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**The Role of Women, Marriage, Courtship and Social Status in the
selected works of Jane Austen**

**Postavení žen, manželství, dvoření a sociální status ve vybraných
dílech Jane Austen**

Bakalářská diplomová práce

Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Libor Práger

OLOMOUC 2012

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Děkuji PhDr. Liborovi Prágrovi za odborné vedení mé bakalářské diplomové práce, za poskytnuté konzultace a rady a za laskavé zapůjčení materiálů k této práci.

Abstract

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Name of the bachelor's thesis: The Role of Women, Marriage, Courtship And Social Status in the selected works of Jane Austen

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Key words: social status, middling sort, middle class, sense, sensibility, pride, prejudice, women, courtship, marriage, fashion, household, role, men

Description of the bachelor's thesis:

The bachelor's thesis is focused on the selected works of Jane Austen – Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice. The work is describing the position of women from the middle class, the analysis of the courtship, marriage and social status of women in the Regency Era. The description of the historical background is the necessary key point to understand the work – how the historical events were influencing the era when Jane Austen lived. The focus is concentrated on the balls and fashion in the following chapter from Northanger Abbey. The balls were important for young girl – according to chances of meeting a future husband. Then it is described in the next chapter, how important the etiquette was and what should girls do. The girl were supposed to be respectful to their origins and the class they came from. The chapter including work Pride and Prejudice is describing the importance of being married, the gap between the higher and lower classes and prejudices towards men. The influence of Jane Austen on the next generations is admirable. The pictures showing the period clothes and portraits are shown at the end the thesis.

Anotace

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Název bakalářské diplomové práce: Postavení žen, manželství, dvorení a sociální status ve vybraných dílech Jane Austen

Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Libor Práger

Klíčová slova: sociální postavení, střední třída, rozum, cit, pýcha, předsudek, ženy, dvoření, manželství, móda, domácnost, postavení, muži

Charakteristika bakalářské diplomové práce:

Bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na vybraná díla Jane Austenové Northangerské opatství, Rozum a cit a Pýcha a Předsudek. Popisuje pozici žen střední třídy, analýzu dvoření, manželství a sociální postavení žen střední třídy z dob Regentské éry. Popis historické doby je také nezbytným faktorem k porozumění této práci – jak historické události ovlivňovaly dobu, ve které Jane Austinová žila. Velkým tématem jsou plesy a bály, o módě se pak dozvíme v kapitole, která se zabývá hlavně dílem Northangerské opatství. Ples byl opravdu důležitou událostí pro mladé dívky, kterou byly uvedeny do společnosti – byla to pro ně také možnost potkat budoucího manžela. Dále je v práci popsána důležitost etikety dvoření. Dívky musely respektovat původ a třídu, ze které pocházely. Kapitola o Pýše a Předsudku popisuje důležitost být vdaná, propast mezi vyššími a nižšími třídami a předsudky vůči mužům. Vliv Jane Austenové na budoucí generace je úžasný. Obrázky znázorňující dobové šaty a portréty jsou uvedeny v závěru práce.

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1. Introduction

Middle class was the part of society where Jane Austen (16th December 1775 – 18th July 1817) spent all her life and naturally, it is masterfully described in her novels. She portrayed society through the way women were treated by their families, friends, enemies and everyone else. Britain during Austen's times was changing, prospering, heading to the new world and colonizing, but society remained strictly directed by prejudices and conventions. Etiquette people were respecting and the code of conduct during the end of seventeenth century were different those of today. For them, eloping brought shame and embarrassment to the family; nowadays we view it as something very romantic. Us today probably would not even understand what is romantic about a situation in which a man in love takes a lock of hair from his beloved woman who will probably become his wife. People from Regency era, on the other hand, would not understand why we enjoy fast food or use facebook to socialize.

People may ask – did Jane Austen fall in love? Was she in love or just bitter about relationships? Did her literary works serve as a reflection of what she imagined her life to be? Publications about her life do exist, but there is still that one small tempting question – „what if.“ What if she never knew what it feels like to be in love? And if indeed she never loved, how was she capable of writing such romantic dreamy novels? These questions will most likely always remain unanswered.

Why did I decide to write about Jane Austen? Her works are timeless, the stories of love and courtship inspired many writers and directors; her writing skills have fascinated readers for more than two hundred years.

I want to focus on the strong women of Austen's novels; how they put up with the society they live in and face the wiles, twists, and turns of their destiny – courtship, marriage, possessions, and eventually also love. In the end, the reader inevitable discovers that the Beatles were right – all you need is love!

I will devote one chapter to important British history that influenced not just my favourite writer, but also many politicians, events, cultural and literary movements. I decided to focus on *Pride and Prejudice*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility*. One is satirical, one includes the most popular male character and the last one was published for the first time with an author named “a lady“.

The first chapter will be an overview of Britain during Jane Austen's times. I want to focus on factors that had an impact on the society; social conventions are especially important.

Second chapter will include a description of marriage and law, the importance of etiquette of courtship and having one's own household.

Third chapter covers *Northanger Abbey* including themes such as coming of age, leisure, fashion, and balls. I also focus here on courtship and the differences between Elinor's and Marianne's character from the book *Sense and Sensibility*. Marriage, prejudices and most importantly pride are key words mentioned in the chapter on *Pride and Prejudice*.

Complementary pictures and images can be found at the end and provide for a visual component to what I talk about in my thesis.

2. The Background of Jane Austen's novels

Understanding the history and background during the times of Jane Austen is one of the key points to understanding her work. It is necessary to understand the processes that caused changes in social climate and led people to think and live in certain ways in Britain of eighteenth and beginning of nineteenth century.

For more than half of the eighteenth century, European powers were fighting for the territory and the biggest colonies abroad. Britain had her great competitors in Spain and France.

England had become the biggest trading nation by 1700. A huge variety of brand new goods came into the market – people were introduced to new imported supplies of tobacco, spices, sugar, silks and were selling them back to Europe. The living standard improved for most people in this century. People were used to having ingredients from their own farms and productions, but thanks to imported goods, their living standard was changing.

By 1700 Britain had colonies, with a firm base in the New World. England was controlling most of the territory on the new continent.

England was also trading with India – Elizabeth I. founded the East India Company in 1600. The competitors were the Netherlands and Portugal for cotton, rare dyes and luxury silks. It wasn't just the rich who were able to enjoy a great variety of goods arriving to England from abroad. Travelling peddlers bought their goods in ports and in London; then, they travelled long distances to sell them in towns and villages. The goods from peddlers were used in many households.

In the second half of seventeenth century it was very fashionable for every rich household to have black slaves.

Different people were arriving to England from France, like the Huguenots (Protestants). Most of them stayed for the rest of their lives in Britain and soon they managed to work as skilled craft workers (silk weavers, clockmakers). They also became very successful lawyers, doctors, or bankers.

Diseases remained quite rampant and people were scared of them. Nevertheless, after the epidemic in 1665, terrible plagues never happened again in new London and the rest of Britain. It is not exactly clear why it happened, because ships were still coming to ports, but it seems that the most probable explanation would be the new quarantine laws. These helped to prevent people who were sick on ships from entering the country of Britain.

Another important thing that also helped was the rebuilding after the fire. People started to live in new brick houses, which prevented plague carrying black rats from building their nests. Smallpox plague was still hitting both rich and poor (it also killed King Charles's II. sister Mary and brother Henry), and measles as well as typhus were still prevalent.

There was still a lot of people in Britain who did not receive a proper education. There existed more schools for girls in towns than did in the countryside.

Society was still divided, but worldly influences changed many aspects of life; however, the hierarchy within social structure remained – in description of Daniel Defoe: “the great, who live profusely; the rich, who live plentifully; the middle sort, who live well and the working trades, who labor hard, but feel no want.”¹

Agricultural sector was also prospering. There was improvement in the quality of animals sent to market, as well as crop yields. There were no more common fields with animals (sharing diseases), but every farmer had his own farm. Profits from farming on crop fields started to increase – there was no more need for consulting the ownership of strips of land and new crop rotations were introduced, too. This as well as a rapidly growing population and grain exports until the 1790s helped improve the sector of agricultural situation in the country.

Changes tied to the economic growth also described as the Industrial Revolution arrived in the middle of eighteenth century. „Yet the period which in retrospect seems to have provided the platform for industrial take-off was widely regarded at the time as one of worrying recession, and continues to present problems of evaluation. In the 1730s and 1740s agricultural prices were exceptionally low; some important manufacturing regions, particularly the old textile centres, suffered serious unemployment and unrest.”² Also, some promising developments were apparent. Low prices of food motivated consumers to increase their spending on goods and thus naturally lead to expansion of industries. Improvements and advancements were also noticeable in other sectors such as transportation –in 1730s, the construction of a turnpike system. Turnpike was a popular invention which helped local people in a form of an injection of sums of raised capital into repair. This development would not have been so effective without the great expansion of trade, capital and inland consumption. However, this growth was overshadowed by trade growth and expansion overseas.

¹ Mike Corbishley, John Gillingham, Rosemary Kelly, Ian Dawson, James Mason *The History of Britain and Ireland (from early people to present day)*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 248.

²Kenneth O'Morgan *The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain, updated edition for the 21st century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 374.

The provinces of Montreal and Quebec came under the control of Britain, while the Spanish-American empire was stretching from about Argentina to California. The West Indian islands were also changing their master – Spain, France and Netherlands.

Britain decided America should pay for their own defence - this money was supposed to be raised by paying local taxes (as in England). Americans were rejecting the British government, because they did not have any Members of Parliament to argue with the House of Commons since there was no representation to govern them from overseas. It was just a matter of time for a revolution to come about.

Demonstrations were on the rise in the next few years, until the American colonists started a boycott with Boston Tea party in 1773. Parliament responded by sending their troops and Americans could not stop the British landing on the east coast wherever they wanted. But equally, British could not afford to supply an army large enough to suppress the rebellion. The confrontation led the British troops to Lexington, where the Battle of Lexington and Concord started; this also meant the beginning of a war.

The Declaration of Independence was published in 1776 by Americans and the Dutch, Spanish and French were secretly providing the supplies, weapons, ships and troops to assist Americans. After the fights, the remaining British were forced to surrender and the peace was signed in 1783 in Versailles.

It did not take very long for another revolution in Europe to come. It is interesting that Jane Austen never mentioned any wars, politics or revolutions in her novels. On July 14, 1789 the French revolution began. Many people in Britain sympathized with Liberté, Fraternité, Egalité and the change of government (taking an example from Americans), but it later became nothing more than a bloody massacre with paranoid leaders who sent to the guillotine everybody whom they considered an enemy of state, even without a trial. Everybody knew king Louis XVI. was guillotined in January 1793 (his wife Marie Antoinette followed soon), but not everybody knows that Jane's and her sister Cassandra's cousin Eliza went to guillotine in 1794, too.

The new French Republic declared a war (just few days after the death of king) on Britain and for the next twenty years the battles were the centre of attention. This was about half of Jane's life. The battles were fought also in West Indies, islands, land and sea. Cassandra was affected, because her fiancé, reverend Tom Fowle, went as a chaplain to defend West Indies in 1795 and died there of yellow fever. Their brother Henry went to defend his country, settled in the Oxfordshire Militia to be a lieutenant and in next years went with his regiment to defend the channel round the coast.

At the turn of the century, the Revolutionary Wars came to an end. In 1799, a young soldier from Corsica, Napoleon Bonaparte, overthrew the government, came to power and became (well, he called himself) the First Consul of France. The English were mobilizing their troops in order to defend their country and Frank and Charles signed off from their ships and went to their family to Bath for a couple of months. Napoleon declared war against Britain in 1803 and put the Channel under the danger of invasion, until Admiral Nelson defeated his troops (French and Spanish ships) at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. The war in Europe continued until dear Napoleon was forced to sign abdication in 1814 and was definitely defeated at the Battle of Waterloo.

When king George III. came to throne in 1760, Britain was dealing with problems in several spheres of life – trading, overseas territories and demographic expansion. George III.'s predecessor, king George II., was on the throne when his reign was afflicted by waves of influenza-like infections and smallpox. The plague was really serious and had serious demographic consequences – since 1580s it was the worst mortality crisis and by 1731 the population reached about 5,200,000 people in the country.

Under the reign of king George III., the English countryside was changing, getting greener and cleaner, more peaceful than it is today. In 1760s the number of inhabitants reached eight million, many of them living in a countryside making a living through farming and working in agriculture. It is interesting again, that Jane lived at the era of growing industry, but was not focused on innovations or new improvements; she lived in a century full of historical events, revolutions important for Europe, America and the rest of the world yet never mentioned them in any of her books.

The middle class or the „middling sort“, a social group to which most of Austen's characters belonged, formed about twenty percent of the population. These people lived pretty comfortably, buying books, carpets, etc. Shops in country towns were full of new fashion items, newspapers were carrying advertisements convincing them (the middling sort) of a possibility to live life of higher standard. „Middle-class work and study required middle-class play and diversions. The eighteenth century will for ever be associated with the amusement of a fashionable oligarchical society, represented most notably in the prime of the first of the great spa towns. Yet Bath would have been a shadow of its Georgian self without its middle-class clientele.“³

³ Kenneth O'Morgan *The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain, updated edition for the 21st century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 393.

1.1.The Regency era

The era since 1795 till 1830 is called The Regency Era, an era that painted the background of Austen's novels.

The Regency Era was an important period in England, full of changes in social life widening the gap between the poor and the rich, full of gossips. During this era people saw the rise and fall of Napoleon along with political changes in France. Lord Byron became a famous celebrity with his romantic poetry; fashion was changing and improving; a new style of writing emerged. Charles Dickens and our dearest Jane Austen were publishing their social comments on the people and the social classes in their novels that were addressed to the public.

As mentioned in a previous paragraph, King George III. was the head of the country. He was a father to his fifteen children (!) with his wife Duchess Sophia Charlotte of Mecklenburg – Sterlitz. His son, George IV. (1762 – 1830), established as Prince Regent (called “Pinnie“), led an extravagant life filled with excesses and scandals. He was a gambler but his excesses helped to finance plans for reconstructing the buildings into regency style of London – the Brighton Pavilion and Mayfair still exists. He is well-known for having a scandalous life and for a love life full of mistresses. Marie Anne Fitzherbert was a mistress who he secretly married. She was already married twice; thus, they never had the consent of his father – the king. When he finally became king in 1820, he was in the centre of public scandals, with the fiasco - trying to prevent his wife to come to coronation – on the top. He married his cousin Caroline of Brunswick from an allowance of the Parliament. A divorce came later, unsuccessful for him since Caroline came out as the better one in popular opinions. King George IV. ruled the country for only nine years.

During his reign, Robert Peel initiated social and legal reforms. He was standing behind the establishment of the first police force in London. Catholic Reformation in 1829 gave Catholics the right to vote, to have seats in Parliament and to run for a public office.

During the Regency era the class system was strictly upheld by higher and older class, the Church and the Royals. But the social and the economic sphere were changing too, together with the starting Industrial Revolution. Bourgeoisie was improving and blossoming, people from this class were getting richer due to rising industries, which helped them achieve greater monetary rewards. An important fact to mention is also that the middle class was threatening the aristocracy – before the aristocrats were strictly respecting the code of etiquette, which was diverging them from the lower classes in

showing the distance between the classes. The hierarchy of the society was enforced and the people from lower classes were respecting them; were submissive and knew exactly how to show the correct way of respect towards wealthier classes.

Because of the impacts of Industrial Revolution, people were leaving countrysides in higher numbers than before to working factories. Expansion of urban centres caused the rise of slums and increased poverty in big cities. Moreover, an increase in the number of factories led to an increased pollution, mostly in London. Most problematic was smog from coal factories.

England started to be more powerful, more crowded under the George's short reign. Australia was also colonized, so there was an increase in trade. After George, his brother William IV. came to the throne (1830 -1837). After him, Queen Victoria followed her long reign – from 1837 till 1901.

In the following pages, we will turn to the works of Jane Austen and the analysis of the position of women in the middle class, the importance of leisure (fashion included), courtship, and most importantly, the significance of marriage.

2. What it feels like for a girl

Jane Austen's novels appear to be compact of abject truth. Their events are excruciatingly unimportant; and yet, with Robinson Crusoe, they will probably outlast all Fielding, Scott, George Elliot, Thackeray, and Dickens. The art is so consummate that the secret is hidden; peer at them as hard as one may; shake them; take them apart; one cannot see how it is done

Thornton Wilder, 1938

Have you ever wondered why Mrs. Bennet was so obsessed about marrying her daughters? Have you ever thought about what it must have felt like to be a girl or a young woman getting married and running her own household? Why do the heroines never tell us first how they feel about a man they love? Why have they never been working? And why was one of the most important things women care about fashion? One might assume that it must have been so enjoyable to be a girl, but today's girls would probably suffer in the Regency Era, the times and the world created by Jane Austen, regardless of whether there was a Mr. Darcy to save them with his unconditional love.

2.1. The rights of the married women

Married women had no right over their property till the end of the nineteenth century. After the wedding, a husband and a wife became one person by law so the wife's existence was integrated into her husband's personality. Of course, he could leave a will to his wife with all the property, but that would not be effective until his death or the end of the marriage. He took the responsibility for all her debts, before the marriage and during as well. Before Married Women's Property Act in 1884, married women were „femmes covert“ – a woman's personal property was automatically transferred and owned by her husband. Her whole property was under her husband's control but remained hers for inheritance purposes.

During their marriage, according to the real estates, she had no legal testamentary rights. The property gained before marriage became solely her husband's and he had also the right to leave it in a will. If her husband left a will or a permission, woman was able to gain the property she had before marriage back.

A good example is Henry Tilney – he was guaranteed to inherit property from his mother according to the aforementioned settlement and he could not be disinherited by his father. After the Married Women’s Property Act women could keep all their properties they owned before marriage and also during. Thanks to this act, married women’s property right was equal to the right of a single woman, and she as well could preserve her property that she was given as a gift by her parents.

Every mother’s priority in Regency Era was to ensure a beneficial engagement for her daughter and marry her daughter well. „Mr. Bennet’s property consisted almost entirely in an estate of two thousand a year, which, unfortunately for his daughters, was entailed in default of heirs male, on a distant relation; and their mother’s fortune, though ample for her situation in life, could but ill supply the deficiency of his. Her father had been an attorney in Meryton, and had left her four thousand pounds.“⁴ Her daughters could not inherit their own house and father’s estate because of a fee tail, which meant that the property could only pass through a male heir. Their closest male relative was Mr. Collins. Neither of the four daughters could inherit anything after Mr. Bennet’s death.

Property in old England was usually left to an individual, not spread between the relatives, because that would mean the land for example could lose its value. Another and similar type of law was a common law in which an estate could be left to its heir. If there was a property left to the first heir, for life, and then to the second one and his heirs. That means the first heir had a huge advantage in comparison with the second one, because he could keep the property forever. This was why Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters did not inherit anything and had to leave in *Sense and Sensibility*. „Daughters almost never inherit, of course, and, like the Bennets in *Pride and Prejudice* or the Dashwood sisters might even lose their home at their father’s death to a sometimes quite remote male relative, through the system of ‘entail’.“⁵

Getting married was not the difficult part; running the whole household afterwards was the challenge. Every landlady knew very well that her house had to be clean at all times and well-ordered to suit everybody’s tastes. A good management of a household is a real virtue and deserves much attention. Men were the fathers, the heads of their families, the authority; they were the owners with rights, among which was also the right to inherit. However, the control over domestic servants was usually the woman’s job. She was responsible and regarded as an authority in the household over other women.

⁴ Jane Austen *Pride and Prejudice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 20.

⁵ Jane Austen *Pride and Prejudice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 301.

It was also necessary to have an emotional connection with one's husband and a good economic basis to run the household effectively. For most people, marriage was an economic relationship. While marriage seemed to be a priority for every woman and valued as the basic social unit, the fact that around twenty five percent of women never married must not be overlooked. Marriage was one essential way for a woman to obtain her own household. Unmarried women – so-called spinsters - were sometimes kept in a family as housekeepers, nurses, carers for the elderly. Their position was more functional and practical rather than a burden – because of economic and demographic changes, high mortality, frequent illnesses; wives were having many children and spinsters were needed as caregivers in households.

The newly fashioned household belonging to middle classes was mostly the sphere of women – it was their job to create a warm house. Because good households kept servants, their rooms were separated from those of the family members. The kitchen was usually distanced (female servants), also bathrooms and bedrooms. Running a household is a very difficult job, even women from the twenty first century know that. The management, taking care of a child, housework and chores – that was not valued by others a lot, but women found this satisfying and considered it a great opportunity (yes, opportunity - not every woman got married).

2.2. The historical changes in life of women

Married women adapted their employment needs of the family, not vice versa. The essential and the most important feature of the Industrial Revolution in England between 1780-1830 was the use of the cheapest labour of women and children. Economists defined the objective of the development machines so that it was either a total replacement of a human labour, or replacement of male with female and the child labour. The saddest was the increase of abandoned babies in the years 1750 – 1900. Women worked outside the home in major cities in conjunction with the policy of absolutist rulers, in France in the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century, in Austria for the government of Joseph II., in Russia during the reign of Catherine; this led to a massive increase of orphanages. Agrarian revolution in England in the eighteenth century caused a demographic revolution, which reduced the age when entering into marriage and caused a decline in child deaths. These factors lead to significant population growth, changes in living standards. In the first

phase of industrialization men had a low salary and the wives and children even less. In the second phase, men's salaries increased significantly. But laws were changing too. In England in the years 1873 – 1925 the status of mother and father equalized, in 1882 married women gained the right to own property and earn income. In France, women gained the right to dispose of their income in 1907. Germany got rid of the prohibition of any wife to take a job just about fifty years ago – in 1957.

A social state started to be built. In 1890 in Europe, a four-week maternity leave was recommended. Child benefits have been paid in France by fathers of families with four or more children since 1913. At that time was also introduced the health insurance for domestic workers. But what is probably the most important, women in England could vote for the first time in 1928.

2.3. A daily life

It can be assumed the responsibilities and tasks of everyday life kept the leading ladies of the house quite busy. In the mornings, the first important thing for a lady of the house was to talk to her housekeeper about other maids and servants, making sure everybody was behaving in the correct way. If a family was expecting a visit, they were also discussing a meal for the dinner (to show off how great they were, those were typically unusual meals). Then it was necessary to check the bills, and if women were from higher society, they usually went for a visit.

During the afternoons, promenades for young girls from the middling sort became very popular; during these they had a chance to show their latest fashionable clothes and meet with their friends. And during the evenings, they usually went home to prepare the great dinner for their visitors, and after the dinner it was time to read, play an instrument or the cards.

2.4. The code of behaviour

Love, marriage and courtship are the central themes in Jane Austen's novels. When wondering why women were always so reserved, always polite to men (even if the biggest passion of love was burning inside them), they had to abide by the simple rules of

etiquette. Women had to be at their best behaviour at all times, so to speak. They were to show good manners and demonstrate intelligence but also their fidelity and commitment to their men; they knew they must protect their good reputation and have proper manners. To try and attract man's attention was something unacceptable for a girl, apart from a well presented behaviour. If a girl was showing too much interest and enthusiasm, she was exposed to the jokes of others and simply humiliating herself.

The rules of proper courtship were very specific – discrete conversations, no intimate touching, no intimate correspondence, no gift-giving. Couples were not allowed to stay alone together. Any small sign of interest showed openly in a public place could be understood into marital interests. Conversations were interpreted through gestures, blushing, smiling, tears, stares. How on earth could a girl get into a relationship and marry their partner with all these restrictions? Physical contact was restricted as well – no handshakes; the only intimate contact tolerable in public was walking and dancing. „If unmarried and under thirty, she is never to be seen in the company of a man without a chaperone. Except for a walk to church or a park in the early morning, she may not walk alone, but should always be accompanied by another lady, a man, or a servant. (Note: this would seem to have become a more general rule later in the century, as Austen's women are seen walking alone.) Under no circumstances may a lady call upon a gentleman alone unless she is consulting that gentleman on a professional or business matter. A lady does not wear pearls or diamonds in the morning. A lady never dances more than three dances with the same partner. A lady should never "cut" someone, that is to say, fail to acknowledge their presence after encountering them socially, unless it is absolutely necessary. By the same token, only a lady is ever truly justified in cutting someone.“⁶

Corresponding with a man was too obvious and it usually meant there is an attraction. For example Marianne desperately wrote to Willoughby - she never told anybody about their relationship, but others already knew – and Elinor saw that Willoughby gave her a horse and she gave him a lock of her hair in return.

If there was a strong feeling between a „couple“, then the next step was the proposal. Men were usually asking for permission from parents first – this was the best possible way, because when they agreed, they could arrange the meeting and private atmosphere for proposing. But sometimes to propose to somebody is not a good solution. If a man asked parents for permission, but the lady did not want to marry him, it was her job to refuse him

⁶ Niceties and Courtesies: Manners and Customs in the time of Jane Austen<<http://chuma.cas.usf.edu/~runge/MasonJA1.html>>.

sensitively. An engagement was usually like a contract and a gentleman could not break the promise to marry the lady, such as Edward in *Sense and Sensibility* did not want to leave Lucy, even when he did not love her, but wanted to stay loyal.

2.5. Clothes make a woman

Fashion was always important for women, and also for the characters in Austen's books. Clothes in the Regency era were lighter, mostly simpler than in previous decades, as for example in *Rococo*. Fabrics were plain, and due to the Grecian inspiration the waistline was below the bosom. This style was very typical, and if you saw the movies, you clearly saw the same style women were wearing. The waistline was usually tightened by a bow, at the back. Ladies who wanted to wear the proper fashion, were usually wearing long-sleeved jackets and they were cut beneath the bosom. Or they used to wear pelisses – again long-sleeved jackets cut in three quarters down due to the length of the skirt. This was the only time – era from mid 1790s -1820, between the middle ages and the late nineteenth century, when women were not wearing tight corsets so much, or wearing full skirts, crinolines, or hoop skirts. This style is till these days more acceptable and looks still more like a wearing less under the clothes than for example in the Victorian Era. Women were wearing clothes which did not restrict them in movement, and even ladies from the middle class were still looking fashionable. Hemlines were not shorter than few centimetres or inches above the ankles, but most of the time longer. That is why Elizabeth had dirty skirt from the mud on her way to visit ill Jane.

A Regency woman was usually changing her clothes six times a day (!). It must not forget to mention that women during the eighteenth century were wearing a lot of layers under their clothes – chemises, skirt hoops, stockings, corsets. Thanks to the Regency era, some parts of the clothes were not obliged and so the underclothes were not heavy. A simple chemise with corset remained, which served for raising the bust, accompanied by a petticoat. The long figure was fashionable in a simple dress with no large underclothes, of course the petticoat never disappeared from the wardrobe of women.

Walking dresses were an essential component of any lady's wardrobe – used for mostly appearances and to look well on other dresses, worn mostly on promenades. Each walking dress was different depending on the season and the resort where a Regency woman

stayed. An important part was also the cover of the head – mostly bonnets and hats, and gloves. Of course during these days having an afternoon dress is not usual. We do not own dresses for promenade (but mostly for showing special fancy clothes in night clubs as a lot of women do). Most women had dresses for special occasions; a dress for an afternoon tea at a friend's house; a dress for a wedding; a dress for an afternoon stroll; etc.

Evening dresses looked fancier than daily dresses. Because clothes were usually hand – made, their prices were higher. How did women know what the latest trend in fashion was? Women these days usually read Vogue or Elle to know the current trends. Women during Jane Austen's times were usually reading fashion magazines like *The Lady's Magazine* and *The Gallery of Fashion*. *The Lady's Magazine* was a popular journal of fashion, fiction, news, and was popular from 1770 to 1832. This magazine together with other magazines were feeding a culture of women based on material culture, it was showing the latest pictures and trends in fashion for women. The magazines were usually issued in paper bound covers, and every month they included also fashion plates. Interesting thing is that some women cut some pages from the magazines into scrapbooks, important to be kept. The prints were hand-coloured, usually drawn by young girl artists who were colouring their faces.

One of the most important things to mention is the bridal gowns. A lot of people guess what the bride-to-be and as well princess-to-be will be wearing. The bridal dresses were not always white. For her wedding in 1840, Queen Victoria wore the most beautiful dress she owned. During regency times it was typical for middle classes or lower classes to wear their best gowns for a wedding, and also to wear them thereafter (special occasions or to the church). Before the nineteenth century, brides were usually wearing gowns of different colours, and the gowns were also more practical – it allowed for the newly weds to leave immediately. During the times Jane Austen was alive, the most popular colour of the wedding dress was red. But because the trends in fashion were changing, the colours of the dresses were changing too.

In early nineteenth century the most popular colour was yellow, during Regency also green, blue and pink. For the brides from middle classes or lower classes the practical colours of dresses were dark brown and black. Because they were wearing dresses after the wedding, the darker colours were more practical, mostly for one basic reason – on the dark fabric the dirt did not show up as on the white dress of just lighter colour. Fashion for choose a wedding dress changed in the middle of the nineteenth century because of industrial made clothes and fabrics and thus it was more cheaper.

White gowns were worn by the upper classes already, but Queen Victoria changed the wedding fashion forever. After their wedding (with Prince Albert), the Picture of Victoria in the wedding gown was well known and dresses began to be made in a white colour.

In the next chapters I will focus on the selected works that I have decided to describe – in the *Pride and Prejudice* it will be marriage of main characters, in *Northanger Abbey* the leisure time, reading, and coming of age and in *Sense and Sensibility* the courtship.

3. Northanger Abbey

But when a young lady is to be a heroine, the perverseness of forty surrounding families cannot prevent her. Something must and will happen to throw a hero in her way.

Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey

The novel has characteristics of a gothic novel, a comedy, and educates us on how not to act when we have no experience with manipulative people. The original manuscript was called *Susan* and it was sold in 1803 by reverend Austen to Richard Crosby & Co.

The places Catherine Morland visited in the book are still there today. The place where she met Isabella and John was the Pump Room, the place where people were meeting (or watching and gossiping), people were spending their afternoons here socializing and flirting. „As soon as divine service was over, the Thorpes and Allens eagerly joined each other; and after staying long enough in the Pump-room to discover that the crowd was insupportable, and that there was not a genteel face to be seen, which every body discovers every Sunday throughout the season, they hastened away to the Crescent, to breathe the fresh air better company. Here Catherine and Isabella, arm in arm, again tasted the sweets of friendship in an unreserved conversation.“⁷

3.1. Balls and dancing

Evening events - balls – usually took place in Upper and Lower Rooms where Catherine met Henry Tilney for the first time. Shopping was important as well, mostly on Milsom Street, where girls went shopping for new hats, fabrics or ribbons. „Do you know, I saw the prettiest hat you can imagine, in a shop window in Milsom-street just now.“⁸ Bath was a popular place to where people usually travelled for months outside the cities; it was probably the most popular city outside London. It was also a stopover for everybody who wanted to improve their health and people went there more for the water than for the baths in spas. Assembly Room at Bath, a magnificent building which stood from 1770s till their destruction in the second world war in 1942, was built for public dances.

⁷ Jane Austen *Northanger Abbey* (London: Everyman's Library, 1992) 24.

⁸ Jane Austen *Northanger Abbey* (London: Everyman's Library, 1992) 28.

Balls were very important for young girls; it was where they could meet their potential partner. Planning and dressing up for a ball was one of the most important parts for girls; they took their time getting ready to look their best during the event. „I shall make a poor figure in your journal to-morrow’. ‘My journal!’ ‘Yes, I know exactly what will you say: Friday, went to the Lower Rooms; wore my sprigged muslin robe with blue trimmings – plain black shoes – appeared to much advantage; but was strangely harassed by a queer, half-witted man, who would make me dance with him, and distressed me by his nonsense.’ ‘Indeed I shall say no such thing.’ ‘Shall I tell you what you ought to say?’ ‘I danced with a very agreeable young man, introduced by Mr. King; had a great deal of conversation with him - seems a most extraordinary genius – hope I may know more of him. *That*, madam, is what I *wish* you to say.’⁹

„Dancing assemblies“ or public balls became more popular than ever before mostly during both revolutions in France and America. It was Jane who brought ballroom scenes to life and showed their importance in *Pride and Prejudice* as well as in *Sense and Sensibility*. Dances used to be more bouncy and lively, not smooth and slow as you can see in the movies. A very important element was asking the lady to dance, who decided which type of dance will be danced with its steps and which music will play. Others were usually listening to the call of the dance master or observing the leading couple and their steps and joined in. There was no possibility to call out through the whole hall what the upcoming dance is or to remember every sequence of the dance. A long dance usually meant a lot of standing and waiting and presented a great opportunity to converse (or to be pressured to talk, who knows) to the partner.

An English country dance was replaced by more elegant styles imported from Europe, mostly France. The French import, Cotillion, was performed in a square, consisting of fully-fashioned footwork and series of ten “changes“. Waltz was important as well but was not accepted by society from the beginning until the post Napoleonic wars; in fact, it was an object of jokes at first. It also included very intimate contact with the dancing partner as opposed to the other styles. The English regency version was much slower. Another import from France was quadrille – it was a shorter version of the older cotillion. This was set into five sometimes six figures, changes were not used, and the dances were slower. It generally consisted of the same first three figures in combination with a different set of four and five figures. After Quadrille came other dances but most of them included similar

⁹ Jane Austen *Northanger Abbey* (London: Everyman’s Library, 1992) 16.

steps. The new names were Danse Eccossaise and Danse Espagnole; a few of them became so popular, they survived through the whole nineteenth century. Scotch reel and La Buoulangere was another famous genre danced in simple circles. A „Spanish dance“ is the only survivor of its genre from regency dances.

How did women style their hair? What was the beautifying process that preceded a ball? Girls should be thankful to whom ever invented make-up, hair straighteners and Coco Chanel or introduced a fashion style without corsets! What were girls and women usually doing in their preparation to dance the night away?

„Dress was her passion. She had a most harmless in being fine; and our heroine’s entrée into life could not take place till after three or four days had been spent in learning what was mostly worn, and her chaperon was provided with a dress of the newest fashion. Catherine too made some purchase herself, and when all these matters were arranged, the important evening came which was to usher her into the Upper Rooms. Her hair was cut and dressed by the best hand, her clothes put on with care.“¹⁰ Women were usually soaking in a hot tub, sometimes in and out of cold one. But remember, an ordinary bath in a tub was not simple – water had to be heated and one bucket was carried to the bedroom or dressing room after another until the tub was filled. If a family had maids, they were helping with the preparations – putting hair into the curling papers *hours* earlier (it was similar to today’s hair curlers); then they were combing and braiding the hair into an actual hairstyle, helping with pins and jewellery or any headwear. Depending on the age of a girl, powder was used on her face as make up. Maids helped with dressing the girls, with putting on their chemise, gowns, and tightening corsets. Jewellery was important, too; bracelets, earrings, necklaces all had to match.

3.2. Leisure time

It is interesting what the heroines of this era could do. They could play cards, read books, talk to each other, play a musical instrument. Sports existed, too. The predecessor of today’s badminton was very popular, as well as chess and cricket. It is quite interesting that some ladies were brave enough to practice hunting with men or rode horses sitting on the side. Some of us might find going for a walk rather boring, but it wasn’t dull for the girls of those times. Regency girls were going for long walks or took small trips to the

¹⁰ Jane Austen *Northanger Abbey* (London: Everyman’s Library, 1992) 10.

brughams. It cannot be forget to mention the ice skating, swimming, sketching or painting; and indoor activities such as reading, running a household, playing an instrument or making the lavender water from fresh flowers.

Catherine's most favourite free time activity was reading. „Have you gone on with Udolpho? 'Yes, I have been reading it ever since I woke; and I am got to the black veil. Oh! I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life in reading it.'"¹¹ Catherine's naivety towards Isabella is shown here. She does not see that she is a fake girl merely using her, manipulating and forcing her to do things Catherine did not want to do for herself. Catherine never encountered such behaviour before and did not know how she was supposed to react. She cannot get her mind off the images of skeletons from *Mysteries of Udolpho*. For example, when she learns she is going to Northanger Abbey, her imagination starts to work even more – she is expecting dark corridors, mysterious hidden rooms, and a skeleton of Mrs. Tilney who may have killed her husband, general Tilney. I guess Catherine fell in love with the mysteries because she never liked reading a lot, and because Isabella was (from Catherine's point of view) nice to her and her new best friend. I think she was trying to take a fancy. I think she was happy having a good friend in a new place, but as we know, she was really naive about her character, she was probably the only one who could not see what Isabella is like, but Catherine valued having a new friend.

3.3. Coming of age

A young, naive Catherine never thought she could end up being married to a man her heart chose and that it would be the first man she was introduced to. She came from a family of a clergyman; they were not very rich but had enough money to send their daughter to the Bath with their friends: a young girl her age should be attending balls and starting to be introduced to young men. Well, a young girl, who did not have an opportunity to converse did not have an opportunity to amaze a young man. Not knowing how to properly approach a man or converse with him, it was not surprising that she would return from a ball bored and complaining it was dull as she was not able to meet anyone.

As it was mentioned in the first chapter, Austen and her family spent some time in Bath and that was the place that inspired her. *Northanger Abbey* is a satiric novel, but again, we

¹¹ Jane Austen *Northanger Abbey* (London: Everyman's Library, 1992) 28-29.

have in the centre our main character, Catherine Morland. But we can see her role is different from Lizzy's, Marianne's or Elinor's. Catherine is a naive young girl who does not understand what *exactly* it is that others are trying to tell her. „The progress of their friendship between Catherine and Isabella was quick as its beginning had been warm, and they passed so rapidly through every gradation of increasing tenderness, that there was shortly no fresh proof of it to be given to their friends or themselves. Alas! If the heroine of one novel be not patronized by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard?“¹²

Reading improves your language skills, broadens your knowledge of literature and history, helps you create new opinions, understand people better and predict their behaviour. And that is what Catherine was missing. You will not improve without reading novels or by reading a book of low quality. How can you expect to be able to communicate or read between the lines when your information is based on books that everyone else is making fun of and regards as a joke. It is obvious Jane Austen created here a parody of gothic genre and teaches young girls how to behave and live up to the expectations of society. The reader can see Catherine is everything but a heroine – not *that* pretty, not skilled in anything, has problems to attract a man and is friends with a very doubtful Thorpe siblings. She thinks everything is good and all the situations which normal to others are supernatural to her. What I love here is that even though Austen mocks gothic novels, the book is still unique and it is impossible not to fall in love with this story.

Gothic genre usually puts the reader to the dark old castles, puts him into mysterious chambers and corridors and shows him supernatural situations. Through mystery and tension a reader becomes one of the characters of these books. The plot is usually frightening, scaring the reader, forcing him to examine the situations and people around him, and once a reader becomes addicted to the plot he or she sees everything as supernatural around him. And that was Catherine's problem – examining all the things around her, having a feeling she is part of something huge, but her real problem was bad Isabella's influence who was more experienced, but according to the books just plain and stupid. I guess her main problem was that she was relying on the elders who had more experience with society. She appreciated their wisdom and good will. This is obviously the problem of inexperienced young seventeen year old girls who are coming of age and have to learn to trust in themselves and pick the best possible friends who are as truthful to you

¹² Jane Austen *Northanger Abbey* (London: Everyman's Library, 1992) 26.

as you are to them. I think every girl has a problem from the beginning but as she is growing, she is learning to make her own opinions about others. Her role is to read between the lines, understand what exactly others are trying to tell her.

It is very obvious that all Jane Austen's books have women as main characters, *not men*; she always worked with the same structure or formula – a heroine, refusing love, behaving politely, refusing the traditional ways of finding a husband. They overcome obstacles that society creates and despite them all they do find the man of their dreams whom they marry in the end. Jane was not an ordinary boring writer – she was inventive, open to new literary techniques – and even when you read three of her books, you find each of them is different and unique in its own way.

Elinor and Lizzy were clever, mature heroines; Catherine, on the other hand, is a simple young woman from a family of five children. As Tomalin says, a heroine of Jane Austen's books is not a so by any of the usual rules of fiction; she is neither clever nor beautiful, she is without accomplishments or admirers, just an ordinary girl, one of ten children from a family of a plain country clergyman.¹³

Catherine is coming of age, becoming a young woman, trying to be nice and polite to everybody she is introduced to, without knowing the other person may be a fool. Catherine's character was mostly used as a joke through which Austen was making fun of and satirizing Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*; she again did not create a heroine typical for gothic novels – beautiful, astonishing, clever girl, but ordinary, not that pretty and not so smart. Catherine matured throughout the book. Having a great imagination sometimes makes her a foolish person. Because she is ingenious, never been to a ball or a social event of such kind, she does not understand others' behaviour, she does not know who is being polite to her or judges her based on her background. But as she is maturing, she is learning and starting to understand how society works and that not always are people nice to others.

Her character is not typical. She wants to go to the Bath to meet her future husband but only because her parents want her to go; they know she is inexperienced. Her role is to learn how not to be a child; she must become a young woman who thinks rationally and realistically. Her role for me is similar to Marianne – in a childish way.

Catherine is always reading, living in her imaginary world, not understanding that some people are manipulative. I guess that her attitude towards gothic novels shows us she

¹³ See Claire Tomalin *Jane Austen – A Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999)165.

is still a little girl who has to learn to stop reading them and who must start to read more mature books. I think she needs to improve her social skills and understand the ‚art‘ of reading people. Coming of age also means learning to read between the lines. But *everybody* in the age of seventeen is more childish, unable to understand what adults are talking about. But yes, being seventeen is also the age when a young lady has to learn to be responsible.

Being able to read between the lines in metaphorical sense also means predicting behaviour of others, their motivations and characteristics. It is obvious that readers understand from the beginning what these people really like but Catherine does not. The main heroine is trustful but not stupid. She cannot avoid thinking of Isabella’s real character which is later confirmed with her letter. Thanks to a good friend, Eleanor Tilney, and the truthful words of Henry who also loved *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and admitted that ‚the person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid. I have read all Mrs. Radcliffe’s works, and most of them with great pleasure. ‘The Mysteries of Udolpho’, when I had once begun it, I could not lay down again; - I remember finishing it in two days – my hair standing on end the whole time.’¹⁴

¹⁴ Jane Austen *Northanger Abbey* (London: Everyman’s Library, 1992) 97.

4. Sense and Sensibility (...by a Lady)

You will be glad to hear that every copy of Sense and Sensibility is sold and that it has brought me £140 besides the copyright, if that should ever be of value.

Jane Austen, 3 July 1813

It is not surprising that the Dashwood sisters came from a middling sort. The novel has two interesting aspects – firstly, it was more closely concerned with social problems and manners than any other literary work and secondly, it was a product of middle class where Jane Austen lived. Her family was of the rural kind and her father was a clergyman. A historian Paul Johnson wrote in his book about Jane that her family was not that poor – they were lower aristocracy and did not live in bad conditions.

Mobility between gentry and the rural professional classes was normal, as only the eldest son of a landowning family could inherit the estate (by a law known as a „primogeniture“); the army and the church were common destinations for younger sons. Sisters Dashwoods’ brother John - he married Fanny Ferrars and was supposed to inherit everything - promised his father to make his sisters comfortable. „Well, then, *let* something be done for them; but *that* something need not be three thousand pounds. Consider,“ she added, „that when the money is once parted with, it never can return. Your sisters will marry, and it will be gone for ever. If, indeed, it could ever be restored to our poor little boy...“¹⁵ Money is one of the central themes of this novel.

4.1. The Courtship, Sense and Sensibility

The first word that should come to a reader’s mind after reading Sense and Sensibility is “courtship“. This whole novel is about struggles of young girls falling in love, about courtship, deep hidden feelings and broken hearts. Qualities that make Austen’s novel appealing to a large audience of readers from her times till these days are still continually appreciated. Her characters are individuals and the reader cannot exactly tell how the character will behave in certain situations. The readers are getting to know the characters

¹⁵ Jane Austen *Sense and Sensibility* (Mumbai: Wilco Publishing House, 2007) 7.

page after page, thus we can relate to our favourite character and then somehow predict their behaviour.

The words in the title of book “sense“ and “sensibility“ represent also the leading question who stands for sense and for sensibility? These two stand together as both older Dashwood sisters Elinor and Marianne. Elinor represents the qualities of the older, rational, responsible and sensible one. Marianne is representative of sensibility – she is emotional, impulsive, devoted. Marianne did not hide her feelings for John Willoughby. Elinor, on the other hand, hides her feelings for Edward Ferrars. Their two different personalities show different attitudes towards men and love.

Austen wrote this novel at the turn of the century, between two cultural movements – classicism and romanticism. It is possible to see in the character of Elinor classicism, associated with her balance, rationality, judgment. She is practical, loyal to her mother and family, never loses her mind,. On the other side, Marianne shows us the typical features of Romanticism – she is sensitive, impulsive, idealistic, nature – loving. However, we cannot forget that Elinor is not the only one who ignores her passions and sensitive character, and Marianne does not always follow her heart foolishly. It needs to be in balance, or you will end like Fanny close to the end of the novel, where she was too passionate about protecting her brother’s best interests.

What was the role of courtship in this novel? Why did Jane Austen write this book? Why did she create two characters so different and yet so similar, sharing the same family? The novel is about more than just sense and sensibility. It also shows us where too much sense can take us: Elinor to a nervous breakdown and Marianne’s near-death experience from being too sensitive, showing everybody how she feels. Courtship for them was something new that they have never experienced before.

Jane Austen was demonstrating in the *Sense and Sensibility* what will happen if you are refusing social conventions of manners or if you are not showing anything. To tell exactly if Jane was Mary’s supporter is not easy. One thing is easy – both women were not scared to write about women, with the former showing us the inner emotional world of heroines.

Courtship in this beautiful book is very interesting. Hierarchical and social conventions were pushing the characters to make proposals based on money, taking into consideration the financial background of the family.

4.2. Elinor

Many families placed much importance on the wealth of the potential partner. It was one of the major topics of conversations even though talking about the future partner himself was more interesting. Elinor was the type of a young nineteen – year – old girl who was the eldest sister helping her mother and taking care of younger sisters. The character of Elinor is the type of person any girl can relate to. Having overcome all the obstacles, she could finally marry her Edward. But what preceded this? Was it love at first sight? Interpretation of Elinor's feelings towards Edward, her behaviour and hidden emotions are in contrast with Marianne's. Both girls experienced different obstacles on their way towards happiness. Elinor fell in love with Edward, never showing anyone she loved him, how much she enjoyed their moments together. She was the type of a girl, who is more quiet, does not talk too much, does not show her immediate interest – because what would others say about her inappropriate behaviour? Elinor's romantic interests are more socially acceptable than Marianne's. „I venture to pronounce that his mind is well-informed, enjoyment of books exceedingly great, his imagination lively, his observation just and correct, and his taste delicate and pure.“¹⁶

She is also different from her sister when it comes to the social etiquette. While Marianne is ignoring good manners, Elinor is strictly driven by what is acceptable for a girl of her origin. One might imagine she is obsessed with the severe social conventions of behaviour, refuses to be too emotional, tries not to embarrass her family. She is a girl with a restricted source of money; it is not easy to be in such a position. Money runs the world; the society tells you if you are to be in a relationship with somebody else. Elinor always told people what was polite and always put other's feelings ahead of her own. She was a good obedient and helpful daughter always loyal to her closest relatives. Romantic connection and platonic interaction together with disappointment in love shows Elinor in a different way than Marianne. She did not tell even the fact Lucy Steele was engaged to Edward for four years! „ 'Twill be a fine thing to have her married so young, to be sure, said she, „and I hear he is quite a beau, and prodigious handsome. And I hope you may have as good luck yourself soon, - but perhaps you may have a friend in the corner already.“ The letter F – had been likewise invariably brought forward, and found

¹⁶ Jane Austen *Sense and Sensibility* (Mumbai: Wilco Publishing House, 2007) 16.

productive of such countless jokes, that its character as the wittiest letter in the alphabet had been long established with Elinor.¹⁷

By keeping her sorrow to herself and not being a burden to her family, Elinor was doing what society expected of her. But what else should a girl in her position do? Slap Lucy in the face and yell at her? Tell Fanny she is arrogant, snobbish, and evil who constantly plays against her sisters and mother? Elinor was not in a position to be able to do whatever she liked. She did not have enough money and so she was to be modest and silent when the rich were speaking.

4.3. Marianne

Marianne understands very well how a girl of her position should behave, but she refuses to conform to these norms. She refuses to be conservative, and does not show any interest in Willoughby; instead, she chooses to share her joy and excitement in a form of platonic love. Her conversation, new relationship to a man are leading her to ignoring of moderate rules society wants from her, towards almost childish acting, without thinking of the consequences. If somebody fell in love with someone too quickly, too deeply, you might end up hurt, *that* is the rule.

She is showing her sensibility, her imbalanced character; she was, after all, just a seventeen – year – old girl, still a child. Nevertheless, in the view of those days' society, she was a young woman ready to get married. As it was mentioned before, both girls were going through periods of sorrow, but Marianne was the one who could not pretend to be happy and calm when she was not. She was demonstrating it when, for example Colonel Brandon, her admirer, entered the room or when she was not in the mood; she just was not talking. It is difficult to tell whether her behaviour was childish or whether she was simply refusing the strict norms whereby you are to „pretend you are fine even though you feel like jumping off a cliff the next day“ – was she acting naturally? When she was enjoying the company of Willoughby, she was acting just the way she felt, hiding nothing, having fun and sharing her passion, being in love with a potential future husband.

When Willoughby refused her in a letter, she was not hiding her true feelings as Elinor was: „No, no,“ cried Marianne, “misery such as mine has no pride. I care not knows that I am wretched. The triumph of seeing me so may be open to all the world. Elinor, Elinor,

¹⁷ Jane Austen *Sense and Sensibility* (Mumbai: Wilco Publishing House, 2007) 117.

they who suffer little may be proud and independent as they like – may resist insult, or return mortification – but I cannot. I must feel – I must be wretched – and they are welcome to enjoy the consciousness of it that can. I would do more than for my own. But to appear happy when I am so miserable – Oh! Who can require it?¹⁸

When Elinor found out about Edward's engagement which lasted for four years, she did not show anything, no pity, because she was taking care of her family, she was protecting them. Marianne, on the other hand, was not scared to show her true feelings about anything. The way in which one deals with difficult situations depends on their character. One may cry for days and nights, hiding himself from the rest of the world in a protective shell. Someone else may be suffering from cancer and be the most positive person in the world, joking and making everyone around him laugh.

Marianne shares her inner world with people around her. She may give the impression of a hasty person, but that is only one of her characteristics. Falling in love with Willoughby was her first experience with the sentiment of love and she was not afraid to share her joy with the rest of the world no matter what other people would think about her. Austen is showing us a decorum of courtship and of how somebody should not behave. Marianne is representing a girl who cannot work and earn money to make a living, so she has to wait for a husband to support her and assure her a good position in the society. Also Elinor represents her social group, but in a different way. She hides her true feelings and the reader is not sure about Edward's feelings towards her till the end of the book because of the lack of conversations between the two of them. Here we can see how important it was for a girl her social class to get married. The decorum says a girl cannot show any feelings, must always be polite and respect the elderly and the wealthy.

Marianne's romantic behaviour which may look hysteric at times, is also portrayed as unrealistic and weak in contrast with Elinor and her diplomatic personality. Marianne falls victim to her romantic feelings, finding herself ill and having a near-death experience. She became emotionally but mostly physically ill and suffered from a crazy little thing called love. But still she recovered, realized she had to change her manners and start to behave more maturely. „I have formed my plan, and am determined to enter on a course of serious study. Our own library is too well known to me to be resorted to for any thing beyond mere amusement. But there are many works well worth reading at the Park, and there are others of more modern production which I know I can borrow of Colonel Brandon. By reading

¹⁸ Jane Austen *Sense and Sensibility* (Mumbai: Wilco Publishing House, 2007) 175.

only six hours a day, I shall gain the course of a twelvemonth a great deal of instruction which I now feel myself to want."¹⁹ Finally Marianne turned into a more rational woman, better emotionally controlled. Her marriage to Colonel Brandon is based on sense; love appeared between them later, only after marriage.

Was Elinor always diplomatic and a strict follower of her rational side even when she was suffering from rejection? The courtship between her and Edward was different than Marianne's, but both girls wanted to marry their "lovers" from pure love, not for material property they were (not) owning. Was Elinor's rational philosophy working? „But Elinor, how are *her* feelings to be described? From the moment of learning that Lucy was married to another, that Edward was free, to the moment of his justifying the hopes which had so instantly followed, she was everything by turns but tranquil. But when the second moment had passed – when she found every doubt, every solicitude removed – compared her situation with what so lately it had been – saw him honorably released from his former engagement – saw him instantly profiting by the release, to address herself and declare an affection as tender, as constant as she had ever supposed it to be – she was oppressed, she was overcome by her own felicity, and happily disposed as is the human mind to be easily familiarised with any change for the better, it required several hours to give sedateness to her spirits, or any degree of tranquility to her heart."²⁰

Jane Austen did not let readers down – she was able to again mock the romantic, ideal, perfect love through Marianne and her manners. She was criticizing Colonel for being older, not married, a man who had already loved somebody else before he and was not sharing the joy of life. After learning Willoughby is the evil one, selfish and egoistic, Marianne felt emotionally stronger, more calm and mature. She may be also an example of somebody who is likes to idealize love and marriage too much for their own good. Courtship between her and Willoughby failed; her idealistic love failed and let her down. The role of courtship for a woman is important, but we have to always stay down to earth and not let our emotions absorb us; we must not lose our sense and our mind. Elinor's position was relative to her character, the social class she belonged to asked her to always behave at her best and hope for a good marriage. Every woman is hoping to find big passionate love, to date the perfect guy who will treat them the right way but we must never forget to think rationally; we should never be driven crazy by the object of our

¹⁹ Jane Austen *Sense and Sensibility* (Mumbai: Wilco Publishing House, 2007) 321.

²⁰ Jane Austen *Sense and Sensibility* (Mumbai: Wilco Publishing House, 2007) 340.

feelings. Austen shows us on Elinor, the main heroine, that whatever can happen, she is always prone to lose her true emotions and behave selfishly as Marianne did.

5. There's something about Lizzie

A lady's imagination is very rapid; it jumps from admiration to love, from love to matrimony in a moment.

Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice

It is pretty challenging to introduce a brilliant piece of literature more than 200 years old such as Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Lizzie Bennet and Mr. Darcy became two most popular characters in the history of literature. They have created one of the most beautiful couples in literature, competing with tragic Romeo and Juliet (no offence, William Shakespeare).

Many people saw a film or tv show about based on Jane Austen's stories –*Pride and Prejudice* for example. Even if somebody have never read a book - people still recognize the name. Indeed, Mr. Darcy from Austen's novel and Mark Darcy from *Bridget Jones' Diary* are two very similar characters, Mark Darcy being among the favourite contemporary prince charming figures in the view of women of the 21st century.

Jane Austen has delighted generations of readers. She knew exactly how to use language, when to use proper descriptions and which language should be used for which person coming from a different social class. There is no need to describe the plot of *Pride and Prejudice*; more important are human relationships and especially the role of Lizzie and her girlfriends and their place in marriage, courtship, and money matters.

5.1. Marriage

Marriage is the key word of this novel. Marriage was important in every novel, but nowhere as prevalent as in *Pride and Prejudice*. Lizzie's mother was obsessed with the idea of her daughter marrying a wealthy man; or any man for that matter. „She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news.“²¹ It is her, who is pushing her daughters to meet new young men, pushing her own child to marry silly Mr. Collins.

²¹ Jane Austen, *The Pride and Prejudice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 3.

This novel starts with a fact. The reason is to provide us the main theme of the novel. „It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in a want of a wife.“²² In the next few lines, Mrs. Bennet shows more of her comic, possessive character: „Oh! Single, my dear! To be sure! A single man of a large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!“²³

Women could not usually decide who they wanted to marry, they could be happy they are married to anyone, and their social status was no longer labeled as a „single girl“. For girls to be accepted socially, marriage was basically the only way to achieve social security and social recognition. It is necessary to remember how society in Britain worked. As it was mentioned in the first chapter, the middling sort created about twenty percent of population, and that meant a lot of competition among women of this class with women from upper classes who had better opportunities to get married. We cannot forget how the situation changed from middle ages till 1800 – it was normal before that parents were agreeing with the marriage, while in the eighteenth century it was starting to be normal that the lovers were deciding who they wanted to marry.

The influence of the middling sort was becoming more and more significant. But we have to remember that the middle class was divided into few sub-classes. Probably the most interesting part of *Pride and Prejudice* are its contrasts.

5.2. Prejudices and pride

And what about pride? What about prejudice? Austen had reasons for using these two words in the title. I have started this chapter talking about marriage, which is important indeed, but what about that which proceeds marriage? It is very typical in any love story that two lovers have to overcome obstacles – thank God Austen is showing the people the way with an ironic feel, without giving the impression of sweet Danielle Steel – like story (where people can easily predict how the book will end after having read the first chapter). The obstacles come in several forms, mainly in the form of Mrs. Bennet’s idiocy, Lady Catherine De Burgh’s snobbery, Caroline’s arrogance, Lydia’s degrading behaviour. It is the pride and the prejudice that are keeping the characters of higher class in their respected positions (but not morally respected) and Bennets in the lower class, with less respected positions, where everybody knows their positions in the society. „In considering of

²² Jane Austen, *The Pride and Prejudice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 1.

²³ Jane Austen, *The Pride and Prejudice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 1.

relationships of the heroines and the heroes, it is important to emphasize the material factor which conditions, inhibits, and confuses it – that of money. A „good“ marriage, in the society Jane Austen depicts, is always one which enhances status, and status is primarily a matter of wealth.²⁴

However, everybody is supposed to be equal. But supposed still does not mean that it *is*. Mr. Darcy cannot stand Lizzie's mother and the rest of the family except for Jane, Lizzie cannot stand Darcy's snobbery. These two words – pride and prejudice are the obstacles the two had to pass. But not just them, for example let us consider Mr. Bingley and Jane – he fell in love with Jane the moment he saw her/ Jane was lucky: she was a nice, good looking girl who charmed the young rich man.. The only thing that was her disadvantage was her social status and the only thing she could do was to hope Mr. Bingley will not listen to his sister was against their marriage.

The role of women and their desperate desire to marry a man is countered by Austen in the form of Lizzie's opinions. She obviously does not belong to the mentioned group and is more of a matchmaker and helper to her sister. Lizzie rejects Mr. Darcy for his behaviour and disapproval of the relationship between Jane and Mr. Bingley. Austen tried to show her readers that it does not matter if women are single, it does not matter if a rich man wants to propose to you, as long as he acts immoral, you *can* reject him. It does not mean the end of the world if you stay single for a little longer, you do not have to marry the first guy who proposes if it means that you will end up in a marriage with somebody you do not love, only because of his fortune.

„I see what you are feeling,“ replied Charlotte, - „you must be surprised, very much surprised, - so lately as Mr. Collins was wishing to marry you. But when you have had time to think it all over, I hope you will be satisfied with what I have done. I am not romantic you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state.“²⁵ Charlotte is the example of a woman who was a burden to her family in her late twenties. She is also a prototype of what women considered a good marriage, good connections, and proper household. Charlotte and Mr. Collins' marriage was a result of a coincidence in a way. One woman rejected him and so he was trying to find another wife to run his household. Charlotte accepted his marriage proposal because she knew she will be more

²⁴ Christopher Gillie *A Preface to Jane Austen* (New York: Longman Group, 1985) 121.

²⁵ Jane Austen, *The Pride and Prejudice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 96.

respected by others and her family as a married woman. We can see here the differing opinions of two good friends – one is rejecting patrimony because she is refusing to marry somebody she is not in love with; the other is a realistic woman, who sees marriage as a great opportunity to earn a better standard of living.

The relationship between Lizzie and Mr. Darcy was from Lizzie's point of view very Cinderella-like. It should not matter that you fell in love with him despite a very bad first impression of him. The actions of Mr. Darcy are demonstrative of his noble character and true love for Lizzie; his confessions in the last chapter sum it up quite well: „But your family owe me nothing. Much as I respect them, I believe I thought only of you." Elizabeth was too much embarrassed to say a word. After a short pause, her companion added, "You are too generous to trifle with me. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. My affections and wishes are unchanged, but one word from you will silence me on this subject for ever." Elizabeth, feeling all the more than common awkwardness and anxiety of his situation, now forced herself to speak; and immediately, though not very fluently, gave him to understand that her sentiments had undergone so material a change, since the period to which he alluded, as to make her receive with gratitude and pleasure his present assurances."²⁶

The inner world of the characters is in evolution, constantly changing, finding new things that are important for their next psychological move. The plot develops as the characters are getting to know each other better and more. The geniality of Austen lies also in the fact that she did not describe these characters on the first pages; she did not tell us right away how these people were; the reader has to find out for him/herself and be the judge of morality of characters' actions. Readers are often left wondering what makes Mr. Darcy so snobbish. We cannot judge somebody based on the first impression we have of them; we have to get to know him, his thinking and character.

5.3. Relationships

Gradually developing of relationship is the base for true love and good marriage in the future. The point is to not marry anyone who comes first to you just because you don't want the society to look down on you. Lizzie is demonstrating it here. She refused at first the clown-like Mr. Collins. Austen knew perfectly how things were working those days,

²⁶ Jane Austen, *The Pride and Prejudice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 296.

she realized that girls and women did not have any other choice. However, the new thinking and historical events changed the thinking of women rapidly.

As it was mentioned in previous paragraph, Lizzie refused the first proposal of Mr. Darcy. These two people were distant from each other from the beginning because of their prejudice. They also had plenty of time to change their opinion about the other and to find out what their true feelings were. The obstacles they were forced to overcome, mutual understanding and time they had to get to know each other better helped them create a special relationship full of deep love between them and lead them to create an everlasting marriage.

Austen is here revealing the importance of getting know a partner before marriage. She believes that love should be regarded as something completely independent of social conventions and expectations. It should be something independent from social classes and forces, a thing that can be created between a couple, two strong individuals who are strong enough to escape from prejudices of hierarchical society. What the readers will appreciate the most is the cynical tone in which the book was written. Sure, she really is a realist, but the cynical tone what made her novel so popular. True love is portrayed as a force able to conquer all prejudices of hierarchical society.

Jane was in a different situation. Her relationship with Mr. Bingley was not full of hatred, prejudices and pride. They are the example of two innocent people who fell in love at first sight. People see that the way in which their relationship developed and all that it had to overcome, the ending is almost American movie-like. Their love had overcome Caroline's gossips and it is impressive that their love lasted through the embarrassment Jane's mother was bringing upon their family. It was typical and very popular for young girls to go to balls where they could find their future partner dreaming about Mr. Charming.

As time goes by, it is possible to see how opinions have changed. Helen Fielding, a huge Jane Austen fan, admitted to pillaging her plot. Silly Bridget is a different person from clever Lizzie, but basically they are both the same – overcoming obstacles, finding true love. It is obvious, however, that Lizzie is an eighteenth century girl while Bridget is a modern heroine for contemporary women. Fielding demonstrates the emotional evolution of a woman of the twenty first century, based on the version Jane Austen showed us two hundred years ago. The only difference is that nowadays it is still normal to be single even when you are in your thirties. Is Jane Austen portraying in *Pride and Prejudice* a woman in

pursuit of a husband or a man in a search of a wife? She established the question for future generations, even for generations of the twenty – first century.

It is the hope of almost all women and men to find their ideal partner. The manners, role of women, families, books, opinions, the whole world with which she was familiar has changed. „Singletons“ became more popular. The closest literary character to Lizzie (together with the plot and the name of her enemy/lover Mark) is Bridget.

She is the example of the new century woman, living life of a single woman without a man. The whole idea of Bridget's New year resolutions is to be involved in a relationship with a great, normal man (...but what does it mean „normal“?) and not be single having to answer annoying questions like „How's your love life, anyway?“ Oh God. Why can't married people understand that this is no longer a polite question to ask? We wouldn't rush up to them and roar, 'How's your marriage going? Still having sex?' Not being a natural liar, I ended up mumbling shamefacedly to Geoffrey, 'Fine,' at which point he boomed, 'So you still haven't got a feller!'²⁷ This scene shows us that sometimes it doesn't matter whether it is the 21st or 18th century; if you are 30 years old and still single, married people are bound to ask you inappropriate questions. The first impression is the image of a successful cosmo girl living her awesome life somewhere in Los Angeles, travelling around the world with golden credit card together with a young, hot model who will pay for all your Luis Vuitton handbags (does not matter if he is a real lover, the other frenemies have to be jealous!) and attending all the glamorous parties. Maybe Candace Bushnell and the creators of the Sex and the City tv show gave us the wrong idea of a successful woman (who would not want all that fashionable shoes Carrie had in her closet anyway).

The base for the characters is very similar to the original book. Except that the events changed a little bit according to the new age. People live in an age where you can wear mini skirts even if you have cellulite, smoke a lot and have a lot of boyfriends. The difference is that he is not in the troops, does not play hazardous games and did not marry your younger flirty sister. Nowadays, it is enough if he is a handsome player, flirting with you, but most of the time it does not matter from which part of society you are till you are a model with a perfect body and extra white teeth. A man should love you as you are, regardless of how much you drink or smoke. He does not need to be a man, who will ride his horse through half Britain, it is enough if he is a brilliant lawyer. „Do you remember

²⁷ Helen Fielding *The Bridget Jones' Diary* (London: Picador, 1996) 11.

Mark Darcy, darling? Malcolm and Elaine's son? He's one of these super-doooper top-notch lawyers. Divorced. Elaine says he Works all the time and he's terribly lonely. I think he might be coming to Una's New Year's Day Turkey Curry Buffet, actually.' I don't know why she didn't just come out with it and say, 'Darling, do shag Mark Darcy over the turkey curry, won't you? He's very rich.'²⁸

The sad thing is that - and Jane for sure would have agreed with it -people still need to have some "capital" to enter into a successful relationship; women expect a diamond ring, etc. The good thing is that love somehow finds us at any age, regardless of whether we do or don't want to fall in love and most of the time it happens when we least expect it. The phrase „I don't need a man“ sounds funny even in this era full of feminists, single women – the truth is, people always need love! Bridget shows us she is still worried about not being able to find her true love and Elizabeth does too, no matter how independently she behaves. Contemporary society is still full of prejudices against single women after thirty who are not having babies. They are constantly being reminded of their biological clocks. They are not mutants, it has simply taken them longer to find love and they are still waiting for love to enter their lives. It is key for these women to stay open-minded and not judge the book by its cover. Sometimes they just need to wait it out and then they find their own Mr. Darcy.

²⁸ Helen Fielding *The Bridget Jones' Diary* (London: Picador, 1996) 12.

6. Conclusion

What is so different about Jane Austen's books? Why is she still beloved and our favourite author? Her characters have depth; every reader has to think about the inner side of the heroines. She does not tell us directly at the beginning what her heroine is like; instead, she lets her characters grow, change, and develops the story unfolds. Realistic characters are better than romantic ones, and real stories, set in the real middle class are better than fiction or fantasy stories.

Austen was not trying to resist the masses by creating differences and plastic characters. For example, in the third chapter of *Sense and sensibility*, Austen thanks to free indirect speech creates a feel of deep feelings and speculations of Elinor. Where Marianne plays an expected role of betrayed heroine –she is crying, lies in her bed, and then becomes seriously ill – Elinor is quiet about her suffering. Or, she is being quiet when in the company of other people, but we know how she is feeling thanks to the descriptions of her mind. Elinor is becoming a character who is not shallow but rather is able to think deeply.

What is so strong and intense about Jane Austen that it creates among her readers such powerful feelings towards the characters and her stories? As I have mentioned before, thanks to those described inner feelings, readers are able to relate to the heroines better. And with these connections, readers can feel the cultural contradictions. Reading her novels gives us a chance to feel differently, strangely. She is so lovable because she was the first one to have created an illusion of character in literature and celebrated different characters and their psychologies using sarcasm as her main literary tool.

Jane Austen gave us a new perspective on middle class, new look on a real position of women and the law pushing some of them into a chase on a rich husband. Society forced women to devote themselves to one activity - to attract a husband as soon as possible and preferably one who had money. That means they had to look and behave like a ladies. Since they were not allowed to study at university or work, at least they were trying to be the best in the things they could do – dancing, art, reading, playing piano and singing. They learned to recite well-known poems and wore beautiful fancy looking dresses.

Mentioning the best looking dresses brings me to the next point I would like to talk about – the importance of being "trendy". Special occasions were calling for proper fashionable clothes. Ladies were changing clothes a few times a day, because for some occasions such as ordinary walks it was important to wear a different type of dress from for

example a dinner visit. Dresses were made of a few layers of fabric and corsets were important as well.

Balls enabled young girls to meet their future husbands. But to our surprise it was not followed with romantic walks and private talks – the couple was simply expected to be in love and get married. And because showing feelings was regarded almost as a crime, we could only wish that the couple would be happy and care for one another. The rules of behavior that couples were to abide by were strict.

Marriage meant victory for many women, but as I mentioned in the chapter with *Pride and Prejudice* it was not that easy and it meant mainly a responsibility for a household. Of course, if women refused a man who proposed to them it was likely they would never get married. Some felt guilty for not being married. The second possibility was they were not in love with the man and wanted to wait for real love; love with no prejudices, without any pride – showed on the character of Lizzie. This book influenced many generations of readers and creators of similar plots, such as the author of aforementioned *Bridget Jones*. At first sight it is a very funny story but in the end, it is showing us how society is still full of prejudices against single women who are in their thirties.

Austen has become a favourite author of many because she has the ability to create an illusion of personality, the ability that speaks directly to our romantic individualism and our situation, where as readers we are standing between conflicts – all conflicts the heroines have to deal with. Everyone who wants to know the inner life of a vast and admirable class of English „rural nobility“, which does not exist in any other country in the world has to read the novels of Jane Austen. If Jane is sort of an amulet for an British reader, for non-english reader it is something different – a proof that English gentry is persisting as a depository of the most valuable characteristics of England. It proves that somewhere exists a small fortress resisting a destructive wave of globalization. Thanks to this, the experience from the book is an essential complement of a modern life style. We must then look more closely and think about her story and message deeply because nothing is as it seems.

I hope I showed properly in my work how society was organized and worked according to young girls and women. The beloved Jane Austen is one of the all-time favourite writers and her books are much more than just romantic stories. Their readers have to think about what is hidden beneath a simple looking story. Austen's novels belong to the canon of Britain's greatest literary treasures and remains a significant component of British cultural inheritance.

7. Resumé

Zaměřením bakalářské práce jsou především ženy a jejich postavení ve společnosti střední třídy z dob Jane Austenové. Vybrala jsem si tři díla: Northangerske opatství, Rozum a cit a Pýcha a Předsudek. Zaměření kapitol je rozděleno na historické pozadí, na postavení žen z regenské éry – dvoření, etiketa, manželství, právo žen a dědictví.

Proč jsem si zvolila tyto tři díla? Opatství Northanger reprezentuje dobovou důležitost plesů, kde dívky doufaly, že potkají toho pravého. Rozum a cit ukazuje etiketu dvoření, v Pýše a Předsudku pak zobrazuje lásku, předsudky, a důležitost manželství.

V první kapitole popisují historické pozadí – je důležité znát historii a důvody proč vykreslovala Jane Austenová příběhy takový stylem.. Popisují se tady důležité události, které předcházely době, v které Jane žila. Za těchto časů byla Británie největší mocností světa. Měla důležité postavení na poli trhu a obchodu. Byla to mocnost, která obchodovala s Východem, Afrikou a samozřejmě i se Severní Amerikou.

Důležitou událostí byla revoluce ve Francii. Je podivuhodné, že Jane nikdy nevzpomenula v žádném svém díle následky války nebo revoluce a žádná z jejich hrdinek nebyla těmito událostmi poznamenána. Nebyly zmíněny ani problémy mezi Severní Amerikou a Británií. Lidé v té době zažili vzestup a pád Napoleona, viděli prosperovat svoji zemi i všechny velké světové změny. Důležitým faktem byla měnící se doba – z georgiánské na regentskou. Regentská éra je ta důležitější, do té jsou zasazeny všechny hrdinky. Byla to doba, kdy se měnil literární styl, architektura, myšlení i politika. Tehdy bylo nejvíc možné vidět rozdíly mezi třídami. Jane Austenová pocházela ze střední třídy a uměla ji skvěle popsat. Nezbytné byli také testamenty, kdy matky mohli zanechat dědictví dětem a ani jejich otec je nemohl vydědit. Problémem však bylo, jestli potomky byli ženy.

Je důležité chápat paní Bennetovou, i když se chovala v mnoha situacích zahanbujíc své dcery. Jejich problémem totiž bylo to, že nejbližším mužským potomkem byl pan Collins, který po smrti pana Benneta zdědí všechny majetek a milé sestry Bennetovy budou tak vydány na milost. Je však úžasné vidět, že ne všechny byly zastrašeny a proto také Lizzie odmítla pana Collinse, i když věděla, že o ní bude postaráno.

Ráda bych připomněla, že být paní domu také nebylo jednoduché. Vést domácnost efektivně, aby bylo vyhověno všem, bylo náročné, a je náročné i v dnešní době. Lidé se často brali jenom kvůli ekonomické možnosti. Okolo dvacet procent dívek se ale nikdy nevdalo. Slobodné dívky zvykli sloužit v domácnostech jako služky nebo domácí učitelky.

Po Velké Industriální Revoluci ženy mohli pracovat – ovšem za nejnižší mzdu. Vezmeme si ku příkladu Charlotte – dala jasně najevo, že není romantický typ a je své rodině na obtíž. Vzala si pane Collinse, i když ho nemilovala, ale měla možnost mít vlastní dům a řídit si domácnost jak chtěla – a hlavně o ni bylo postaráno. Nesmím zapomenout napsat, že až v dvacátém století mohli ženy začít volit.

Zamysleli jste se někdy, proč se všechny hrdinky chovali tak uhlazeně a před každým nadějným ženichem pokorně klopili oči? Dvoření a její přísná pravidla nedovolovali totiž, aby ženy mohli ukázat svou inteligenci nebo vtipkovat. Jedině takhle mohli dát najevo, jak se umějí chovat ve společnosti a že jsou vhodnými kandidátkami na pozici manželky. Bylo nemyslitelné, aby dívka jako první mluvila s mladým mužem, aby na neho hleděla – protože pak by si to všimli i ostatní, a mohlo by to být dostatočným důvodem na podezírání ze zasnoubení nebo zbytečných klepů. Když dva chtěli dát najevo, že se jim líbí být ve společnosti toho druhého, mohli si psát dopisy, chodit na procházky, nebo tančit – to byli jediné možnosti, jak spolu mluvit. Když totiž dívka s klukem ostali spolu sami v jedné místnosti, bylo to podezíravé a ostatní je pak zvykli považovat za snoubence. Dobrou správou je, že i když dívky byly prakticky odevzdané osudu a tomu, jestli se zalíbí nejednému mladému muži, ještě pro nich bylo možné odmítnout žádost o ruku.

Co se týče dívek a jak ulovit svého prince, musím připomenout taky oblečení, které bylo typické pro regenstkou éru. Velké a nepohodlné krinolíny z georgiánské doby nahradil praktický empírový střih. Je to střih, který zahalí nežádané, zdůrazní přednosti a z každé slečny v naději na manžela udělá princeznu – je populárním dodnes. Nepohodlné korzety a velké sukně byli minulostí a ženy nosili zvyčejně střih, který byl uvázan stužkou pod prsami a dále volně padal až k nohám po zem.

Když už je řeč o šatách a touhy vdávat se, musím uznat, že svatebními šaty jsem byla překvapena. Ženy obyčejně nosili šaty tmavé barvy, které pak mohli využít také později na praktické účely. Nejpopulárnější barvou však byla červená. Byla to až královna Viktorie, která si ve svý nejšťastnější den oblékla ty nejlepší a nejkrásnější šaty - zhodou okolností bílé barvy.

Následující třetí kapitola zahrnuje knihu Northangerské opatství. Městečko Bath bylo populárním střediskem, kde se setkávali rodiny a seznamovali mladí lidé. Mladičká a zcela obyčejná Catherine se zde ocitla po prvníkrát. Výše jsem spomínala, že tancování byl jeden z mála důvodů, kdy si mladí lidé mohli promluvit nebo se zblížit. Také scény z filmu vypadají nádherně, ale ve skutečnosti nebylo lehké si všechny taneční kroky pamatovat. Klasické anglické tance byli nahrazeny čtverylkou a později byl přidán i valčík, z kterého

si lidé dřívěji utahovali. Bály a plesy byli především společenskými událostmi, kde dívky mohli potkat svého nadějného ženicha. A pravděpodobně tím nejdůležitějším bylo vypadat božsky, v co nejlepších šatách, s několika hodinovými přípravami.

Bylo vždy zajímavé, jak zvykli ženy trávit volný čas, když to byla doba dvě ste let stará a internet byl v nedohlednu. Číst knihy, vyšívát nebo kreslit bylo typické, odvážnější ženy jezdili s muži na lov. Všeobecně byli dívky, které uměly hezky psát, četli významná díla a dokázali zahrát na piáno bez reptání za vhodné kandidátky.

Oblíbenou činností Catherine bylo čtení knih. Catherine je tady také zobrazena spočátku jako naivní dívka, které neprospívá neustála společnost koketní Isabelly. Záhady Udolfa byli oblíbenou tématou těchto dvou kamarádek – a samozřejmě je tady vidět výsměch a satiru z gotických příběhů samotné autorky románu. Protože Northangerské opatství je také knihou o dospívání, Catherine si také postupně uvědomuje, v jaké je pozici a snaží se vymanit spod chapadel Isabelly. Když pak hlavní hrdinka odjede navštívit opatství, je zde možné vidět, jak si uvědomuje její doposudní naivitu a nezkušenost. Dobrým příkladem slouží nález záhadných papírů ve skříni, o kterých pak vyjde najevo, že jsou to jenom účtenky.

Ve čtvrté kapitole popisují kontrast mezi rozumem a citem, Marianne a Elinor. Je to i román, kdy čitateli napadne jako první – dvoření. Elinor je ta, která znázorňuje ztelesněnou dokonalost chování ve společnosti. Uvědomuje si svůj původ a nedává najevo náklonnost k Edwardovi, také ani její zklamání, když zjistila, že je zasnoubený s Lucy. Marianne je naopak detinsky porušovala. Psala si dopisy s Willoughbym, jasně dávala najevo své nálady a nebála se prezentovat, co si myslí. Ano, pro dnešní dívky je to naprosto normální, jenomže ve světě starého Anglicka rozhodně ne, a stavělo to Marianne zbytečně do světla výsměchu a drbání. Ovšem tato zkušenost jí stála téměř život a Marianne je pevně rozhodnuta se změnit. Na konci se všechno k dobrému obrátí a Marianne je poučena. Změní svůj postoj, své myšlení a stává se z ní mladá rozumná žena, která dá šanci v lásce poručíku Brandonovi.

Elinor je typem knižné hrdinky, která se líbí více čitelům Jane Austen – vydaná napospas milosti jejího bratra, jestli bude ochoten jim finančně přispívat, a nešťastně zamilovaná. Z jistého uhlu pohledu je to jakýsi příběh o Popelce, která vyhrá boj o srdce svého prince. Elinor je tedy nakonec šťastně zasnoubená, je zde vidět povedený konec dívky ze střední třídy.

V poslední kapitole se zaměřuji na lásku a manželství. Je zcela zbytečné představovat příběh, který už léta patří k oblíbeným a je jedním z nejromantičtějších příběhů. Nutnost

manželství je cítit ve všech dílech, ale v tomhle bezprostředně nejvíc. Už v úvodu knihy nám autorka dokazuje, jak výhodné bylo být mladým, bohatým a nezadaným mládencem. Slavná matka paní Bennetova byla posedlá touhou provdat své dcery výhodně. Dívky si nemohli moc často vybírat, za koho se provdají – mohli byt vůbec rády, že je někdo požádal o ruku, když pocházeli ze střední třídy. Také ženich musel splňovat požadavky rodičů a ptát se jich na svolení. Lizzie je jistým způsobem hrdinkou, když odmítla směšného pana Collinse, i když věděla, že možnost, že se nikdy neprovdá, je zcela reální. Dílo Pýcha a Předsudek je plné rozdílností mezi dvěma společenskými třídami. Pro Lizzie byl pan Darcy jenom nafoukaný boháč a pro pana Darcyho byla Lizzie zcela obyčejná a nezajímavá dívka s matkou, která byla mistrem v nemístních poznámkách.

Jane Austen byla jedna z prvních, která zobrazovala důležitost znát svého nastávajícího a potřebu lásky. Stane se, že člověka, kterého nemáte rádi, si zamilujete. Stvořením tohoto příběhu ovlivnila Jane Austen mnoho následujících generací a taky spomínanou Bridget Jones. Je to jakási dobová Lizzie, ovšem méně zdvořilá a starší. Vplyv Pýchy a Předsudku je viditelný a je skvěle zasazen do dnešní doby, kde je stejně patrně vidět předsudky a odsuzování lidí za to, že ve třiceti letech není někdo provdanej. Nemít přítele nebo manžela ve třiceti letech je i v dnešní době pro mnoho lidí něco nepředstavitelného. A co tenhle příběh dělá ještě zajímavějším? Jsou to taky překážky – protože není lehké najít a bojovat o svou lásku a když se to hrdince podaří, o to větší radost má taky i ten, co příběh čte a prožívá ho spolu s hrdinami.

I když doba pokročila o dvě ste let od dob, kdy Jane Austen tyhle úžasné příběhy napsala, myšlenka je nesmrtelná. Nadčasové problémy týkající se výběru vhodného ženicha s dostatečně vysokým kapitálem, návodem, jak zaujmout muže a proč je láska důležitá i když hrozí, že ostanete svobodná po zbytek života. Není nic špatného být svobodná, ale přizná si to pak každý, že je vždycky lepší si počkat a skutečně najít si tu pravou nebo si najít svého pana Darcyho. Anglie může být pyšná, že je krajinou původu, ze které pochází jedna z nejcennějších autorek literatury.

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Niceties and Courtesies: Manners and Customs in the time of Jane Austen: **Basic Etiquette** <http://chuma.cas.usf.edu/~runge/MasonJA1.html>

Pictures

Picture n.1 – The Five positions of dancing

<http://janeaustensworld.wordpress.com/2010/06/28/dancing-at-the-netherfield-ball-pride-and-prejudice/>

Picture n.2 – Frederic Soulacroix

<http://nhomthangmuoimot.blogspot.com/2010/07/frederic-soulacroix.html>

Picture n.3 – Regency ball

<http://englishhistoryauthors.blogspot.com/2011/11/regency-era-ladys-prodigious-layers-of.html>

Picture n.4 – The Regency period

http://bethelliott.webs.com/The_First_Quadrille_at_Almack%27s.jpg

Picture n.5 – The Regency era fashion plate

<http://regency-clothing.blogspot.com/2011/12/regency-era-fashion-plate-november-1820.html>

Appendix



Obrázok 1 The Five positions of dancing



Obrázok 2 Frederix Soulacroix



Obrázok 3 Regency ball



Obrázok 4 The First Quadrille



Obrázok 5 Regency Era Fashion Plate