community and independent living.⁷⁷ The development of women's rights in the educational field also worked the other way around and women were employed in elementary schools since the 1870 Education Act which provided new opportunities. Not only that, but women could also vote and run for membership on the school boards and that was a huge achievement compared to the past.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ [cit. 15.3. 2022] retrieved from
<https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private_lives/relationships/overview/custodyrights/>

⁷⁶ TUCKER, Herbert F. *A Companion to Victorian Culture and Literature*. Blackwell, 1999.

⁷⁷ SAGE, Lorna. *The Cambridge Guide to Women's Writing in English (1st Paperback Edition)*. Cambridge University Press. 1999.

⁷⁸ TUCKER, Herbert F. *A Companion to Victorian Culture and Literature*. Chapters: *Feminism activism, The Most Important Laws Concerning Women*

As women were changing the laws in many fields, there was still the issue of marriage and the rights that women had or more likely did not have when being in one. The first Married Women's Property Act of 1870 became the crucial point in changing the ways of marriage and though women hoped for more, this Act at least granted that all wives had rights to separate property acquired after marriage.⁷⁹ This Act paved the way for the development of women's marriage rights and before long, a new proposition was coming. The improved Married Women's Property Act of 1882 is considered a breakthrough in the legal status of women in the 19th century because it allowed wives to have rights to their property which they acquired before and during marriage. As for the property, the situation changed for the better, but women's position continued to be unequal in the eyes of law.⁸⁰

A last crucial focus of feminist activism in 1870 concerned the Contagious Diseases Acts. Women were forced to undergo compulsory genital inspection for venereal disease in suspected prostitutes and detention in lock hospitals for infected women. There were protests that opposed this inspection because as Josephine Butler puts it, it hugely resembled instrumental rape and women should not be subjected to such violation of their privacy. The law was signed by more than 250 hundred women and one of the famous signatures belonged to Florence Nightingale whom the society respected for her work in the medical field. The Act was fortunately repealed in 1886 and all these efforts paved the way for the Women Suffrage Movement that started forming at the end of the 19th century.⁸¹

Yet while the ideas about marriage, education, children, or women's privacy had changed over the course of the century, women were still just at the beginning of their pursuit of achieving equality. Nonetheless, the Victorian era showed how extraordinary and resilient women can be and that their voices should be heard.

⁷⁹ TUCKER, Herbert F. *A Companion to Victorian Culture and Literature*. Chapter: *On the Subjection of Women*

⁸⁰ TUCKER, Herbert F. *A Companion to Victorian Culture and Literature*. Chapter: *Women's rights*

⁸¹ TUCKER, Herbert F. *A Companion to Victorian Culture and Literature*. Chapters: *Feminism activism, The Most Important Laws Concerning Women*

7 Conclusion

The aim of this bachelor thesis was to introduce the 19th century British authors Jane Austen, Emily, and Charlotte Brontë and describe their notable works in context of Romanticism and Realism of the 19th century and expound on the role of women of that period.

Firstly, I chose to write about the origins of Romanticism as a movement and what impact it had on the society as a whole and on members of the writing community. I wanted to show the background of the era in which many culturally important works were published and received huge praise from the Victorian society.

In the next part, I described the key women representatives of the Victorian tradition, their childhood and its impact on their later works, their life as women in the male dominated society and their most famous works. This part included the description of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and focused on her unique style of writing which was and is regarded as a revolutionary one. My next focus was the Brontë sisters which grew up together, therefore their lives intertwine and are affected by one another. Although the sisters grew up with each other, their later novels differed and both sisters created something new. Charlotte created a new heroine who can be independent and decide for herself and Emily portrayed a disturbingly attractive antihero whose passion has no bounds. Throughout these separate topics, the idea of romanticism and realism is what connects them all and this part I was trying to capture just that.

The principal part of the thesis focused on the literary analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Wuthering Heights*. I tried to describe how these two works can be viewed in terms of the literary tradition of Romanticism and Realism with particular focus on domestic novels and realistic novels. I also characterised the difference between romance and Romanticism and how these two similar words carry a completely different meaning in the novels. My focus then turned to the influence of Gothic on the novels, especially on *Wuthering Heights* where its impact is undeniable. With that in mind, I tried to depict the settings of the two novels and how the lives of the authors had a role in their choices. This part is concluded with the portrayals of the main female and men protagonists, their personality traits,

behaviour and their take on love, marriage, and the rules of society. The role of women is partially opened in this part but only briefly so not to overlap with the next part.

At the end of my thesis, I presented extraordinary women in their search for equality and same rights as men. I tried to describe the beginnings of women's rights, the main protagonists of the movement and there is a brief mention of male supporters as well. I focused on the law changes that were made throughout the century and how women of 19th century paved the way for the Suffrage movement which raised awareness about women's inequality at the end of the Victorian period.

In my bachelor thesis, I was trying to present many important women whose work had an impact on culture, literature and whose novels are still considered the gems of British literature of the 19th century and inspiration to many other famous writers. In my thesis, I wanted to show how women accomplished great achievements in the Victorian era even though they were regarded as less, and how women should never be underestimated.

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