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The Victorian Governess Novel

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2. Jádrem práce bude analýza a srovnání zvolených románů – Agnes Grey Anne Brontëové a Jane Eyre Charlotty Brontëové.
3. Závěrem studentka shrne, jak oba romány zachycují pozici vychovatelky ve viktoriánské společnosti, porovná, nakolik zobrazují tradiční a nakolik netradiční postavy vychovatelek a nakolik jsou oba romány tradiční či inovativní.

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Abstract

In nineteenth-century England, the governess held a peculiar position. There was a large increase of governesses in the Victorian era, and the situation of this group of wage-earning women was heavily discussed. The governess became a social phenomenon. From the mid-nineteenth century, the governess became a popular figure in Victorian fiction, and a governess novel genre developed. Many authors of governess novels drew on their own experience as a governess. Among these authors are also Anne and Charlotte Brontë. This thesis focuses on showing the typical traits of the governess novel genre by comparing two novels written by the famous Brontë sisters – *Agnes Grey* by Anne Brontë and *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. The novels are analysed and compared with respect to the main features of the governess novel genre. The aim of the thesis is to illustrate how both of the novels depict the social position of the governess in Victorian society, and to compare to what extent the protagonists of the novels and the novels themselves are traditional or innovative.

Keywords: Victorian governess; Victorian governess novel; working women

Viktoriánský román o vychovatelkách

Souhrn

V Anglii devatenáctého století měla vychovatelka zvláštní pozici. Ve viktoriánském období došlo k velkému nárůstu vychovatelek a situace této skupiny žen pracujících za mzdu byla velmi diskutována. Z vychovatelky se stal fenomén. Od poloviny devatenáctého století se vychovatelka stala oblíbenou postavou viktoriánských románů a vznikl tak nový žánr – viktoriánský román o vychovatelkách. Mnoho autorek těchto románů čerpalo z vlastních zkušeností s prací vychovatelky. Mezi takové autorky se řadí také slavné sestry Anne a Charlotte Brontëovy. Tato diplomová práce se zaměřuje na zobrazení charakteristických rysů viktoriánského románu o vychovatelkách. S ohledem na dané prvky jsou srovnány dva romány o vychovatelkách sester Brontëových – *Agnes Grey* Anne Brontëové a *Jane Eyre* Charlotte Brontëové. Cílem diplomové práce je zobrazit, jak oba romány zachycují pozici vychovatelky ve viktoriánské společnosti, a také porovnat, nakolik jsou postavy i romány samotné tradiční či inovativní.

Klíčová slova: viktoriánská vychovatelka; viktoriánský román o vychovatelkách; pracující ženy

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Introduction

“I have just one word to say of the whole tribe; they are a nuisance.”
(Brontë, Ch. 176)

This is a quotation taken from *Jane Eyre*. A lady named Blanche Ingram says this of governesses. As it is obvious from this quotation, governesses in Victorian England did not enjoy a good reputation, and were despised by the society. These wage-earning middle class women contrasted with feminine ideals of Victorian times. “In nineteenth-century England governesses were often referred to as a group, or even as a race, of their own, separated from the rest of society” (Lecaros 39). There was a large increase of governesses in the Victorian era, and the governess became a social phenomenon. In the society where it was not acceptable for a lady to work, the social position of governesses was peculiar since on the one hand, they were ladies, and on the other hand, they were wage-earners. From the 1830s and 1840s a great number of novels depicted the plight of governesses, and the governess became a popular figure in Victorian novels. Thus, a new genre developed – the Victorian governess novel.

Via the literature the Victorian society became conscious of the deplorable lot of governesses. Many authors writing about the trials of the governess drew on their own experience since they had worked as governesses themselves. Among the writers who were inspired by their own governess experience are the famous sisters Anne (1820-49) and Charlotte Brontë (1816-55).

This thesis focuses on showing the typical traits of the governess novel genre by comparing two governess novels written by Brontë sisters – *Agnes Grey* (1847) by Anne Brontë and *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Brontë. The thesis begins with an introduction to the issue of governesses in Victorian England. After this short summary of the history of governess profession in England, the definition of the governess novel genre follows. The analysis of the selected novels is divided into six chapters, in which some of the typical features of the genre are analysed. Each chapter begins with a description of the specific trait of the genre, subsequently, the novels are compared individually with respect to the trait in question. The chapters of the analysis are organized according to the chronology found in most governess novels. This is to show

how similarly the novels are structured, and also to convey a picture of governess life as it is portrayed within the genre.

The traits analysed are as follows - the heroine's background; the social identity of employers and marginalization of the governess; the terms of employment –poultry salary and undefined duties; pupils – little angels or wicked characters?; solitude and some kind of friend who helps the heroine to get through her plight; personal development of the heroine.

The aim of the thesis is to illustrate how both of the novels depict the social position of the governess in Victorian society, and to compare to what extent the protagonists of the novels and the novels themselves are traditional or innovative.

The Victorian governess - the history of the governess profession

In Victorian England, the proper sphere for a woman was within her home. A married woman was expected to oversee her husband's household. She was supposed to devote exclusively to the household and to care for her husband. It was not acceptable for a woman to work or to have other kinds of activities outside the house. According to the Victorian mores, a man was expected to support his wife financially. A new ideal of a woman became popular – a woman of leisure. Peterson explains this new ethos of a woman of leisure by saying that an ideal lady was devoted exclusively to her family sphere, and was supported by her husband or her father, if not married. What is more, the women were forbidden from a paid employment (6). If a woman happened to be unmarried and her family was not able to support her, she was forced to earn her own living. It was difficult for her to find a job which would not degrade her. In the words of Gender,

because of the social mores of the Victorian era [women] could not take on any job. Jobs such as those in business and banking belonged to men, and only those women of the lower and working classes would be found in the factories and the fields. (5-6)

Gender also writes in her study that the only suitable occupation for a middle-class woman in Victorian England was the governess profession:

because of the social stigma attached to the idea of the working woman, the middle or upper class girl with the need or desire to work was given only one option: a job in a household as a governess (2).

Lecaros is in agreement with Ginder's statements pointing out that in nineteenth-century England, where the ideology of female domesticity was adopted and women were excluded from the employment market, the governess, a wage-earning woman, held an extraordinary position. Middle-class women could choose only from a narrow professional area which would not endanger the family's middle-class status. The most common occupation was a teaching profession (Lecaros 15-17). Goreau observes that "as a rule, single women who had to earn their keep overwhelmingly preferred to be employed as a governess because it involved the least injury to social standing" (41). According to Lecaros, such a profession was suitable since "the tasks were so strongly related to the traditionally feminine tasks of the middle-class wife and mother"; and governesses "could to some extent maintain their status as members of a middle-class household, although they had entered employment" (18). Holcombe offers a similar explanation regarding the reason why the governess profession was acceptable for the Victorian lady who was forced to work for a living:

By devoting herself to the care and education of children, even for hire, a lady could fill the role for which nature had intended her; and by living at home and going out into other homes as a daily governess, or by working as a resident governess in a girls' boarding school or in her employers' household, she would still enjoy that sheltering abode deemed to be her proper sphere. (12)

As stated in *British Authors of the Nineteenth Century*, "there was nothing in those days for a 'lady' to do to earn her livelihood except to teach" (75).

As suggested above, the only thinkable employment for a Victorian woman was the governess profession. But the following questions arise - when ever started the families employing governesses, and what actually provoked them to do so? Ginder gives an answer to these questions saying that "the need for the governess arose from the realization that female children, as well as male children, should be educated" (3). Neff writes that in Tudor times, governesses were engaged to teach the daughters in noble families exclusively. Before the nineteenth century only the more aristocratic families could afford to hire a governess. Over time, not only upper class daughters but also those of the clergy were taught by a governess. Later on, when England had

become more industrialized, the new class of manufacturers started to have their daughters educated at home as well. A governess became a symbol of respectability in middle-class home (151-3). “The wealthy middle class imitated the aristocracy and educated their daughters at home, with governesses and nurses” (Perkin 32). Also Lecaros (18) and Hughes (21) declare that before the nineteenth century, the governess was first hired only by upper-class people, and subsequently, middle-class families started to copy the gentry’s manners. Peterson presents a similar progression in the matter of who actually hired governesses:

From at least Tudor times the governess had been part of the households of the upper classes. In the nineteenth century, increasing numbers of governesses were employed by the English middle classes. The governess was a testimony to the economic power of the Victorian middle-class father, as were servants, carriages, and the other “paraphernalia of gentility”. (5)

Hughes agrees that in most cases, a great number of families hired the governess especially to “show off their own wealth and social prestige” (21). Peterson states that another reason for hiring a governess was the fact that “the employment of a governess was even more a symbol of the movement of wives and mothers from domestic to ornamental functions” (5). As a matter of fact, this is related to the above mentioned ideal of a woman of leisure.

As Lecaros explains, the term ‘governess’ was used to denote a resident teacher, a daily governess, a school teacher, and a female music or dance teacher. The status of resident governess was divided into the nursery governess and the finishing governess who prepared girls to entering the social sphere (18). In the words of Peterson, in mid-nineteenth century, the term “governess” referred to:

a woman who taught in a school, a woman who lived at home and travelled to her employer’s house to teach (called “a daily governess”), or a woman who lived in her employer’s home and who taught the children and served as a companion to them. [...], sometimes referred to as the “private governess.” (4)

According to Peterson, Victorian parents required their daughters to be taught the genteel accomplishments, and the governess had to be ladylike (5). Also McMaster notes that the governess was often “of gentle birth” (327). As the governess was expected to be a model of appropriate values and good manners, it is inferable that the governess had to be a gentlewoman. Also Neff (154) and Hughes (21) observe that

the governess was supposed to be ladylike and highbred. Neff quotes a writer from the *Quarterly Review*:

The real definition of a governess, in the English sense, is a being who is our equal in birth, manners, and education, but our inferior in worldly wealth. Take a lady, in every meaning of the word, born and bred, and let her father pass through the *Gazette* [bankruptcy], and she wants nothing more to suit our highest *beau idéal* of a guide and instructress to our children. (154)

Like Neff (157), Peterson (6) and Lecaros (19) are also convinced that girls were becoming governesses just because of their unfavourable financial situation. Peterson mentions the Victorian stereotype of the governess according to which she was

a woman who was born and bred in comfort and gentility and who, through the death of her father or his subjection to financial ruin, was robbed of the support of her family and was driven to earn her own living. (6)

Peterson adds that for such women, the only way how to keep their status was through the profession of governess (6). As Lecaros puts it, many middle-class women preferred this badly paid profession as they were afraid of lowering their social status by accepting some other employment that would be more visible to the public (17). In the words of Holcombe, “every woman was by nature a teacher, and the mere fact of being a lady and in straitened circumstances especially qualified her somehow for teaching” (12).

Lecaros (15) and Peterson (5) identically state that there was a discrepancy between the tasks the governess was hired to perform, and the Victorian values. According to Peterson, this fact caused “a conflict and incongruity for both the governess and the family, a conflict which called forth a variety of responses from governess, family, and society” (5). The following description of the governess profession implies that the lot of the governess was not a happy one:

Too low for the family, too high for the servants, she was isolated, yet had no privacy, and was almost universally despised. She worked all day, often sharing a bedroom with the children and taking care of their baths and meals as well as their lessons, yet was discouraged from being affectionate to them; in odd moments she did family mending. [...] When her services were no longer needed, she was out of work and home without a pension. (Perkin 164)

The situation of governesses was really painful. Fortunately, the society was not indifferent to their plight. “The growing anxiety concerning governesses led to the

establishment of the philanthropic Governesses' Benevolent Institution in 1843" (Lecaros 19). Goreau points out that this institution provided help to destitute, aged and unemployed governesses. The author also adds that in 1848 Queen's College for Women was established to better prepare women for the governess profession, and thus make it possible for them to ask for a higher salary (42). This formal education was believed to help governesses to find an employment in the oversaturated market.

The Victorian governess novel – a specific genre

In the mid-nineteenth century, there was economic insecurity in England, and more and more women were forced to seek employment. As the governess profession was the only suitable employment for a lady, the number of governesses grew rapidly. The governess became a social phenomenon. The governess novel genre grew out of the extensive discussions of the situation of this group of wage-earning women.

As Lecaros claims, the governess appeared in plenty of nineteenth-century novels, and adds that "the genre of governess novels coincided in time with the large increase of governesses in Victorian England" (29, 277). Also Neff confirms that the governess played an important role both in the literature and the real life. She says that the governess's importance "is proved both by the census figures and by her frequent appearance as heroine or minor figure in the novels of the period" (153). Neff declares that "of all wage-earning heroines in early nineteenth-century literature, the governess occupied by far the most conspicuous place" (182). Of course, there was a great number of working women who had more demanding professions. Holcome gives an explanation why exactly the governess was a familiar figure in Victorian novels:

It was not that governesses were the most numerous or the most depressed class of women workers in the country, but unlike women workers in factories and fields, they were highly "visible" to the middle and upper classes, being familiar figures in their homes. (14)

Lecaros states that "many novels from the 1830s and 1840s take the form of promotion texts for the cause of the governess" and that there was "a clearly voiced desire to draw attention to the difficulties of governesses" (199). In the words of Ginder, "the literature of the Victorian era was truly instrumental in popularizing the plight of the governess"

(16). Neff remarks that all novelists who wrote about governesses were contemplating primarily the social class of both the employer and the governess (153-4). “A master-servant relationship between people so outwardly similar yet so differently positioned posed an obvious dilemma” (Lecaros 20).

Regarding the appearance of the governess in the literature, Lecaros maintains that in some Victorian novels, the governess was either a minor character, or her position was not so important for the storyline. But next to these novels, a great deal of Victorian fiction concerned with governesses can be classified as a specific genre since the novels have got similar plot lines, characterisations, scenes, aim and intention. Nevertheless, it is not easy to define the genre since genres influence each other and novels often encompass attributes of more than one genre (29). Lecaros further mentions that in the 1840s to the 1860s, the profession of the governess was heavily discussed, and as the result, the governess novel was highly popular in this period. While some authors of governess novels primarily described a governess life, the others incorporated traits from other genres (30). Among the genres that influenced the governess novel and vice versa, Lecaros names the following genres - domestic novel, school stories, sensational novel, detective novel, and Bildungsroman or the novel of development (30-5). In spite of the fact that the genres often blend together, there are several crucial themes that are typical for the governess novel genre, including the heroine’s loss of social status, her intermediate position, and her moral worth in relation to the people around her (Lecaros 29). These themes appear both in *Agnes Grey* and *Jane Eyre*. About the first Sanders writes:

Its governess-narrator endures loss of status, humiliation, snobbery, and insult, but her account of herself is characterized by a calm sense of her own moral justification. (428)

Another significant trait of the governess novel genre is a “kind of progress towards maturity or improvement on the part of the heroine” (Lecaros 34). Lecaros gives the following description of the personal development – the governess is forced to leave her home due to some kind of loss, after numerous troubles and distress, she finally progresses towards adulthood and maturity, and finds her rightful place in society (36). Next very important theme of the genre Lecaros mentions is that of “reversed fortunes and sudden impoverishment”. The author further says that the heroine, who is often

an orphan and therefore lonely, usually has some kind of friend who helps her to get through her plight (40). The aim of the authors was to arouse a feeling of sympathy on the side of the readers. In the words of Lecaros, “A governess novel features a governess heroine [...] on whom the narrative is centred, and with whom the reader’s sympathy lies” (37). The governess mostly encounters many unpleasant and oppressive situations, and often faces troubles with her employers, her pupils, insolent servants, and rude visitors, who offend her. Because of all the hardship, many governesses “struggled to escape. [...] They plotted deliverance by setting up a school or by marrying a curate” (Neff, 174). The intermediate position of the governess in relation to the other women of the household, to her employers and to the servants of the house is an essential feature of the genre. (Lecaros 38). Wadsö gives the following explanation of the governess’s undefined position:

[the governess] is socially marginalised in her employer’s household. In her dependent and wage-earning position, the governess is similar to the domestic servant; but she also resembles the mistress of the house because of her middle-class background. (39)

The governess was often excluded from the social sphere so that the mistress of the house could acknowledge her own social position. The employers did not regard the governess as their equal, they rather treated her as a servant. This was indicated by the accommodation of the governess, her salary, terms of employment, and also by behaviour of the children of the house. The mother and the nurse were often jealous of the governess in the matter of affection of the children. That is the reason why a female rivalry is a relevant theme in the genre (Lecaros 40). Regarding the rivalry, according to Hughes (81) and Lecaros (40), the governess’s better moral qualities and sometimes her more highbred social origin are often contrasted with her employer’s demoralized behaviour. As to the fact that the governess was mistreated, and her high-bred origin was not respected, Hughes claims that for the employers, it was important that the governess was of gentle birth since this was a testimony of their gentility. But on the other hand, regarding the governess as a part of the family would have impact on their social status. For this reason “some employers felt the need to mark their social distance from the governess by means of a hundred little snubs and petty slights“ (88).

As Lecaros declares, the governesses’ working conditions and social position were heavily discussed by contemporaries, and “the novelists took an active part in this

debate“. The aim of the authors of governess novels was mainly “to improve the situation of a vulnerable group of women” (275).

Heroine’s background

Lecaros observes that “the heroine’s background is of importance both for the plot and for the development of the governess character” (47). In governess novels, the heroine usually comes from a respectable family that, unfortunately, becomes impoverished. “Novelists represented these daughters of ruined gentlemen as commonly becoming governesses” (Neff, 155). As Lecaros puts it, “the initial loss has a catalytic function in governess novels” (51-2). Usually, the heroine is a daughter of a clergyman, and in many cases, she is an orphan. According to Lecaros, a rapid change and following despair are common in the genre, in addition to this, father of the family often dies unexpectedly (50). As stated above, it is believed that girls sought for the position of governess only when they were forced by the financial situation of the family, however, there are some exceptions. Holcombe states that “only 6 or 7 per cent of all middle-class women teachers had consciously chosen teaching as their career” (12).

Agnes Grey

Agnes is a clergyman’s daughter, and as it is evident from the following mention of her parents, she comes from a decent family:

My father was a clergyman of the north of England, who was deservedly respected by all who knew him and, in his younger days, lived pretty comfortably on the joint income of a small incumbency, and a snug little property of his own. My mother, who married him against the wishes of her friends, was a squire’s daughter, and a woman of spirit. (Brontë, A. 61)

Agnes’s father did not have much money as a parson, and he “troubled his head with revolving endless schemes for the augmentation of his little fortune, for [his wife’s] sake, and ours [the daughters’]” (Brontë, A. 63). Although they were not rich, the father:

liked to see his house comfortable, and his wife and daughters well clothed, and well attended; and besides, he was charitably disposed, and liked to give to the poor, according to his means, or some might think, beyond them. (Brontë, A. 63)

As it is obvious from the above excerpts, Agnes has a very comfortable background, and lives in a happy family.

One day, Agnes's father is suggested by a kind friend, a merchant, to double his private property by entrusting him with the money he spared, promising him a fair share of the profits. But unfortunately,

the vessel, which contained [the] fortune, had been wrecked, and gone to the bottom with all its stores, together with several of the crew, and the unfortunate merchant himself. (Brontë, A. 64)

Thus, the family is suddenly impoverished, which is a typical trait of the governess novel genre. This is the point when Agnes decides to become a governess. But it is not only because she wants to help her family financially, and support herself, but she also wishes to be independent of her family since till then they have taken care of her:

I, being the younger by five or six years, was always regarded as the *child*, and the pet of the family – father, mother, and sister, all combined to spoil me - [...] by ceaseless kindness to make me too helpless and dependent, too unfit for buffeting with the cares and turmoils of life. (Brontë, A. 62)

Also Goreau writes in her introduction to *Agnes Grey* that the heroine's ambition to become a governess is incited by her family's "insistence on condescending to Agnes as the helpless 'baby' of the family" (35).

Agnes is actually very enthusiastic about becoming a governess, which is rather untypical. Lecaros compares this wish to create a life for herself to the wishes of many male characters within the Bildungsroman genre (59):

How delightful it would be to be a governess! To go out into the world; to enter upon a new life; to exercise my unused faculties; to try my unknown powers; to earn my own maintenance, and something to comfort and help my father, mother and sister, besides exonerating them from the provision of my food and clothing; to show papa what his little Agnes could do; to convince mamma and Mary that I was not quite the helpless, thoughtless being they supposed. And then, how charming to be intrusted with the care and education of children! (Brontë, A. 69)

Goreau finds Agnes Grey an exceptional character, and makes the following comment on Agnes's decision to become a governess:

Anne Brontë's Agnes Grey differs from the stock Victorian governess heroine in one essential respect: she actively chooses her employment rather than being constrained to do so by a father's bankruptcy or husband's death – though certainly the financial condition of her family plays an important part in her desire to help. The fact that Agnes Grey looks forward to her first post as governess with eagerness and enthusiasm is crucial to the structure of the book; (43)

Also according to an author Lecaros quotes in her study, Agnes's wish to become a governess is important for the plot (59). Lecaros further adds that Agnes's desire to become a governess makes her hardships more severe (59). However distressed and tormented in her both situations, Agnes's optimism and enthusiasm distinguish her from the other governesses. Agnes is very optimistic about the position of governess and educating children:

I had but to turn from my little pupils to myself at their age, and I should know, at once, how to wing their confidence and affections; how to waken the contrition of the erring; how to embolden the timid, and console the afflicted; how to make Virtue practicable, Instruction desirable, and Religion lovely and comprehensible. [...] To train the tender plants, and watch their buds unfolding day by day! (Brontë, A. 69)

Even after Agnes sees that it is not as she has expected, that her pupils are terrible and unmanageable; her optimism does not diminish:

Unshaken firmness, devoted diligence, unwearied perseverance, unceasing care, were the very qualifications on which I had secretly prided myself, and by which I had hoped in time to overcome all difficulties, and obtain success at last. (Brontë, A. 107)

When Agnes moves from her first situation, which was greatly oppressive, to another one, she keeps her optimistic hopes:

my pupils, being older, would be more rational, more teachable, and less troublesome than the last, they would be less confined to the school-room, and not require that constant labour and incessant watching; (Brontë, A. 114)

The above excerpts demonstrate that Agnes comes from a very comfortable background in spite of the poverty, and lives in a happy family before she accepts her first situation. Whenever feeling miserable, she can find solace in her loving relatives and 'friends', how she calls them in the novel.

Jane Eyre

Jane Eyre is an orphan, she lost her parents when she was about one year old. Unlike Agnes, who is supported by her kind family, she has no relatives and is truly alone in the world. Jane says to Mr Lloyd, the doctor: “I have no father or mother, brothers or sisters.” (Brontë, Ch. 26). As the most of the governesses, Jane is a daughter of a clergyman:

my father was a poor clergyman; that my mother had married him against the wishes of her friends, who considered the match beneath her; that my grandfather Reed was so irritated at her disobedience, he cut her off without a shilling, that after my mother and father had been married a year, the latter caught the typhus fever while visiting among the poor of a large manufacturing town where his curacy was situated, and where that disease was then prevalent; that my mother took the infection from him, and both died within a month of each other. (Brontë, Ch 28)

Subsequently, the poor orphaned baby is adopted by Mr. Reed, her mother’s brother. Unfortunately, he dies shortly after adopting Jane. His wife, Mrs Reed, promises to her dying husband to “rear and maintain [Jane] as one of her own children” (Brontë, Ch. 18). Mrs Reed keeps Jane in her house, however, Jane is emotionally, and often physically too, abused by both Mrs Reed and her three children. Mrs Reed resents that her husband loved Jane more than his own children. Jane is constantly being humiliated and reminded that she is a dependant:

You have no business to take our books; you are a dependant, mamma says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen’s children like us, and eat the same meals we do, and wear clothes at our mamma’s expense. (Brontë, Ch. 12)

This is what Jane’s cousin, John Reed, says to Jane when he finds her reading a book from the library. He is a very wicked boy, who tyrannizes and bullies Jane all the time, sometimes even in his mother’s presence.

Little Jane is reminded also by the Mrs Reed’s servants that she should be grateful to her aunt. Bessie, the maid, says to Jane: “You ought to be aware, miss, that you are under obligations to Mrs Reed: she keeps you: if she were to turn you off you would have to go to the poorhouse” (Brontë, Ch. 14). Jane, already in such a young age, realizes that she is an outcast:

I was a discord in Gateshead Hall; I was like nobody there; I had nothing in harmony with Mrs Reed or her children, or her chosen vassalage. If they did not love me, in fact, as little did I love them. [...] I know that had I been a sanguine, brilliant, careless, exacting, handsome, romping child – thought equally dependent and friendless – Mrs Reed would have endured my presence more complacently; [...] the servants would have been less prone to make me the scapegoat of the nursery. (Brontë, Ch. 17)

At the age of ten, Jane is sent to a charitable school at Lowood. She spends there eight years – six as a pupil, two as a teacher. There are appalling conditions at Lowood – children are starving, have insufficient clothes, a great number of pupils die in the typhus epidemic. After this affair, conditions at Lowood get better, and Jane is quite satisfied there as a teacher. But when Miss Temple, the superintending teacher and Jane's intimate friend, leaves the school, Jane misses her much and longs for a change. And this is the reason why Jane wishes to become a governess: "What do I want? A new place, in a new house, amongst new faces, under new circumstances" (Brontë, Ch. 88). Like Agnes, Jane is excited about becoming a governess:

I was too much excited. A phase of my life was closing to-night, a new one opening to-morrow: impossible to slumber in the interval; I must watch feverishly while the change was being accomplished. (Brontë, Ch. 91)

Jane simply "longed to go where there was life and movement" (Brontë, Ch. 90). As Ibbett writes in her introduction to *Jane Eyre*, Jane "yearns to be independent, reaching outwards from a constrained world to a life of more action, liberty and achievement." Not only boredom at Lowood but also a higher salary motivates Jane to find a new place: "I had a prospect of getting a new situation where the salary would be double what I now received" (Brontë, Ch. 90-1). In the words of Lecaros, for the girls who are orphans and are brought up and educated at boarding schools, it is their natural fate to become governesses (50). Jane seems to be aware of her lot: "I want this [to become a governess] because it is of no use wanting anything better" (Brontë, Ch. 88).

Unlike Agnes, Jane is a deprived child and her life is difficult from her early childhood. Jane is an orphan from a young age and does not know what it is like to be loved by her family and to have home. However, she is probably more apt than Agnes to bear her new situation, and not to suffer so much in the position of governess. According to Lecaros, when the heroine becomes an orphan at a very young age, she is often brought up with a prospect of becoming a governess, she is more reconciled with

her fate. On the contrary, when the heroine is deprived of wealth or family more recently, she is usually much more distressed in her new situation (49). Agnes serves as an example of such a situation – on one hand, she has an advantage of having her own family, but on the other hand, she feels frustrated by the employers' odious behaviour, which is in a sharp contrast to her and her family's moral qualities. Furthermore, with respect to the parentless children, Lecaros claims that "childhood deprivation serves to strengthen them and make them caring and loving towards their own pupils" (63). This shows to be true with Jane in her relation to Adèle.

In the novel, Jane is not the only governess mentioned. The Rivers sisters work as governesses as well. While Jane is an orphan, and becomes a governess from her own accord, though she has not much choice; the Rivers sisters' reason for becoming a governess is different. Like most of the heroines, they are forced to seek places as governesses because of a sudden impoverishment:

their father had some years ago lost a great deal of money by a man he had trusted turning bankrupt; and as he was now not rich enough to give them fortunes, they must provide for themselves. (Brontë, Ch. 339)

The social identity of employers and marginalization of the governess

Governesses were hired especially by aristocratic and upper-class families. Later on, a great number of newly rich middle-class families started to employ governesses as well. By hiring the governess, they wished to show their economic power. Regarding the social identity of employers, a question arises whether it was better to work for upper-class people, or whether an employment among the middle classes was of advantage. According to Lecaros, it might be assumed that a family of higher rank will treat the governess more courteously. While the governess will thus have more independence, and will face less insults, she will be short of friends or companions, nobody will sympathize with her. On the other hand, it might be difficult to work for a middle-class family since the governess's social position within the family is often not clearly defined, and "her own middle-class origin might be felt as a threat there" (95). The author quotes an anonymous writer observing that "the social status of the employer compared to that of the governess" often caused problems (95).

The ambiguous position of the heroine was caused by the social class both of the governess and the employer. Lecaros sees the problem in the fact that

the governess was not treated as an equal. Because of her position as a middle-class woman who was also a domestic hireling, the Victorian governess was trapped in an intermediate and undefined position. [...] She was supposedly her employers' equal, but nonetheless she was paid to work for them (20)

Peterson observes that the families do not know how to treat the governess because of her undefined position – “she is not a relation, not a guest, not a mistress, not a servant – but something made up of all” (10). In the words of Goreau, governesses were not “good enough to associate with their employers, but too good to be friendly with the servants” (41).

As Lecaros further writes in her study, the employers were not sure whether to regard the governess as a family member, or whether to exclude her from their sphere. It is apparent that they tended to choose the second option. The governess thus had no chance to converse with her employers, her social equals; she was left just to the company of the children. When she was present at dinner, or some other event, she was often expected not to join the conversation (249). Hughes observes that “it was the very fact of their ladyhood which caused the difficulties and isolation that they experienced within their employers' home” (98). In the words of Lecaros, “the marginalisation of the governess functions as the employer's strategy to exercise power over an equal” (95). Hughes father remarks that it was often discussed whether the governess should dine with the family. When the governess was expected to do so, she was still made inferior, for example by being offered plainer food than the rest of the company, or by being served last (98). Regarding the question of joining the family dinner, Lecaros claims that it would be expected that the governess dines with the employer since she is a lady. However, she was often served in the nursery, or her room; which signifies that the employers saw her rather as a domestic servant (256). This matter was often mentioned in the novels as well:

When she was not welcomed into the social circle of the family, but still expected to share her meals with the family, eating became something of an ordeal. The matter of eating habits in the employer's house was a cause of difficulty for many governesses and a topic repeatedly brought up in the novels. (Lecaros 257)

The situation was far more arduous when the governess participated some event, where she got into contact with the guests or other noble people outside the family:

The governess was left with the dilemma of whether she was to behave towards her employers' friends with the easy approachability of a family member, or whether she should rather keep the respectful distance of a mere domestic. So excruciating was the problem to all concerned that many employers and their friends adopted the cowardly, though effective, tactic of simple pretending not to 'notice' the governess on those occasions [...] As a result, governesses often found themselves squeezed out of conversations and even ignored altogether. (Hughes 100)

It is evident that governesses were humiliated not only by their employers, but also by the visitors., During the parties, the guests often talked openly on the subject of governesses, though they were aware of the presence of one of them (Lecaros 253). This was also rather degrading. As Neff suggests, not only the employers and the guests were arrogant, but also servants behaved adversely to the governess, being inspired by the disdainful manners of the employer (166). Hughes is in agreement with Neff in the matter of insolent servants saying that

domestic staff were also likely to challenge the governess' right to claim the respect and attention due to a lady. If middle-class employers were anxious to stress then governess' unlikeness to themselves, their servants were equally keen to point out how little separated her situation from their own. (88)

As Holcombe puts it, governesses "were often excluded from the family circle as being little better than servants, and were in turn despised by the servants themselves" (14). Neff quotes a writer from the *Quarterly Review*: "The servants invariably detest her, for she is a dependent like themselves, and yet, for all that, as much their superior in other respects as the family they both serve" (167). McMaster's comment on the servants' attitude towards governesses is in agreement with the above statements. The author remarks that governesses were "socially and educationally above servants, but economically below them", and adds that servants resented the fact that governesses, though their wages were as low as those of servants, behaved like ladies and expected to be treated accordingly (327). As a matter of fact, the governess's "dealings with her employer's own domestic staff were a very real test of whether she was regarded as a lady" (Hughes 94).

The governess's status of incongruity was indicated not only by the employers' and the servants' conduct towards her, but also by the bedroom she was allotted. As Lecaros claims, in the novels, the question of governess's accommodation was often used to point out her status in her employer's house. The Victorian house was socially divided. On the first floor, there were main bedrooms situated, the rooms for children were usually located above their parents' rooms. The schoolroom would be often found upstairs, and the servants typically occupied the top floor. The room of the governess was scarcely ever similar to the room she was used to occupy at home, very often it resembled rather a servant's room (109). Both Hughes (153) and Lecaros (111) observe that the room the governess was to occupy was often one of the worst rooms of the house. Furthermore, Hughes states that "her bedroom was likely to be near that of her pupils [...] in cramped households the governess might even be deprived of her own space altogether", and thus shared the bedroom with her pupils (153). Lecaros describes the governess's room as "scantily furnished and sometimes without a fire", and adds that "such lack of comfort serves to underline the precarious situation of the heroine" and "the location of the chamber emphasizes her feeling of being confined within a house where she does not belong" (111).

Agnes Grey

Mr Bloomfield, Agnes's first employer, is "a retired tradesman, who had realized a very comfortable fortune" (Brontë, A. 70). He is a representative of humbler ranks. As Neff notes, "his family life revealed the absence of the gentility and courtesy" (154). Mr Bloomfield's "favourite beverage was gin and water, of which he took a considerable portion every day" (Brontë, A. 103). He does not appear to be a very sophisticated man, he is rather mean and vulgar. When Agnes once dines with the whole family, Mr Bloomfield makes fuss about meal, and she is not much impressed by his behaviour:

His conduct there did not greatly raised him in my estimation. [...] I was very glad to get out of the room with my pupils; for I never felt so ashamed and uncomfortable in my life for anything that was not my own fault. (Brontë, A. 83-4)

The Bloomfields belonged to the newly rich middle class. As mentioned above, these people were believed to humiliate the governess because of their similar origin. With respect to this fact, Lecaros quotes an author claiming that

in the light of the strong social upward mobility of the Victorian age, [...] the fiction of the time [...] commonly attacked newly rich tradesmen, often making them the villains.” (96)

After the bad experience at Bloomfields’, Agnes is looking for another situation. This time, her mother gives her the following advice:

you should try your fortune in a somewhat higher family – in that of some genuine, thorough-bred gentleman, for such are far more likely to treat you with proper respect and consideration, than those purse-proud trades-people and arrogant upstarts. (Brontë, A. 112)

From what the mother says, it is obvious that upper class people were expected to treat the governess with a greater respect than the ‘upstarts’, this is how she calls the newly rich classes such as the Bloomfields. However, she admits that the high rank does not imply respectful manners:

I have known several among the higher ranks, who treated their governesses quite as one of the family; though some, I allow, are as insolent and exacting as anyone else can be: for there are bad and good in all classes. (Brontë, A. 112)

The rank of Mr Murray, Agnes’s second employer,

appeared to be higher than that of Mr Bloomfield, and doubtless he was one of those genuine thorough-bred gentry my mother spoke of, who would treat his governess with due consideration as a respectable, well-educated lady, the instructor and guide of his children, and not a mere upper servant; (Brontë, A. 113-14)

Unfortunately, as Agnes soon discovers, the state of the family is “unfortunate” (Brontë, A. 121). Mr Murray turns out to be

a blustering, roystering, country squire, a devoted fox-hunter, a skilful horse-jockey and farrier, an active, practical farmer, and a hearty *bon-vivant* [...] Frequently, indeed, his loud laugh reached me from afar, and oftener still I heard him swearing and blaspheming against the footmen, groom, coachman, or some other hapless dependent. (Brontë, A. 119)

“Mrs Murray was a handsome, dashing lady of forty, [...] whose chief enjoyments were [...] in giving or frequenting parties, and in dressing at the very top of the fashion”

(Brontë, A. 119). The Murrays are a nice example of the case when the high rank is not a guarantee of respectful conduct towards the governess.

As far the marginalized position of the governess is concerned, the Bloomfields, a middle class family, do not consider Agnes their equal. Already the cold and distant reception Agnes is given by the mistress signifies that Agnes is not going to be treated with much consideration. As Agnes observes, the lady “was somewhat chilly in her manner, [...]. She was a tall, spare, stately woman, with thick black hair, cold grey eyes, and extremely sallow complexion” (Brontë, A. 74). On account of cold weather, Agnes’s fingers are so chilled that she is not able to handle her knife and fork when being served “beefsteaks and half-cold potatoes” (Brontë, A. 74). While Agnes is struggling with the tough beefsteaks, “the awful lady [is] a spectator to the whole transaction”. After Agnes apologizes for her clumsy handling of the knife and fork, she is astonished by the lady’s cold reply: “‘I dare say you would find it cold,’ replied [Mrs Bloomfield] with a cool, immutable gravity that did not serve to re-assure me” (Brontë, Ch. 75). Agnes has not expected such a cold reception:

[Mrs Bloomfield’s] company was extremely irksome to me, and I could not help feeling that she was cold, grave, and forbidding – the very opposite of the kind, warm-hearted matron my hopes had depicted her to be. (Brontë, A. 80)

According to Lecaros, such a cold behaviour and insensitivity to the governess’s situation foreshadows a stand-offish behaviour of the employer (82). For example, when Mr Bloomfield scolds Agnes for letting the children get wet while playing outside, she is astonished “that he should speak so uncivilly to [her] – their governess, and a perfect stranger to himself” (Brontë, A 82). As Goreau writes, Agnes “is shocked when her first employer behaves toward her as she would be an upper-servant” (44).

Agnes is disdained not only by her employers, but also by other people that visit the house. One of them is Mr Robson, Mrs Bloomfield’s brother:

a nose that seemed to disdain the earth, and little grey eyes [...] with a mixture of real stupidity and affected contempt of all surrounding objects. [...] the unnatural stiffness of his form, showed that the lofty-minded, manly Mr Robson [Mrs Bloomfield’s brother], the scorner of the female sex [...] He seldom deigned to notice me; and when he did, it was with a certain supercilious insolence of tone and manner that convinced me that he was no gentleman, though it was intended to have a contrary effect. (Brontë, A 102)

Another person who is harmful to Agnes is Mr Bloomfield's mother:

now I looked upon her as hypocritical and insincere, a flatterer, and a spy upon my words and deeds [...] She considerably strengthened [Mr Bloomfield's] prejudice against me. (Brontë, A 96-98)

As Agnes says,

Mr Robson and old Mrs Bloomfield were not the only guests whose coming to Wellwood House annoyed me; every visiter disturbed me, [...] not so much because they neglected me (though I did feel their conduct strange and disagreeable in that respect), as because I found it impossible to keep my pupils away from them, as I was repeatedly desired to do (Brontë, A 106).

Even though Agnes is troubled more by the visitors' presence than their disdainful behaviour, it is evident that she is disregarded by these people.

Already the first meeting of Agnes with Mrs Murray implies that neither at her second situation is she treated with respect. After Agnes's arrival at the Murrays', the mistress of the house does not even bother herself to meet Agnes, and when she finally does so, it is far from a kind reception:

I did not see [Mrs Murray] till eleven o'clock on the morning after my arrival, when she honoured me with a visit, just as my mother might step into the kitchen to see a new servant girl – yet not so, either, for my mother would have seen her immediately after her arrival, [...] moreover, she would have addressed her in a more kind and friendly manner, and given her some words of comfort as well as a plain exposition of her duties; but Mrs Murray did neither the one nor the other. (Brontë, A.119)

Such a reception is quite degrading for Agnes, as it is clear from her contrasting the reception she is given to the way her mother welcomes servants. Another thing that annoys Agnes is the fact that the lady never lets Agnes say anything in self-defence when being reproved:

I was about to give the lady some idea of the fallacy of her expectations; but she sailed away as soon as she had concluded her speech. Having said what she wished, it was no part of her plan to await my answer: it was my business to hear, and not to speak. (Brontë, A 207)

Furthermore, Agnes is frequently neglected by people that the Bloomfields meet either at the church, or at their house:

I owe [Mr Hatfield] a grudge for nearly shutting me out of [the carriage]; [...] though I was standing before his face, close beside the carriage steps, waiting to

get in, he would persist in putting them up and closing the door, till one of the family stopped him by calling out that the governess was not in yet: then, without a word of apology, he departed, [...] Mr Hatfield never spoke to me, neither did Sir Hugh or Lady Meltham, nor Mr Harry or Miss Meltham, nor Mr Green or his sisters, nor any other lady or gentleman who frequented that church, nor, in fact, any one that visited at Horton Lodge. (Brontë, A 139)

Mr Hatfield's conduct is very mortifying for Agnes. At another situation, Agnes is again not offered help, but this time, the gentleman is not as rude as Mr Hatfield:

[Harry Meltham] had not attempted to shut me out like Mr Hatfield; neither, of course, had he offered me his assistance [...], but as long as the door had remained open he had stood smirking and chatting. (Brontë, A. 141)

Also the walks back home from the church are "a great nuisance" to Agnes since she is neglected by the ladies and gentlemen:

As none of the [...] ladies and gentlemen ever noticed me, it was disagreeable to walk beside them, as if listening to what they said, or wishing to be thought one of them, while they talked over me or across, and if their eyes, in speaking, chanced to fall on me, it seemed as if they looked on vacancy – as if they either did not see me, or were very desirous to make it appear so. (Brontë, A. 162)

Agnes is also ignored when she accompanies her pupil to the village, where they meet with two ladies:

I, feeling myself to be one too many, left them to their merriment and lagged behind, as usual on such occasions: I had no relish for walking beside Miss Green or Miss Susan like one deaf and dumb, who could neither speak nor be spoken to. (Brontë, A. 184)

When left behind during this walk, Agnes is joined by Mr Weston, the curate. He asks about the Misses Green, but Agnes says she knows anything about them since she "never exchanged a word with them" (Brontë, A., 184). Mr Weston is rather surprised by Agnes's answer since he does not find the girls so uncommunicative. Agnes promptly explains the reason why the ladies do not talk to her: "Very likely they are not [reserved] to people of their own class; but they consider themselves as moving in quite a different sphere from me!" (Brontë, A. 184). In fact, Agnes believes that the girls might "condescend to converse with her, when no better company were at hand" (Brontë, A. 162).

Agnes's marginalized position is indicated also by the worst position in the carriage, which one of her pupils considers "a nasty, horrid place":

my position in the carriage was to be crushed into the corner farthest from the open window, and with my back to the horses, a position which invariably made me sick; and, if I were not actually obliged to leave the church in the middle of the service, my devotions were disturbed with a feeling of languor and sickliness, [...] and a depressing head-ache was generally my companion throughout the day (Brontë, A 126-27)

As far as the behaviour of the servants and nurses is concerned, at Agnes's first situation, "the only person in the house who had any real sympathy for [her] was the nurse; for she has suffered like afflictions, though in a smaller degree" (Brontë, A. 100-1). On the contrary, at the Murrays', Agnes meets with quite rude servants. When Agnes finds out after her arrival that her luggage has not yet been brought up, she tells the problem to the lady's maid, who "with the air of one conferring an unusual favour; [...] vouchsafed to undertake the sending up of [Agnes's] things;" (Brontë, A. 117). Not only took it a long time, but what is more, "the luggage was brought in by a roughlooking maid and a man, neither of them very respectful in their demeanour to [Agnes]" (Brontë, A. 117). The following excerpt shows that the servants were disrespectful to Agnes, and it also explains the cause of such a behaviour:

The servants, seeing in what little estimation the governess was held by both parents and children, regulated their behaviour by the same standard. I have frequently stood up for *them*, at the risk of some injury to myself, against the tyranny and injustice of their young masters and mistresses; [...]; but they entirely neglected my comfort, despised my requests, and slighted my directions. [...] the domestics in general, being ignorant and little accustomed to reason and reflection, are too easily corrupted by the carelessness and bad example of those above them; (Brontë, A. 128)

Regarding the eating habits, at her first situation, Agnes dines with the whole family: "I dined with the children at one, while he and his lady took their luncheon at the same table" (Brontë, A. 82). While working for the Murrays, Agnes does not dine with the employers, and as the following excerpt shows, the dinner could not have been enjoyable for Agnes :

I had all my meals in the school-room with my pupils, at such times as suited their fancy: sometimes they would ring for dinner before it was half-cooked; sometimes they would keep it waiting on the table for above an hour, and then be out of humour because the potatoes were cold, and the gravy covered with cakes of solid fat; (Brontë, A. 127)

As for the accommodation, at her first situation, Agnes shares her room with one of the pupils. After her arrival, Agnes is informed by her mistress: “Mary Ann will require watching, [...] I have ordered her crib to be placed in your room” (Brontë, A. 75). At her second position, Agnes is led into her room by one of her pupils:

[Matilda] took a candle and proceeded before me, up the back stairs, a long, steep, double flight, and through a long, narrow passage, to a small but tolerably comfortable room. (Brontë, A.116)

It is evident from this passage that the room is somewhere upstairs and separated from main bedrooms. Also the back stairs is a sign of a room suitable rather for a servant than for a governess. Moreover, Agnes is surprised that there is a bell missing in her room, the bell is something that a lady would consider a common thing: “I instituted a search for the bell; [...] failing to discover any signs of such a convenience in any corner of the room“ (Brontë, A. 117).

Jane Eyre

Mr Rochester, Jane’s employer, is a landlord; he owns a mansion at Thornfield. He is also in possession of “a small estate of two or three farms [...] thirty miles off” (Brontë, Ch. 273). This is how Mrs Fairfax, the housekeeper, describes Mr Rochester to Jane:

I believe he is considered a just and liberal landlord by his tenants [...] you cannot be always sure whether he is in jest or earnest, whether he is pleased or the contrary: you don’t thoroughly understand him, [...] but that is of no consequence, he is a very good master. (Brontë, Ch.106)

From what Mrs Fairfax says about Mr Rochester, it is certain that he is high-bred, well-educated, intelligent, and affluent:

‘Mr Rochester is so talented and lively in society, that I believe he is a general favourite [...] though you would not think his appearance calculated to recommend him particularly in their [ladies’] eyes: but I suppose his acquirements and abilities, perhaps his wealth and good blood, make amends for any little fault of look.’ (Brontë, Ch.158)

Though Mr Rochester is “very changeful and abrupt” (Brontë, Ch. 128), and has “such a direct way of giving orders, it seemed a matter of course to obey him promptly”

(Brontë, Ch. 131), Jane does not seem worried by his capricious behaviour: “His changes of mood did not offend me, because I saw that I had nothing to do with their alteration; the ebb and flow depended on causes quite disconnected with me (Brontë, Ch. 130). Generally, unlike Agnes, Jane is treated with respect and consideration. Mr Rochester himself tells Jane that he does not “wish to treat [her] like an inferior” (Brontë, Ch. 134). This is how Jane perceives his behaviour towards her:

The ease of [Mr Rochester’s] manner freed me from painful restraint; the friendly frankness, as correct as cordial, with which he treated me, drew me to him. I felt at times as if he were my relation rather than my master. (Brontë, Ch. 147)

As far as the reception of the governess by her employer is concerned, whereas Agnes faces cold reception, Jane is welcomed very warmly:

A more reassuring introduction for a new governess could scarcely be conceived: there was no grandeur to overwhelm, no stateliness to embarrass; and then, as I entered, the old lady [Mrs Fairfax, the housekeeper] got up and promptly and kindly came forward to meet me. (Brontë, Ch. 97)

At first, Jane considers Mrs Fairfax the mistress of the house, so her extremely kind reception surprises Jane twice as much. She later finds out that the old lady is not her employer, but still, she is glad for such a warm reception. Mrs Fairfax’s solicitous care for Jane at her arrival is completely different from the Mrs Bloomfield’s insensibility. The housekeeper invites Jane to come to the fire, conducts Jane to her own chair and helps to remove Jane’s shawl and to untie her bonnet strings. She even orders Leah, the maid, “to make a little hot negus and cut a sandwich or two” (Brontë, Ch. 97). The very first morning, Jane went up to Mrs Fairfax and “was received with an affable kiss and shake of the hand” (Brontë, Ch. 101). As to meeting the employer, Jane sees Mr Rochester, her master, as late as after three months of her stay at Thornfield. But, this is not because of Mr Rochester’s lack of interest, he is just absent from the house. Nevertheless, he does not see Jane to welcome her at his house as soon as he arrives at Thornfield, neither in the morning, since on the day he arrived to Thornfield he “went to bed early that night nor did he rise soon next morning. When he did come down, it was to attend to business” (Brontë, Ch. 120). However, they are to meet in the evening, and the reason of why he has not yet seen Jane is soon explained by Mrs Fairfax:

Mr Rochester would be glad if you and your pupil would take tea with him in the drawing-room this evening, [...] He has been so much engaged all day that he could not ask to see you before. (Brontë, Ch. 121)

Though the reception Jane is given by Mr Rochester can not be considered very nice, it does not mean that he despises his new governess, this is simply because of his caprice:

it appeared he was not in the mood to notice us [Jane with Mrs Fairfax], for he never lifted his head as we approached. [...] he bowed, still not taking his eyes from the group of the dog and child. [...] there was something in the forced stiff bow, in the impatient yet formal tone, which seemed further to express, ‘What the deuce is it to me whether Miss Eyre be there or not? At this moment I am not disposed to accost her.’ (Brontë, Ch. 121)

Surprisingly, Jane is not offended by his moody behaviour, more the contrary, she finds it advantageous to her. The following excerpt explains Jane’s attitude:

I sat down quite disembarassed. A reception of finished politeness would probably have confused me: I could not have returned or repaid it by answering grace and elegance on my part; but harsh caprice laid me under no obligation; on the contrary, a decent quiescence, under the freak of manner, gave me the advantage. (Brontë, Ch. 122)

While Agnes suffers much in both of the situations, Jane is content at Thornfield, she even considers it her home. When she comes back from her visit at Gateshead, she says to Mr Rochester: “Thank you, Mr Rochester, for your great kindness. I am strangely glad to get back again to you; and wherever you are is my home – my only home” (Brontë, Ch. 244). Of course, Jane’s feelings are influenced by her affection for Mr Rochester, and this is the same with Mr Rochester, who is secretly fond of Jane as well. But still, this is not the only reason why Mr Rochester treats Jane so kindly, he also admires her character, he is aware of her “nobleness and magnanimity” (Brontë, Ch. 312).

Regarding the intermediate and undefined position of the governess, unlike Agnes, Jane is respected by her employer. He even invites her to the party, which takes place at Thornfield. Though the reason why he decides to invite Jane might be that he thinks it right not to exclude a governess from such events, his feelings to Jane probably play an important role. Whether he would have invited a governess to whom he would have no affection is questionable. Nevertheless, Jane is present at the party, and

similarly as Agnes, she is neglected and even despised by the visitors. Before the party, Mrs Fairfax gives Jane the following advice:

I'll tell you how to manage so as to avoid the embarrassment of making a formal entrance, which is the most disagreeable part of the business. You must go into the drawing-room while it is empty, before the ladies leave the dinner-table; choose your seat in any quiet nook you like; you need not stay long after the gentlemen come in, unless you please. (Brontë, Ch. 169)

This advice indicates that a presence at such a party was not very comfortable for governesses. It is nice of Mr Rochester that he asks Jane to come to the party, but on the other hand, it is an awkward situation for her. When the ladies enter the room after dinner, they do not show much regard: "I rose and curtsied to them: one or two bent their heads in return; the others only stared at me" (Brontë, Ch. 170). The most painful situation is when the guests start complaining about governesses so loudly so that Jane hears it. Blanche Ingram says to Mr Rochester:

You should hear mamma on the chapter of governesses. Mary and I have had, I should think, a dozen at least in our day; half of them detestable and the rest ridiculous, and all incubi. (Brontë, Ch. 175)

Then, Mrs Ingram adds: "don't mention governesses; the word makes me nervous. I have suffered a martyrdom from their incompetency and caprice" (Brontë, Ch. 176). After this, Mrs Dent reminds in whisper "that one of the anathematized" is present. (Brontë, Ch. 176). But Mrs Ingram, who is aware of this fact, makes a waspish remark:

'I hope it may do her good!' Then, in a lower tone, but still loud enough for me to hear, 'I noticed her; I am a judge of physiognomy, and in hers I see all the faults of her class.' (Brontë, Ch.176)

Afterwards, the guests amuse themselves by sharing stories about how they once teased their governesses.

When the ladies and gentlemen are about to play charades, Mr Rochester does not neglect Jane, and asks her quietly whether she will play. She shakes her head, and he accepts it. Then, also one of the gentlemen remarks that Jane should join them, but Lady Ingram is resolutely against:

One of the gentlemen, Mr Eshton, observing me, seemed to propose that I should be asked to join them; but Lady Ingram instantly negated the notion. 'No,' I heard her say: 'she looks too stupid for any game of the sort.' (Brontë, Ch. 182)

Blanche Ingram behaves scornfully to Jane several times during her stay at Thornfield. As Jane remarks, she was

a great lady, who scorned to touch me with the hem of her robes as passed; who, if ever her dark and imperious eye fell on me by chance, would withdraw it instantly as from an object too mean to merit observation. (Brontë, Ch. 184)

When Blanche Ingram happens to meet with Jane at the window, “she curled her lip and moved to another casement ” (Brontë, Ch. 188). Or when Jane is forced to disturb her and Mr Rochester while playing billiards, Miss Ingram behaves in a snobbish way:

It required some courage to disturb so interesting a party; [...] I approached the master where he stood at Miss Ingram’s side. She turned as I drew near, and looked at me haughtily: her eyes seemed to demand, ‘What can the creeping creature want now?’ and [...] she made a movement as if tempted to order me away. (Brontë, Ch. 221)

Blanche Ingram’s scornful behaviour towards Jane can be interpreted in two ways – she either disdains governesses in general, or she is jealous of Jane since she might sense the mutual affection between Mr Rochester, her potential husband, and Jane.

Next to the conceited visitors, Jane faces another haughty behaviour while visiting her dying aunt, and meeting with her cousins:

Young ladies have a remarkable way of letting you know that they think you a ‘quiz’ without actually saying the words. A certain superciliousness of look, coolness of manner, nonchance of tone, express fully their sentiments on the point, without committing them by any positive rudeness in word or deed. (Brontë, Ch. 227)

In the novel, besides Jane, there are another governesses mentioned, who are disdained by their employers – Diana and Mary Rivers, Jane’s cousins. These accomplished and intellectual women work as governesses in wealthy families. By several references to their positions it is indicated that these well-bred and intelligent women are treated without respect:

Diana and Mary were soon to leave Moor House, and return to the far different life and scene which awaited them, as governesses in large, fashionable, south-of-England city, where each held a situation in families by whose wealthy and haughty members they were regarded only as humble dependants, and who neither knew nor sought one of their innate excellences, and appreciated only their acquired accomplishments as they appreciated the skill of their cook or taste of their waiting-woman. (Brontë, Ch. 349)

As to the conduct of the Mr Rochester's employees towards Jane, it must be noted that the housekeeper, the French nurse and also other servants behave respectfully to Jane. It is obvious that Jane is very happy among them. For instance, when Jane comes back from her visit of Mrs Reed, all of them are glad to see her:

Mrs Fairfax received me with her usual plain friendliness. Leah smiled, and even Sophie bid me 'bon soir' with glee. This was very pleasant; there is no happiness like that of being loved by your fellow-creatures, and feeling that your presence is an addition to their comfort. (Brontë, Ch. 244)

Regarding Jane's room, it is also situated upstairs, on the top of, it is next to the housekeeper's house, but unlike Agnes's employers, Mrs Fairfax chose the place with consideration:

I will show you your bedroom. I've had the room next to mine prepared for you; it is only a small apartment, but I thought you would like it better than one of the large front chambers: to be sure they have finer furniture, but they are so dreary and solitary, I never sleep in them myself. (Brontë, Ch. 99)

Though in the gallery through which Jane is introduced into her room she does not feel very comfortable, she likes her new room:

[Mrs Fairfax] led the way upstairs. The steps and banisters were of oak; the staircase window was high and latticed; both it and the long gallery into which the bedroom doors opened looked as if they belonged to a church rather than house. [...] and I was glad when finally ushered into my chamber, to find it of small dimensions, and furnished in ordinary modern style. (Brontë, Ch. 99)

While Agnes is not content with her accommodation, Jane has positive feelings about her room. To be sure, the room is of small size, the furniture ordinary; but this is still better than Lowood conditions:

The chamber looked such a bright little place to me as the sun shone in between the gay blue chints window curtains, showing papered walls and a carpeted floor, so unlike the bare planks and stained plaster of Lowood, that my spirits rose at the view. (Brontë, Ch. 99)

Terms of employment – paucity salary and undefined duties

In the governess-novel genre, the question of pay has a symbolic function. It serves to show the unfortunate conditions of the governess profession. As to the wages,

they varied. Neff states that according to *Fraser's*, the usual annual rate was “thirty-five pounds, although thirty was a common salary” (158). Peterson claims that “pay ranged from £15 to £100 a year. [...] The average salary probably fell between £20 and £45 a year” (7-8). These numbers accord with the average salary referenced above by Neff. Also Goreau mentions the pay of £100 a year as the governess's largest potential remuneration, “but salaries of £30 to £40 a year were more common“ (41). According to Holcombe, the highest salary was £65 a year, which is a lower number than those given by other authors, the lowest remuneration was £10. The usual pay for governesses was about £25, which corresponds with the average salaries stated above (14). Peterson finds the pay “notoriously low”, and adds:

Governesses were, of course, housed and fed, but they were expected to pay for such expenses as laundry, travel, and medical care. They had to dress appropriately, and it was for them to make their own provisions for unemployment and old age. A governess often tried to support a parent or a dependent sister or brother as well (7).

Lecaros agrees with Peterson in stating that for governesses “laundry and clothes were not their only expenses [...] many governesses were actually breadwinners for family members” (129).

According to Lecaros, the main reason why the salaries were so poor was the overcrowded and competitive governess market; thus, the governesses had no choice (120). Goreau states the same reason for paltry remunerations governesses were paid:

The bank failures of the 1830s and consequent economic hardship had swollen the ranks of gently bred women who were driven to seek employment. The strong competition further depressed salaries that were already marginal. (41)

There might be another reason of such low salaries. Lecaros points out the fact that the mistress of the house imposed “her traditional maternal duties” on the governess. On that account, it was not clear how to pay the governess, if she was to do tasks that would have been done for free if performed by the mother (121).

Neff observes that though the pay was usually rather low, governesses were expected to offer a wide range of accomplishments and qualities (159). The employers also requested a large number of duties. In the novels, the fact that the governess is overloaded by a range of tasks was often used to underline the mortification of the heroine (Lecaros 100). Moreover, the duties were usually undefined. In the words of

Neff, the governess “was expected to be generally useful. Any leisure from her schoolroom tasks could be filled with needle-work for a thrifty housewife (172). Also Holcombe observes that, besides the task of instruction, governesses were charged with other jobs assigned to the servants such as nurses and maids. They were expected to “make themselves generally useful wherever needed“ (12). As Hughes maintains,

the governess was responsible for the total welfare of her young charges. While she was competent to instruct in a wide range of academic subjects, her main task was to provide the round-the-clock moral and social supervision [...] Her role had often been that of moral guide and sympathetic older friend. (21)

Peterson’s comment on the governess’s duties is in accordance with both Neff’s and Hughes’s descriptions of the duties stated above:

The duties of a governess in a household were as varied as the salary she was paid. [...] Constant supervision of pupils seems to have been a common duty of governesses, and would have kept them busy all day, leaving little time for a life of their own (8).

Agnes Grey

Agnes’s first employer, Mr Bloomfield, “could not be prevailed upon to give a greater salary than twenty-five pounds to the instructress of his children” (Brontë, A. 70). In her second position, Agnes is paid twice as much: “[the Murrays] would consent to give me fifty pounds, the sum my mother bade me name as the salary I should require” (Brontë, A. 112). Agnes is an example of a governess doing her best to support her family:

I flattered myself I was benefiting my parents and sister by my continuance here; for, small as the salary was, I still was earning something, and with strict economy I could easily manage to have something to spare for them, (Brontë, A. 91)

Even though Agnes’s salary is higher than that given by the Bloomfields, it is still not much since Agnes, as many other governesses, has to spend almost half her yearly salary on other expenses:

I must have decent clothes becoming my station, I must, it seemed, put out my washing, and also pay for my four annual journeys between Horton Lodge and home; [...] twenty pounds, or little more, would cover those expenses, and then there would be thirty for the bank, or little less; what a valuable addition to our stock! (Brontë, A 114)

As for the duties, Agnes serves as an example of an overstrained governess. In her first post, it is demanded of her to educate three children, moreover Mrs Bloomfield asks her to watch one of her daughters, and to “overlook her washing and dressing, and take care of her clothes” (Brontë, A. 75). It is obvious that Agnes is very busy, since by the end of Agnes’s first day on duty she has not been able to unpack her suitcase yet, and moreover, she seems to be really tired:

At seven, I had to put Mary Ann to bed; then I played with Tom till eight, when he too went, and I finished my letter, and unpacked my clothes, which I had hitherto found no opportunity for doing, and, finally, went to bed myself. (Brontë, A. 84)

When Agnes is distressed and feels like crying, she does not want to do so for the following reason: ”my employments were too numerous, my leisure moments were too precious to admit of much time being given to fruitless lamentations” (Brontë, A. 94).

In her next situation, Agnes is expected to

renden [the girls] as superficially attractive and showily accomplished as they could possibly be made, without present trouble or discomfort to themselves; and I [Agnes] was to act accordingly – to study and strive to amuse and oblige, instruct, refine, and polish, with the least possible exertion on their part, and no exercise of authority of mine. With regard to the two boys, [...] I was to get the greatest possible quantity of Latin grammar and Valpy’s Delectus into their heads, in order to fit them for school [...], without trouble to themselves (Brontë, A. 120)

Rosalie, the oldest daughter and one of Agnes’s pupils, applied herself only to showy accomplishments such as ”French, German, music, singing, dancing, fancy-work, and a little drawing. As to the drawing, she was frequently assisted by Agnes. It was the same with fancy-work – “all the tedious parts of her [Rosalie’s] work were shifted on to my [Agnes’s] shoulders” (Brontë, A. 122). Though Agnes has some spare time, she can not enjoy it much since she is supposed to be at hand to the pupils all day long:

though I had many spare minutes during the day, I seldom could look upon an hour as entirely my own, since, where everything was left to the caprices of Miss Matilda and her sister, there could be no order or regularity, and what ever occupation I chose, when not actually busied about them or their concerns, I had, as it were, to keep my loins girded, my shoes on my feet, and my staff in my hand; for not to be immediately forthcoming when called for, was regarded as a grave and inexcusable offence, not only by my pupils and their mother, but by the very servant, (Brontë, A. 157)

This excerpt shows that Agnes is treated without consideration even as far as her duties are concerned. Everything she does is regulated by her pupils, who keep her busy all day long. If Agnes happens to have some spare time, the pupils do not give her a chance to enjoy it and relax. This must have been really stressful for Agnes.

Jane Eyre

It is written in the letter Jane receives from Mrs Fairfax as a reaction to her advertisement that “the salary is thirty pounds per annum” (Brontë, Ch. 90). From the scene when Jane asks Mr Rochester a permission to leave and see her dying aunt, it gets clear that Jane is not paid regularly. As soon as he realizes that he has not paid Jane, he does his best to set it right, and he proves to be a generous and solicitous employer:

‘Well, you must have some money; you can’t travel without money, and I dare say you have not much: I have given you no salary yet [...].’
Soon he produced his pocket-book:
‘Here,’ said he, offering me a note; it was fifty pounds, and he owed me but fifteen. I told him I had no change.
‘I don’t want change; you know that. Take your wages.’
(Brontë, Ch. 223)

Concerning Jane’s responsibilities, her main duty is to educate but one pupil, a girl under ten years old. Jane does not appear to be overstrained, even though she is sometimes required to perform tasks that are not typical for the position of governess. For example, Mrs Fairfax asks Jane to assist at preparations for the great house party that is to be held at Thornfield:

From school duties [Adele] was exonerated: Mrs Fairfax had pressed me into her service, and I was all day in the storeroom, helping (or hindering) her and the cook; learning to make custards and cheese-cakes and French pastry, to truss game and garnish dessert-dishes. (Brontë, Ch 163)

It is evident that Jane does not mind extra work, she is always willing to help. Even Mr Rochester reminds Jane her good will: “You ran downstairs and demanded of Mrs Fairfax some occupation: the weekly house accounts to make up, or something of that sort” (Brontë, Ch. 310). Jane is happy at Thornfield, she feels comfortable with all the people from the house, and maybe it seems natural to her to do some additional work.

Pupils – little angels or wicked characters?

In governess novels, pupils often make the governess's life miserable. Nevertheless, Peterson claims that the children's behaviour was not solely bad, but she admits that it was often the case:

There was sometimes respect and affection, but more often there was disobedience, snobbery, and sometimes physical cruelty. A frequent theme of governess-novels was the triangle of governess, parents and children. (12)

Neff points out that the relation of the governess and the pupils was an extreme trouble (168). As Hughes puts it, the governess had no authority, and the children quickly took advantage of her powerlessness. They showed no respect to the governess, and were ungovernable. The governess was not allowed to punish them. If any problem with discipline occurred, she was asked to refer to their mother, who had no idea whatsoever of the difficulties the governess had to face up, since she saw her children just an hour or two a day (65-8). Also Neff claims that because of the loose attitude of the parents, the governess had no authority. It was extremely difficult to cope with the children since "complaints to the mother about the behaviour of the children had no effect. They were to do as they pleased" (171). The governess gets into a very painful situation – the parents require her to manage the children, when she fails to cope with them, they often get angry with her. On the other hand, they do not wish the governess to reproach and punish their children. Such an attitude is rather absurd and harmful to Agnes. If we consider the fact that most mothers were convinced that "their children were little angels who could be controlled with nothing more than a firm word and a winning smile" (Hughes 67), then, as Lecaros remarks, there is a question whether the governess should inform the parents about the children's misbehaviour, or whether she should rather keep it for herself (184). "Although most heroines do their best to fit in and conform to what is expected, they do not spend "a happy life" with their employers (Lecaros 273).

What was also frustrating, "the governess was permitted to love her pupils, [...] she was not to expect or, worse still, solicit any love from her pupils in return" (Hughes 58). Neff quotes a writer from the *Quarterly Review*: "Her pupils may love her, and she may take the deepest interest in them, but they cannot be her friends" (167). As Lecaros puts it, in many governess novels, the disagreeable employers were against the affection

of their children towards the governess. However, in some novels, “there is no mistress in the house, and there the governess naturally finds greater outlet for maternal feelings for her pupils” (194).

Agnes Grey

At her first situation, Agnes faces great difficulties with the pupils, she is tormented by them. Agnes finds their behaviour shocking, especially that of Tom, who whips his rocking-horse, strikes his sister, traps birds and then torments them. At the beginning, Agnes is very enthusiastic about educating young children, but she soon realizes it will not be that easy with the Bloomfields:

My task of instruction and surveillance, instead of becoming easier as my charges and I got better accustomed to each other, became more arduous as their characters unfolded. [...] my pupils had no more notion of obedience than a wild, unbroken colt. (Brontë, A. 84)

In the words of Neff, Agnes “was at the mercy of the children, like a slave (168). During the walks, Agnes has no choice but to do what the pupils choose to do:

I must go with *them* wherever they chose to lead me. I must run, walk, or stand exactly as it suited their fancy. [...] they seemed to prefer the dirtiest places, and the most dismal occupations. But there was no remedy; either I must follow them, or keep entirely apart from them, and thus appear neglectful of my charge. (Brontë, A. 81-2)

Tom Bloomfield, the oldest of the children, is a very rude and aggressive boy, who

manifested a determination to keep, not only his sisters, but his governess in order, by violent manual and pedal applications; [...] I determined to refrain from striking him even in self-defence; and in his most violent moods, my only resource was to throw him on his back, and hold his hands and feet till the frenzy was somewhat abated. (Brontë, A. 84-5)

Agnes has real troubles during the lessons, she is forced to struggle with the pupils, who refuse to do the tasks in the school-room:

Often [Tom Bloomfield] would positively refuse to learn, or to repeat his lessons, or even to look at his book. [...] As there were no settled hours for study and play, I resolved to give my pupils a certain task, [...] and till this was done, however weary I was, or however perverse they might be, nothing short of parental interference should induce me to suffer them to leave the school-room; even if I should sit with my chair against the door to keep them in. Patience,

Firmness, and Perseverance were my only weapons; [...] The task of instruction was as arduous for the body as the mind. I had to run after my pupils to catch them, to carry, or drag them to the table, and often forcibly to hold them there, till the lesson was done. (Brontë, A. 85-6)

Neither Marry Ann, Tom's sister, is willing to learn:

She [Mary Ann] apparently preferred rolling on the floor to any other amusement. Down she would drop like a leaden weight; and when I, with great difficulty, had succeeded in rooting her thence, I had still to hold her up with one arm, while, with the other, I held the book from which she was to read or spell her lesson. [...] she generally preferred lying there like a log till dinner or tea time, [...] and would come crawling out with a grin of triumph on her round, red face. (Brontë, A. 87)

Agnes tries all the possible methods to get her do the task, but her efforts are in vain, the child is simply unruly:

In vain I argued, coaxed, entreated, threatened, scolded; in vain I kept her in from play, or, if obliged to take her out, refused to play with her, or to speak kindly, or have anything to do with her; in vain I tried to set before her the advantages of doing as she was bid, and being loved and kindly treated in consequence, and the disadvantages of persisting in her absurd perversity. (Brontë, A. 88)

As it is obvious from the above excerpts, Agnes's task of instruction was utterly arduous and exhausting. She once sighs that "all [the children] were determined to 'be naughty, and to tease Miss Grey, and put her in a passion'" (Brontë, A. 94). One of the reasons of the pupils' disobedience is the fact that Agnes has no means how to gain the pupils' favour, neither is she allowed to punish them:

I had no rewards to offer, and as for punishments, I was given to understand, the parents reserved that privilege to themselves; and yet they expected me to keep my pupils in order. (Brontë, A. 84)

The problem is that the children are not "guided by the fear of anger", neither "by the desire of approbation" (Brontë, A. 84). Agnes is convinced that "a few sound boxes on the ear" or "a good birch rod might have been servicable" (Brontë, A. 84-5). Mrs Bloomfield cautions Agnes "to mention [the children's] defects to no one but herself" (Brontë, A. 79). But as Agnes's mother warns her "to mention them as little as possible to *her*, for people did not like to be told of their children's faults" (Brontë, A. 79), Agnes decides not to complain about the children. As a consequence, the parents are not

aware of the hardships Agnes has with the children. Very often, they are unjust to Agnes since they blame her for bad disposition and misbehaviour of their children. The parents' conduct restricts the governess's power, they do not support her with their authority. Agnes always does her best to keep the children in order, but unfortunately without success, then she is usually scolded or given "black looks" or "testy observations" from her employers (Brontë, A. 90). For example, when an awful shriek brings Mrs Bloomfield upstairs to check what the matter is, and Agnes informs her that Mary Ann is not willing to finish her lessons, Mrs Bloomfield's reaction is as follows:

'But Mary Ann must be a *good* girl, and finish her lessons.' This was blandly spoken to the child. 'And I hope I shall never hear such terrible cries again!' And fixing her cold, stony eyes on me with a look that could not be mistaken, she would shut the door, and walk away. (Brontë, A. 88)

Mrs Bloomfield is cross with Agnes also when she does not manage to keep Mary Ann out of the nursery:

the more I strove to keep [Mary Ann] out of [the nursery]; the oftener she went, and the longer she stayed – to the great dissatisfaction of Mrs Bloomfield, who, I well knew, would impute all the blame of the matter to me. (Brontë, A. 89)

Though the children are unruly and ill-mannered, the parents find their children little angels. They have got absolutely false ideas of them. This is how Mrs Bloomfield describes her children's dispositions to Agnes before she has had a chance to get to know them personally:

'I think they are clever children, and very apt to learn, especially the little boy; he is, I think, the flower of the flock – a generous, noble-spirited boy, one to be led, but not driven, and remarkable for always speaking the truth. [...] His sister Marry Ann [...] is a very good girl upon the whole.' (Brontë, A. 75)

As it is very soon revealed how evil the children are, Agnes realizes how unbelievably mistaken their mother is. The parents are not aware of their children's wicked characters since they do not spend much time with them, and moreover, the children are extremely sly and two-faced. Even the youngest daughter is rather malicious:

As [little Fanny Bloomfield], generally, was pretty quiet in her parents' presence, and they were impressed with the notion of her being a remarkably gentle child, her falsehoods were readily believed, and her loud uproars led them to suspect harsh and injudicious treatment on my part; and when, at length, her bad disposition became manifest, even to their prejudiced eyes, I felt that the whole was attributed to me. (Brontë, A. 90)

The Bloomfields often find Agnes irresponsible when they find their children “dabbling in the forbidden well, talking to the coachman in the stables, or revelling in the filth of the farm-yard” (Brontë, A. 98). They sometimes find Agnes “stupidly standing by”, but they are not aware that Agnes has “previously exhausted [her] energy in vain attempts to get them away” (Brontë, A. 98). On rainy afternoons Agnes could not prevent the children “running down to tease their parents [...] especially when the visitors were in the house” (Brontë, A. 98-9). Though Mrs Bloomfield requires Agnes to keep the children in the school-room, she “would never chide them for leaving it, or trouble herself to send them back” (Brontë, A. 99). The children are misbehaved in the presence of the guests, and their conduct is absolutely improper:

[the pupils] would indecently and clamorously interrupt the conversation of their elders, tease them with the most impertinent questions, roughly collar the gentlemen, climb their knees uninvited, hang about their shoulders or rifle their pockets, pull the ladies’ gowns, disorder their hair, tumble their collars, and importunately beg for their trinkets. (Brontë, A. 106)

Mrs Bloomfield must have been really ashamed of such a misbehaviour, but what is surprising, she does not do anything to prevent it. She expects Agnes to cope with the children, though the mother is the one who has a greater authority and respect:

Mrs Bloomfield had the sense to be shocked and annoyed at all this, but she had not sense to prevent it. She expected me to prevent it; [...] I strained every nerve to do so; - by striving to amuse [the children], I endeavoured to attract them to my side; by the exertion of such authority as I possessed, and by such severity as I dared to use, I tried to deter them from tormenting the guests; and by reproaching their unmannerly conduct, to make them ashamed to repeat it. But they knew no shame – they scorned authority which had no terrors to back it; (Brontë, A. 106-7)

Agnes assumes that the parents refuse to reprimand the “mischiveous, turbulent” children “either from indolence, or the fear of becoming unpopular with the said rebellious gang” (Brontë, A. 93). Agnes is expected to keep the children in order, but whatever she does to keep them under control seems to be wrong in the eyes of her employers:

If I were quiet at the moment, I was conniving at their disorderly conduct, if (as was frequently the case), I happened to be exalting my voice to enforce order, I was using undue violence, and setting the girls a bad example by such ungentleness of tone and language. (Brontë, A. 98)

Agnes has no authority since she is not allowed to punish the children, neither can she raise her voice; it is no wonder that it is difficult for her to manage the children. What is more, the parents often thwart her efforts to make the children fulfill their tasks. For instance, when Agnes tells the children that “they should not taste their supper till they had picked up everything from the carpet” (Brontë, A. 100), the girls have no problem with that, but Tom refuses to tidy the room, and gets violent. When Mrs Bloomfield comes into the room, and is explained the matter, she does not insist on Tom tidying the room, which results in Tom’s sneering at Agnes:

all [Mrs Bloomfield] did was to send for the nursery-maid to put the room in order, and bring Master Bloomfield his supper.
‘There now,’ cried Tom, triumphantly, looking up from his viands with his mouth almost too full for speech. ‘There now, Miss Grey! You see I have got my supper in spite of you: and I haven’t picked up a single thing!’ (Brontë, A. 100)

The experience of the Bloomfields’ nurse proves that the employers do not tolerate any kind of punishment on the part of the governess or the nurse. The nurse commiserates with Agnes since she is aware of the hardships Agnes undergoes with such wicked children. Interestingly, she tells Agnes that she has been even dismissed for hitting the children:

I don’t vex myself o’er ‘em as you do. [...] I hit ‘em a slap sometimes; and them little uns – I gives ‘em a good whipping now and then – there’s nothing else ull do for ‘em, as what they say. Howsever, I’ve lost my place for it.’ [...] Misses gave me warning a three-wik sin’. [...] but I couldn’t hold my hand off ‘em at nothing [...]. (Brontë, A. 101)

What also lessens Agnes’s authority is the way how the Bloomfields refer to their children. Agnes is “surprised that [Mr Bloomfield] should nominate his children Master and Miss Bloomfield” (Brontë, A. 82). According to Agnes,

the little words Miss and Master seemed to have a surprising effect in repressing all familiar, open-hearted kindness, and extinguishing every gleam of cordiality that might arise between us. (Brontë, A. 118)

Though Agnes finds it absurd, and does not agree with it, it has to be respected:

my calling the little Bloomfields by their simple names had been regarded as an offensive liberty, as their parents had taken care to show me, by carefully designating them *Master* and *Miss* Bloomfield, ect., in speaking to me. [...] the whole affair struck me as so very absurd; (Brontë, A. 118)

Agnes's feelings are particularly wounded when she is dismissed by Mrs Bloomfield, who ensures Agnes that her "character and general conduct [are] unexceptionable", but she is not satisfied with the children's little improvement. Agnes is, of course, accused of insufficient care. Mr and Mrs Bloomfield

felt it their duty to seek some other mode of instruction. Though superior to most children of their years in abilities, they were decidedly behind them in attainments, their manners were uncultivated, and their tempers unruly. And this she attributed to a want of sufficient firmness, and diligent, persevering care on my part. (Brontë, A. 107)

This accusation is very unjust towards Agnes since she was doing her best to cultivate the children. She would like to defend herself, but she is just not able to speak:

Unshaken firmness, devoted diligence, unwearied perseverance, unceasing care, were the very qualifications on which I had secretly prided myself, and by which I had hoped in time to overcome all difficulties, and obtain success at last. I wished to say something in my own justification, but in attempting to speak, I felt my voice falter, and rather than testify any emotion, or suffer the tears to overflow that were already gathering in my eyes, I chose to keep silence, and bear all, like a self-convicted culprit. (Brontë, A. 107)

As Agnes says, "however you may labour to fulfil your duty, your efforts are baffled and set at naught by those beneath you, and unjustly censured and misjudged by those above" (Brontë, A. 93). At the Bloomfields, Agnes is "in a constant state of agitation and anxiety all day long", after her dismissal, she comes back home "a good deal paler and thinner"(Brontë, A. 111).

In her second situation, Agnes suffers again, but this time it is more a psychological strain. She is tyrannized over by her pupils. Furthermore, she is frustrated by the wicked and conceited characters of the family. At the beginning, she has got four pupils – two boys and two girls. The boys are ill-bred and difficult to educate, but to Agnes's relief, they are soon sent to school during the year. John, who is eleven, is "as rough as a young bear, boisterous, unruly, unprincipled, untaught, unteachable" (Brontë, A. 124). Charles, who is one year younger than his brother, is

his mother's peculiar darling [...] a pettish, cowardly, capricious, selfish little fellow, only active in doing mischief, and only clever in inventing falsehoods, [...] to bring odium upon others; in fact, Master Charles was a very great nuisance to me: it was a trial of patience to live with him peaceably; to watch over him was worse; and to teach him, or pretend to teach him, was inconceivable. (Brontë, A. 125)

Agnes has to follow weird principles during lessons - “if [Charles] made mistakes in his little easy sums in arithmetic, they were to be shewn him at once, and the sum done for him, [...] he took no pains to avoid mistakes” (Brontë, A. 125). Agnes does not agree with such rules, but she has no choice:

Yet I did not invariably confine myself to these rules; it was against my conscience to do so; but I seldom could venture to deviate from them in the slightest degree, without incurring the wrath of my little pupil, and subsequently of his mamma, to whom he would relate my transgressions, maliciously exaggerated, or adorned with embellishments of his own; and often, in consequence, was I on the point of losing or resigning my situation; (Brontë, A. 126)

After some time, there are just two girls left to be educated by Agnes. Matilda, who is about thirteen years old, is

barbarously ignorant, indocile, careless, and irrational, and consequently very distressing to one who had the task of cultivating her understanding, reforming her manners, and aiding her to acquire those ornamental attainments [...] she was reckless, headstrong, violent, and unamenable to reason, [...] from her father’s example, she had learnt to swear like a trooper. (Brontë, A. 124)

Matilda’s behaviour during the lessons would “drive any governess to despair” (Brontë, A. 123). The girl abuses Agnes for interrupting her with corrections, or for not rectifying her mistakes before they were made, or something equally unreasonable (Brontë, A.123). Rosalie, the oldest child of the family, is sixteen years old. When she first met Agnes

she was cold and haughty, then insolent and overbearing; but on a further acquaintance, she gradually laid aside her airs, and in time, became as deeply attached to me as it was possible for *her* to one of my character and position; (Brontë, A.121).

Rosalie does not have a very good character, but in Agnes’s eyes she is not bad, she has just not been given a proper instruction how to behave :

she had not been taught to moderate her desires, to control her temper or bridle her will, or to sacrifice her own pleasure for the good of others; her temper being naturally good, she was never violent or morose, but from constant indulgence and habitual scorn of reason, she was often testy and capricious; her mind had never been cultivated. (Brontë, A.122)

As to the hours of study, they are not set. The pupils themselves decide when they feel like learning. Agnes is in a very humiliating position, the children often change their mind and do not pay regard to Agnes's needs:

my judgement or convenience was never once consulted. Sometimes Matilda and John would send the maid to call me up at half-past five, without any scruple or apology; sometimes, I was told to be ready precisely at six, and having dressed in a hurry, came down to an empty room and after waiting a long time in suspense, discovered that they had changed their minds, and were still in bed; [...] I was kept waiting for breakfast, till I was almost ready to faint; [...] Often they would do their lessons in the open air, [...] I frequently caught cold by sitting on the damp grass, or from exposure to the evening dew, or some such insidious draught, [...] they might have been taught some consideration for others. (Brontë, A.127-8)

The pupils' conduct during the lessons is disrespectful, they do not pay much attention to Agnes. At the same, they literally tyrannize Agnes over, and scold her for being inattentive. This is quite unfair to Agnes. What is more, they threaten Agnes with snitching to their mother:

Their indecorous manner of doing their lessons was quite as remarkable as the caprice displayed in their choice of time and place. While receiving my instructions, or repeating what they had learnt, they would lounge upon the sofa, lie on the rug, stretch, yawn, talk to each other, or look out for the window; whereas, I could not so much as stir the fire, or pick up the handkerchief I had dropped, without being rebuked for inattention by one of my pupils, or told that 'mamma would not like me to be so careless.' (Brontë, A 128)

The pupils hurt Agnes in many other ways. For instance, Rosalie is extremely self-centered and arrogant. Once she comes to Agnes, who is reading a long and extremely interesting letter of her sister, and tells her to "put away that dull, stupid letter", so that Agnes could listen to her talking about the forthcoming ball. Rosalie is sure that her "talk must be far more amusing than [the letter]" (Brontë, A. 130). Also her comment on the paper on which the letter is written reveals her snobbish character:

'You should tell the good people at home not to bore you with such long letters [...] do bid them to write on proper note-paper, and not on those great vulgar sheets! You should see the charming little lady-like notes mamma writes to her friends.' (Brontë, A. 130)

In spite of the fact that the girls are older than Agnes's previous pupils, the Bloomfields, and are not that naughty and troublesome; the sisters torment Agnes mentally. They absolutely lack consideration for others. Agnes suffers a lot in the company of such

haughty people, they are in contrast with her warm-hearted family members. Agnes is depressed by the girls' terrible conduct towards the cottagers on their father's estate, by their hypocrisy, by their meanness and heartlessness. As Agnes says, "to submit and oblige was the governess's part, to consult their own pleasure was that of the pupils" (Brontë, A. 161). The Murray girls are particularly cruel when they suspect that Agnes is in love with Mr Weston, the new curate. They make fun of her feelings towards him. When they find out that Agnes once met Mr Weston at one of the cottagers's house, they do anything to prevent Agnes from meeting him there:

I intended to have spent the evening with Nancy Brown, [...] but my kind pupil [Rosalie] took care I should spend it neither there nor anywhere else beyond the limits of the school-room, by giving me a piece of music to copy, which kept me closely occupied till bed-time. (Brontë, A. 194)

They even inhibit Agnes from going to church that often, where she would meet with Mr Weston. And when Agnes does attend the mass, the girls use various pretexts to keep her away from Mr Weston:

I was debarred the pleasure of seeing Mr Weston, or hearing his voice, [...] I could not even see him at church, for Miss Murray, under some trivial pretext, chose to take possession of that corner in the family pew which had been mine ever since I came; [...] I must sit with my back to the pulpit, [...] Now, also, I never walked home with my pupils: they said their mamma thought it did not look well to see three people out of the family walking, and only two going in the carriage; and, as they greatly preferred walking in fine weather, I should be honoured by going with the seniors. [...] I knew these were false excuses, but I made no objections. (Brontë, A. 197)

The girls often lie to Agnes, and make her stay at home:

If I had a cold, or any slight indisposition, they took advantage of that to make me stay at home; and often they would tell me they were not going again that day, themselves, and then pretend to change their minds, and set off without telling me, so managing their departure that I never discovered the change of purpose till too late. (Brontë, A. 197)

After they come back from the church, they tease Agnes by "an animated account of a conversation they had had with Mr Weston" (Brontë, A. 197). What is more, they not only lie to Agnes, but they even lie about her to people she cares about. Then, they maliciously indulge themselves in telling Agnes about their lies:

And he asked if you were ill, Miss Grey [...] but we told him you were quite well, only you didn't want to come to church – so he'll think you're turned wicked. (Brontë, A. 198)

When Mr Weston or Nancy Brown, a poor woman Agnes visits to read from the Bible for her, ask after Agnes, the girls give them false answers. And of course they find pleasure in informing Agnes about their lies:

‘Rosalie told him you [Agnes] were quite well, but you were always so burried in your books that you had had no pleasure in anything else.’
‘What an idea he must have of me!’ I thought.
‘[...] we tell [Nancy Brown] you are so fond of reading and drawing that you can do nothing else.’
(Brontë, A. 198)

Moreover, Rosalie flirts with Mr Weston in the presence of Agnes:

instead of returning the salute with a stiff, ungracious bow, she accosted [Mr Weston] with one of her sweetest smiles, [...] began to talk to him with all imaginable cheerfulness and affability; (Brontë, A. 186)

When Rosalie reveals to Agnes her foxy intentions to “fix that man”, Agnes is shocked and her “heart is in [her] throat” (Brontë, A. 186-7). She wonders whether Rosalie “intended to torment [her], or merely to amuse herself” (Brontë, A. 187). Agnes is “accustomed, now, to keeping silence when things distasteful to [her] ear are uttered” and she is “used to wearing a placid smiling countenance when [her] heart [is] bitter” (Brontë, A. 198). But still, it is very hurting for Agnes. In fact, Ewbank is convinced that this emotional suffering shows how really painful the position as a governess was for Agnes:

It is here that we get to the deep hurt at the heart of the book, the insight into a human situation. The real degradation to Agnes Grey, is not that of social humiliation, slight, and neglect; it is one of absolute human isolation and of emotional and spiritual starvation. (68)

As far as the parents' interference with the education of the children is concerned, Agnes can not count on much support. For instance, when Agnes scolds Matilda for improper behaviour, Mrs Murray warns Agnes not to do it again:

Once or twice, I ventured to remonstrate with [Matilda] seriously for such irrational conduct; but, on each of these occasions, I received such reprehensive expostulations from her mother, as convinced me that, if I wished to keep the situation, I must even let Miss Matilda go on in her own way. (Brontë, A. 123)

Mrs Murray is shocked by the unlady-like behaviour of Matilda, and she naively thinks that it is an easy task for Agnes to make Matilda stop with swearing:

‘But you can soon break her of it, Miss Grey,’ said she; ‘it is only a habit; and if you will just gently remind her every time she does so, I am sure she will soon lay it aside.’

I not only ‘gently reminded’ her, I tried to impress upon her how wrong it was, and how distressing to the ears of decent people; but all in vain, I was only answered by a careless laugh. (Brontë, A. 124)

Beside this, Agnes is unjustly blamed for Matilda’s interest in horses, and for Rosalie’s wandering in the fields:

‘If you would try to amuse Miss Matilda yourself a little more, I think she would not be *driven* to seek amusement in the companionship of dogs and horses, and grooms, so much as she is; and if you would be a little more cheerful and conversable with Miss Murray, she would not so often go wandering in the fields with a book in her hand.’ (Brontë, A. 169)

Agnes is deeply hurt by frequent rebukes, and similarly as in her first situation, they are often not said directly, which gives Agnes no chance to defend herself:

let it not be imagined that I escaped without many a reprimand, and many an implied reproach, that lost none of its sting from not being openly worded, but rather wounded the more deeply, because from that very reason, it seemed to preclude self-defence. (Brontë, A. 206)

With respect to the above mentioned question of the heroine’s care about pupils and their unreturned feelings, the Bloomfield children are feelingless and unsympathetic:

As for kindness and affection, either they had no hearts, or such as they had were so strongly guarded, and so well concealed, that I, with all my efforts, had not yet discovered how to reach them. (Brontë, A. 107)

Agnes once plays with Mary Ann all day, and when she puts her to bed, while the girl lies “all smiles and good-humour”, Agnes kindly asks her to repeat some word from the lesson. She refuses to repeat it, even though Agnes tells her she will not kiss her good-night. Agnes hopes that by her nice conduct Mary Ann will take a fancy to her, however, she is greatly disappointed by Mary Ann’s heartless reaction:

‘Then I can’t kiss you!’

‘Well, I don’t care.’

In vain I expressed my sorrow; in vain I lingered for some symptom of contrition; she really ‘didn’t care,’

(Brontë, A. 89)

Agnes invests so much energy on instruction of the children, cares for them, and tries to instill in them good manners; but unfortunately, it is not appreciated neither by the pupils nor the parents. Having on mind the young Bloomfields, Agnes says that

it is very unpleasant to live with such unimpressible, incomprehensible creatures. You cannot love them, and if you could, your love would be utterly thrown away; they could neither return it, nor value, nor understand it. (Brontë, A. 111)

At the Murrays, the pupils are aware of Agnes’s magnanimity, her care and kind-heartedness; but they do not seem to appreciate it much. It is obvious that Agnes is not happy about this fact:

I sometimes felt myself degraded by the life I led, and ashamed of submitting to so many indignities; and sometimes, I thought myself a precious fool for caring so much about them; [...] (Brontë, A.129)

However, they are not that malign and detestable as the Bloomfields. Especially Rosalie often seeks for Agnes’s company. Most of the time, she talks to Agnes about her admirers. Once she runs to Agnes to trust with her hot news regarding one of her suitors. What is surprising here, is Rosalie’s friendly conduct:

Miss Murray came hustening to meet me; [...] Running up to me, she put her arm in mine, and without waiting to recover breath, began, -
‘Now, Miss Grey, think yourself highly honoured, for I’m come to tell you my news before I’ve breathed a word of it to anyone else.’ (Brontë, A. 175)

What is more, Rosalie gets sentimental when leaving the house, and moving to her husband’s mansion. She says to Agnes: “But don’t forget me; I shan’t forget you, though I’ve been a naughty girl” (Brontë, A. 203). Agnes is quite surprised at Rosalie’s emotions:

[Rosalie] gave me a hasty kiss, and was hurrying away but, suddenly, returning, embraced me with more affection than I thought her capable of evincing, and departed with tears in her eyes. (Brontë, A. 203)

Agnes does not have serious difficulties with the sisters Murray as she had with the Bloomfield children. There are no disciplinary problems. On the contrary, particularly with Rosalie, Agnes gets on very well. Mr Weston once observes that the girls are just few years younger than Agnes herself, and thus, they should be companions for Agnes. However, she gives him this response:

Oh, yes, they are good company sometimes; but I cannot call them friends, nor would they think of bestowing such a name on me – they have other companions better suited to their tastes. (Brontë, A. 185)

Jane Eyre

Jane's pupil is called Adèle; she is a little girl, under ten years of age. When first meeting with Jane, she accepts her without problem. The girl starts talking to Jane vividly, singing songs, and repeating poetry:

[Adèle] came and shook hands with me when she heard that I was her governess; [...] after we were seated at the table, and she had examined me some ten minutes with her large hazel eyes, she suddenly commenced chattering fluently. [...] Descending from her chair, [Adèle] came and placed herself on my knee; then, folding her little hands demurely before her, shaking back her curls, and lifting her eyes to the ceiling, she commenced singing a song from some opera. 'Now, mademoiselle, I will repeat you some poetry.' (102-4)

Adèle's recitation proves that "she had been carefully trained" (Brontë, Ch. 104). Adèle is a bit spoilt girl, but she improves a lot under Jane's instruction:

My pupil was a lively child, who had been spoilt and indulged, and therefore was sometimes wayward; but as she was committed entirely to my care, and no injudicious interference from any quarter ever thwarted my plans for her improvement, she soon forgot her little freaks, and became obedient and teachable.[...] She made reasonable progress, entertained for me a vivacious, though perhaps not very profound affection; and by her simplicity, gay prattle, and efforts to please, inspired me, in return, with degree of attachment sufficient to make us both content in each other's society. (Brontë, Ch. 110)

Unlike Agnes, Jane has got one advantage – her employer does not interfere with the methods Jane uses to cultivate her pupil. Moreover, there might be another reason why Jane gets along well with her pupil. Adèle is Mr Rochester's ward; there is indisputable presumption that he is Adèle's father; but he does not accept this fact. Adèle's mother, who is a French opera-girl, "abandoned her child, and ran away to Italy with a musician

or singer” (Brontë, Ch. 146). Thus, Adèle is something like an orphan. That is why the girl is grateful for Jane’s company; she functions here as a surrogate mother. Regarding the function of surrogate mother, Lecaros observes that it is more natural for the governess to assume such a function “when there is no mistress of the house (216). Jane sympathizes with her charge since she herself is an orphan. What is more, Jane appreciates that she is welcomed by Adèle. This is what she says to Mr Rochester:

I have a regard for [Adèle]; and now that I know she is, in a sense, parentless – forsaken by her mother and disowned by you, sir – I shall cling closer to her than before. How could I possibly prefer the spoilt pet of a wealthy family, who would hate her governess as a nuisance, to a lonely little orphan who leans towards her as a friend? (Brontë, Ch. 146)

While Agnes’s employers are not satisfied with the results of her instruction, Mr Rochester commends Jane for her achievements: “I have examined Adele, and find you have taken great pains with her: she is not bright, she has no talents; yet in a short time she has made much improvement” (Brontë, Ch. 123). Also Mrs Fairfax appreciates Jane’s qualities when saying to Mr Rochester that Miss Eyre is “a kind and careful teacher to Adèle” (Brontë, Ch. 124).

In contradistinction to Agnes, who is tormented by her ill-bred pupils in both of her situations, Jane’s pupil is troublefree. In the novel, no hardship regarding the schoolroom is mentioned. Jane spends a lot of time with Adèle, she often plays with her, listens to her stories; they simply get on very well:

I stayed out a few minutes longer with Adele and Pilot [Mr Rochester’s dog] – ran a race with her, and played a game of battledore and shuttlecock. When we went in, and I had removed her bonnet and coat, I took her on my knee; kept her there an hour, allowing her to prattle as she liked. (Brontë, Ch. 146)

The affection between Jane and her pupil is indicated also by the frequent kisses Jane is given by Adèle. For example, Jane is kissed before she sets out to send a letter:

Having seen Adèle comfortably seated in her little chair by Mrs Fairfax’s parlour fireside, and given her her best wax doll [...] to play with, and a story-book for change of amusement; [...] with a kiss, I set out. (Brontë, Ch. 112)

Another situation when Adèle overwhelms Jane by kisses is when she is grateful that Jane persuaded Mr Rochester to let her accompany them to Millcote. As Jane says, Adèle “commenced kissing me, by way of expressing her gratitude for my intercession”

(Brontë, Ch. 264). As to the discipline, Jane is spared from unruly conduct; Adèle is obedient. For instance, when she is not allowed to go down and see the guests, she respects it:

Adèle now petitioned to go down: but I took her on my knee, and gave her to understand that she must not on any account think of venturing in sight of the ladies, either now or at any other time, unless expressly sent for: that Mr Rochester would be very angry [...] ‘Some natural tears she shed’ on being told this; but as I began to look very grave, she consented at last to wipe them. (Brontë, Ch. 166)

Another token of a nice relationship between Jane and her charge is the fact that Jane is enthusiastically welcomed by Adèle when she comes back from her visit of Mrs Reed: “Little Adèle was half wild with delight when she saw me” (Brontë, Ch. 244). The following excerpt proves that there are nice relationships in the household of Mr Rochester; not only between the governess and her charge, but also other people in the house are amiable to each other. On the whole, the atmosphere there is very affable and homy:

Mrs Fairfax had taken her knitting, and I had assumed a low seat near her, and Adèle, kneeling on the carpet, had nestled close up to me, and a sense of mutual affection seemed to surround us with a ring of golden peace, [...] Mr Rochester [...], looking at us, seemed to take pleasure in the spectacle of a group so amicable [...] (Brontë, Ch. 244)

As it is apparent from the above excerpts, Jane is not in any case tormented by her pupil. But still, there is some evidence of mistreating governesses by pupils in *Jane Eyre*. In the novel, Mr. Rochester’s guests share stories about how they once made fun of their governesses and how they teased them. Blanche Ingram speaks of one of her governesses:

What tricks Theodore and I used to play on our Miss Wilsons, and Mrs Greys, and Madame Jouberts! [...] The best fun was with Madame Joubert: [...] I see her yet in her raging passions, when we had driven her to extremities – spilt our tea, crumbled our bread and butter, tossed our books up to the ceiling, and played a charivari with the rule and desk, the fender and fire-irons. (Brontë, Ch.176)

Also Amy and Louisa Eshton, another guests at the party, share their experience, as far provocation and disrespect of the governesses is concerned:

Louisa and I used to quiz our governess too; but she was such a good creature, she would bear anything: nothing put her out. [...] We might do what we pleased – ransack her desk and her workbox, and turn her drawers inside out; and she was so good-natured, she would give us anything we asked for. (Brontë, Ch.177)

Blanche Ingram also boasts how she and her brother once took a share in dismissal of their governess:

I helped you in prosecuting (or persecuting) your tutor, whey-faced Mr Wining – the parson in the pip, as we used to call him. He and Miss Wilson took the liberty of falling in love with each other [...]; we surprised sundry tender glances and sighs [...], and I promise you the public soon had the benefit of our discovery; we employed it as a sort of lever to hoist our deadweights from the house. (Brontë, Ch.177)

It is certain that the Victorian society was convinced that “there are thousand reasons why liaisons between governesses and tutors should never be tolerated a moment in any well-regulated house” (Brontë, Ch.177). For that reason, Mrs Blanche dismissed the governess as soon as she heard about her romance. This malicious action of maltreating the governess by obstructing her love or friendly relationship is seen also in *Agnes Grey*. The sisters Murray prevent Agnes from meeting Mr Weston, who seems to be the only person, except Nancy Brown, to respect Agnes and appreciate her qualities. However, the ladies’ aim is not to cause dismissal of their governess, as it is the case in *Jane Eyre*; they do it just to amuse themselves, which is equally mean. Also the wrongs Mr Rochester’s guests once caused to their governesses correspond to the adverse behaviour of Agnes’s pupils.

Solitude and some kind of friend who helps the heroine to get through her plight

For governesses living among strangers, “the life was hard and lonely” (Holcombe 12). According to Neff, the daily life of governesses was solitary. The author writes:

Banished to remote rooms in the top of the house, shared too often with the children, and eating their meals in the schoolroom alone or, worse still, with children as tormenting as Agnes Grey’s pupils, who let her food grow cold if they were in the midst of their games, they had no escape from the cold depression which too often settled upon them. (165)

Lecaros claims that solitude and friendlessness is one of the main themes in governess novels (254). In the words of Hughes, it was difficult for the governess to make friends in her marginalized position, and, in the house of her employers, she was isolated. The author quotes an anonymous essayist:

It is only the governess, and a certain class of private tutors, who must hear the echoes from the drawing-room and the offices, feeling that, in a house full of people, they dwell alone. (102).

The isolation resulted from the marginalized position of the governess, and the reserved attitude of the employers. They were not willing to accept the governess as the lady, and excluded her from their family circle. Next to these factors that caused the loneliness of the governess, Neff states that “a great number of employers did not allow any visitors to their governess, and thus they intensified her isolation” (168).

As it is already stated above, in the governess novels, the protagonist usually has some kind of friend who helps her to get through all the annoyances. It might be “a maternal character, a future husband, or a fellow governess” (Lecaros 40).

Agnes Grey

Agnes tells Mr Weston that she has not made a friend since in her “present position there is no possibility of doing so, or even of forming a common acquaintance” (Brontë, A. 185). In her first situation, she has nobody to talk to really. Her only company are evil children. At the Murrays, she still feels isolated, as she says: “I never see any one to talk to – except the young ladies of the Hall” (Brontë, A. 146). But at least, these ladies, who are only few years younger than Agnes, are sometimes good company. Nevertheless, Agnes feels lonely; she has nobody to have a talk with, except poor Nancy Brown:

I was lonely – never, from month to month, from year to year, except during my brief intervals of rest at home, did I see one creature to whom I could open my heart, or freely speak my thoughts with any hope of sympathy, or even comprehension; never one, unless it were poor Nancy Brown, with whom I could enjoy single moment of real social intercourse, or whose conversation was calculated to render me better, wiser, or happier than before; or who, as far as I could see, could be greatly benefited by mine. My only companions

had been unamiable children, and ignorant, wrong-headed girls, [...] (Brontë, A. 154-55).

Mentioning Nancy Brown, Agnes is sometimes “called upon to accompany one or both of the sisters” in the visits of “the poor cottagers on their father’s estate” (Brontë, A. 143). Agnes is often asked to go alone since the ladies are not really interested in the poor people, they do not really care about them. Agnes thus “made a few acquaintances among the cottagers” (Brontë, A. 143). Lecaros observes that “heroines like Agnes Grey find an outlet in their frustration by being able to help other people in need” (273).

As Agnes spends too much time with her charges, she has no chance to communicate with people of her intellect. She is therefore afraid that her personality will be brought to the level of the wicked girls:

I [...] feared exceedingly that [the young companions] would make me worse – would gradually bring my feelings, habits, capacities, to the level of their own, [...] I seemed to feel my intellect deteriorating, my heart petrifying, my soul contracting, and I trembled lest my very moral perceptions should become deadened, my distinctions of right and wrong confounded, and all my better faculties, be sunk, at last, beneath the baleful influence of such a mode of life. (Brontë, A.155)

In addition to Nancy Brown, Agnes finds a friend in Mr Weston, the new curate. When Agnes hears him preach for the first time, she is immediately fascinated:

I [...] was decidedly pleased with the evangelical truth of his doctrine, as well as the earnest simplicity of his manner, and the clearness and force of his style (Brontë, A.139).

From now on, Sunday becomes “a day of peculiar delight” to Agnes (Brontë, A. 156). Agnes finds Mr Weston

a man of strong sense, firm faith, and ardent piety, but thoughtful and stern [...], to his other good qualities, was added that of true benevolence and gentle, considerate kindness. (Brontë, A.156)

Agnes is pleased also by the fact that Mr Weston, unlike other people around, is respectful to her: “seeing me, he acknowledged my presence by a slight bow. I should have been invisible to Hatfield, or any other gentleman of those parts” (Brontë, A.158). Another example of his courteousness is when he helps Agnes to get the flowers:

Immediately the flowers were gathered, and in my hand. It was Mr Weston of course – who else would trouble himself to do so much for *me*? [...]

a remarkable instance of his good nature, [...] so utterly unaccustomed was I to receive such civilities, so little prepared to expect them – from any one within fifty miles of Horton Lodge. (Brontë, A.163)

Agnes is taken by surprise since she is used to being constantly ignored and humiliated almost by everybody. Similarly, when Mr Weston offers Agnes his umbrella, Agnes accepts it “for fear of giving offence”, however, she finds it “an unnecessary piece of civility” (Brontë, A. 189). Agnes appreciates that Mr Weston “thought [her] worthy to be spoken to” (Brontë, A. 219). Agnes falls for Mr Weston, and he is fond of her as well, however, for a long time she is not aware of his feelings for her. Nonetheless, Agnes is happy that there is somebody she can think about, somebody who does not despise her, and treats her with consideration.

Jane Eyre

Jane calls the first three months at Thornfield “months of stillness, monotony, solitude” (Brontë, Ch. 181). When the guests are present at Thornfield, “all sad feelings seemed now driven from the house, all gloomy associations forgotten” (Brontë, Ch. 181). Once, Jane speaks of herself as “a solitary dependant in a great house” (Brontë, Ch. 196). But it is obvious that Jane is not that lonely. Unlike Agnes, Jane is not isolated by her employer. On the contrary, Mr Rochester seeks her company very often, he sees in Jane his companion, and likes to converse with her. Jane befriends also Mrs Fairfax, the housekeeper, who is delighted that she has somebody she can converse with “on terms of equality”. When they meet for the first time, she says to Jane: “I am so glad you are come; it will be quite pleasant living here now with a companion” (Brontë, Ch. 98).

Regarding the typical feature of the genre, which is some kind of friend who accompanies the heroine, Jane has several such friends. The first is Bessie, the maid at Gateshead. She is the only person who treats Jane kindly in her childhood. To console poor little Jane, Bessie tells her entertaining stories, and sings her songs. Several years later, when Bessie hears of Jane’s departure from Lowood to another part of the country, she decides to visit Jane. Their meeting is very cheerful and spontaneous: “In another second I was embracing and kissing [Bessie] rapturously [...] she half laughed,

half cried” (Brontë, Ch. 92). Bessie’s visit at Lowood shows evidence of her concern of Jane. Bessie is Jane’s first model of female behaviour, a kind of surrogate mother. During Jane’s stay at the Lowood School, she finds two close companions – a fellow-student named Helen Burns, and Miss Temple, a kind teacher at Lowood. Helen, a fourteen-year-old girl, becomes Jane’s close friend. She is very peaceful and intellectual. Jane learns from her to control her vehemence. One day, Miss Temple invites both of the girls in her room, where they are treated very kindly, and spend a “memorable evening”. They have a tea together, and then Miss Temple and Helen speak about a great number of things. Jane is surprised how much they know:

They conversed of things I had never heard of; of nations and times past; of countries far away; of secrets of nature discovered or guessed at: they spoke of books: how many they had read! What stores of knowledge they possessed! Then they seemed so familiar with French names and French authors [...] my organ of veneration expanding at every sounding line. (Brontë, Ch. 75)

Jane is amazed at Helen’s attainments, and thus inspired to study hard at school. Speaking about Miss Temple, unlike other teachers and the hypocritical headmaster of Lowood School, she treats Jane and Helen with compassion. Jane is also grateful to her for helping to clear Jane of Mrs. Reed’s false accusation of deceit. Similarly as Bessie, Miss Temple serves as one of Jane’s first female role models, a model of ladylike behaviour. Both Helen and Mrs Temple greatly affect Jane’s personality and character. Also the Rivers sisters can be considered friends who help Jane to get through her difficulties. They help her to recover when running away from Mr Rochester. The sisters are very amiable and good-hearted. Jane befriends them very quickly. Even their brother, St. John, who is quite distant, helps Jane by offering her a position of village teacher. Towards the end of the novel, Jane finds out they are her cousins. This fact makes her extremely happy:

Glorious discovery to a lonely wretch! This was wealth indeed! – wealth to the heart! – a mine of pure, genial affections. This was a blessing, bright, vivid, and exhilarating – not like the ponderous gift of gold. (Brontë, Ch. 381)

And last but not least, also Mr Rochester is considered Jane’s close companion, her beloved friend.

Personal development of the heroine

Personal development of the heroine is a typical feature of the governess novel genre. According to Lecaros, many novelists used the character of governess to portray personal development (34). As it is mentioned above, this progress towards adulthood and maturity is similar to that of the male character in the Bildungsroman or a novel of development. In her study, Lecaros quotes Kate Flint stating that the narrative of governess novels similarly as novels of development “encourages sympathetic identification” from the reader (36). The heroine usually leaves her home because of financial necessity, she takes up work, then she faces various troubles and oppressive situations, but she finally finds her rightful place in society. As Lecaros puts it, “unlike most middle-class heroines in the nineteenth-century novel, the governess actually does leave her home and family sphere, and she has to brave difficulties on her way” (35). The author further writes that in the Victorian novel, the female protagonist usually gets married. The governess novel ends in the same way – the governess heroine marries, and thus she “is usually relieved of her governess yoke” (268). However, it must be remarked that this romantic ending does not conform with the reality (Lecaros 277). From non-fictional materials it is clear that the lot of many governesses was not that happy. As Ginder puts it, “unfortunately, for the governess, the happy endings found in the literature were seldom found in real life” (16). Nevertheless, Hughes gives some examples of real-life governesses who marry the employer or the employer’s relative. One of them is a governess named Sarah, who is in charge of education of her distant cousin’s children. Sarah marries her employer’s younger brother, and thus her status changes “from that of distant relative, to paid employee and, finally, to full family member” (43). In addition to the distinction between the fictional marriage and the marriage in reality, Ginder shows that in reality it was almost impossible for the governess to get married. The author says that the governess’s marriage prospects were minimal since she was cut off from society. Also her social status was disadvantageous - in the position of working woman, she was not suitable for marriage (10). Governess was “a bore to almost any gentleman, as a tabooed woman” (Peterson, 13).

As regards the men fictional governesses usually married, Lecaros quotes Beaty maintaining that one of the characteristics of the genre is that the protagonist of the governess novel “marries a gentleman or clergyman”. Lecaros also observes that “there

is conformity between the professions of the heroine's father and that of her future husband" (270-1). The author further adds that several clergymen's daughters, who marry men of the Church, are not passionately in love with their husbands. They rather appreciate their personal qualities such as piety and humility. On the other hand, when the heroine's husband is a gentleman, the love is much more intense. But it is noteworthy that the heroine does not forget to follow her moral principles (271).

Besides marriage, there was another possibility for the governess to free herself of the governess profession – it was setting her own school. In the words of Hughes, "running one's own school [...] offered distinct advantages over resident governessing" (166).

Agnes Grey

Agnes Grey has typical traits of the novel of development. Lecaros quotes Priscilla H. Costello saying that Agnes Grey

follows a particular pattern of development; she moves from the security of her family through an increasing sense of alienation as governess to a resolution in her attachment to Mr Weston and the establishment of a family of her own" (36)

Agnes faces many oppressive situations in both of the families she works for. She is tormented by her pupils; disdained and neglected by the employers, the visitors, the family friends, and the servants as well. Towards the end of the novel, she gets married to Mr Weston, the curate. She becomes fond of him from the first time she hears him preach in the church. But she does not show her affection, she admires him inwardly. Agnes is not sure about his feelings since "he had not breathed a word of love, or dropped one hint of tenderness or affection" (Brontë, A 219). Agnes sorrows since she does not see Mr Weston for a long time because of the malicious pupils. When she leaves her situation, she does not even hope to meet him again. But finally, they find the way to each other:

I became the wife of Edward Weston, and never found cause to repent it, and am certain that I never shall. [...] Our children, Edward, Agnes, and little Mary, promise well, their education [...] is chiefly committed to me; (Brontë, A 250-1)

Agnes is a typical example of a girl who marries a man of the same profession as that of her father. However, she contradicts the statement that there is not much passion in such

a marriage. Agnes loves Mr Weston very much, so she is an exception in this respect, though there is not such a raw passion like in Jane and Rochester's relationship.

It could seem that marriage freed Agnes from her precarious position, but it was setting up her and her mother's own boarding school that actually helped her to free herself of the governess profession. After the death of her father, Agnes decides to leave her situation to help her mother to get a smaller house, where they would "take a few young ladies to board and educate" (Brontë, A 213). From the beginning, they "had only three boarders and half-a-dozen day-pupils to commence with;" and they hoped "to increase the number of both" (Brontë, A 222). Agnes is very enthusiastic about her "new mode of life", as she calls her new situation. She is aware of the advantages of teaching in one's own school in comparison to the resident governess:

there was, indeed, a considerable difference between working with my mother in a school of our own, and working as a hireling among strangers, despised and trampled upon by old and young; (Brontë, A 222)

It can be stated that from an inexperienced girl, once a pet of the family, develops a mature woman. Agnes had to brave difficulties concerning her profession, also the death of her father was hurting. She is finally happy in her life when she marries her beloved Edward Weston, becomes mother of three children, and what is also important – she is not a dependant among strangers thanks to their successful boarding school.

Jane Eyre

Jane Eyre, similarly as *Agnes Grey*, "chronicles a young woman's development towards maturity and happiness" (Wadsö 34). As it is stated in the article *Jane Eyre*, the novel "depicts the emotional and spiritual development of the heroine" (www.bronte.org.uk). James observes that the novel is "constantly moving from Jane Eyre's progress in life to the inner pilgrimage of her spiritual life" (160). The novel clearly tells the story of a child's maturation. The story line should be mentioned briefly so that it is clear that the heroine has to overcome many obstacles before she achieves a happy and independent life. The novel opens with Jane's unhappy childhood at Gateshead, where she faces many oppressive situations. At the age of ten, Jane is sent to a charitable school, where she suffers privations, but at the same time, she studies hard, and after several years she becomes a teacher there. She befriends Helen Burns and

Mrs Temple. After her favourite teacher gets married, Jane decides to leave the school. She becomes a governess at Thornfield Hall, where she leads quite a happy life – she gets on very well with her pupil, the housekeeper is her companion, and Mr Rochester, her employer, respects her. Jane interests him, and he frequently summons her to his presence to talk with her. Jane gradually falls in love with Mr Rochester. When they reveal love for each other, Jane accepts his marriage proposal. But during the wedding ceremony, Jane finds out Mr Rochester is already married to a mad woman. The wedding is cancelled, and Jane flees from Mr Rochester since she follows her morals, and does not want to be his mistress. After several days of wandering and starving, Jane is provided shelter by St. John Rivers and his sisters. St. John arranges for Jane to teach in a village school. She befriends the Rivers, who turn out to be her cousins. Finally, Jane reunites with Mr Rochester, and marries him. The experiences that help Jane mature and find her legitimate place in society prove that *Jane Eyre* is rightfully considered a novel of development.

As for the marriage, Lecaros remarks that “most novels where there is no mother in the house end with the marriage of the master and the governess” (219). It should be noted that Jane accepts the marriage only after she becomes Mr Rochester’s equal in terms of social position. Before, they were only intellectual equals. After Jane inherits considerable fortune from her uncle from Madeira, her financial situation changes, and their union will be of equals. Finally, they get married, as the famous quotation reveals: “Reader, I married him.” (Brontë, Ch. 444). From the following excerpt it is evident that their marriage is happy:

I know what it is to live entirely for and with what I love best on earth. I hold myself supremely blest—blest beyond what language can express; because I am my husband’s life as fully as he is mine. No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. I know no weariness of my Edward’s society: he knows none of mine, any more than we each do of the pulsation of the heart that beats in our separate bosoms; consequently, we are ever together. (Brontë, Ch. 445-6)

Thus, Jane’s progress towards adulthood comes to a good end. After all the hardship, she manages to become independent, and finds happiness in her life. Analogous to Agnes, she is married to her beloved man, and gives birth to a son. Unlike Agnes, Jane does not establish her own school, though she once uttered a wish to do so: “The utmost I hope is, to save enough money out of my earnings to set up a school some day in

a little house rented by myself” (Brontë, Ch. 197). Instead of teaching in her own school, she lovingly takes care of blind and maimed Edward Rochester.

As to the men governesses married, Jane is an example of the heroine who marries a gentleman. Her passionate love towards Edward Rochester is in accordance with the above mentioned statement that between such a union, there is more scope for love. It is also true that Jane, as most of the heroines who marry a gentleman, does not act contrary to her morals. This is apparent when Jane refuses to live with Mr Rochester after having found he is already married. Though she loves him, she can not stay because it is against her religious persuasion:

Who in the world cares for *you*? Or who will be injured by what you do? [...] *I* care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself. I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man. [...] Laws and principles are not for times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this, when body and soul rise in mutiny against their rigour; stringent are they; inviolate they shall be. (Brontë, Ch. 314)

Conclusion

The governess was a social phenomenon in Victorian England. From the mid-nineteenth century, the governess became a popular figure in Victorian fiction, and a governess novel genre developed. Many authors of governess novels drew on their own experience with the governess profession. Among these authors are also Anne and Charlotte Brontë. Their novels, *Agnes Grey* and *Jane Eyre*, are analysed and compared in the thesis with respect to the main features of the governess novel genre.

Concerning the heroine’s family background, both Agnes’s and Jane’s background are typical for the governess novel genre. The reasons of their choice to become a governess are similar in some respects, but the circumstances differ. Agnes comes from a decent and loving family. As she is a daughter of a clergyman, who loses his fortune; generally, she could be considered forced to become a governess. But this is not really her case. It is Agnes’s wish to become a governess. Her motives are two – self-support and new experience. On the other hand, Jane has no family, is first brought up by her cruel aunt and later on at a boarding school, where she then becomes a teacher. Thus, Jane has no better prospects than to become a governess. Even though the living conditions of both girls are different, Jane’s motives to seek a new

employment are similar to those of Agnes – boredom at Lowood, longing for seeing something new, and also a better salary. As for the Rivers sisters, Jane's cousins, they come from a respectable family, but are forced to seek employment because of a sudden impoverishment. This unpleasant circumstance is typical of the governess novel genre.

Regarding the social status of employers, it is evident from the novels that families who hired a governess belonged to the aristocracy or the upper middle class. Also both of the heroines of *Agnes Grey* and *Jane Eyre* work for noble people. Agnes Grey's employers, the Murrays, belong to highly esteemed country families. Only the Bloomfields are an exception to the rule since they are representatives of humbler ranks, to be more specific, they are a newly rich middle-class family. Mr. Rochester, Jane Eyre's employer, is a wealthy landowner, the master of Thornfield Hall. Another two characters from *Jane Eyre*, Diana and Mary Rivers, who turn out to be Jane's cousins, also work as governesses in aristocratic families.

As to the marginalized position of the governess, for Agnes, it did not matter whether she worked for upper-class family or a family of lower ranks. In both families, she is neglected and treated without respect. She is excluded from their family circle. Not only the employers humiliate her, but the visitors and the servants disregard her as well. Jane works for a nobleman, and unlike Agnes, she is treated with consideration. Also the housekeeper and other servants are friendly with Jane. Still, Jane is not spared of disdain and humiliation since Mr Rochester's guests, especially the ladies, treat Jane with contempt. Next to the painful situations Jane experiences during the party, she faces another disdainful behaviour when meeting with her cousins, the daughters of Mrs Reed. The other governesses of *Jane Eyre*, the Rivers sisters, work for aristocratic families, which treat them without respect and do not appreciate their qualities and acquirements, like the Agnes's employers.

As for the terms of employment, they are different for each of the protagonists. With respect to the remunerations, both heroines seem to be quite content with their salaries, they do not complain much at least. At her first situation, Agnes's yearly salary is £25, the second employers pay her twice as much. Though it is considered a good salary, Agnes is not able to save much money because of expenses such as laundry, clothes and travel. Nevertheless, she is happy she is earning something at least. Agnes is paid regularly but can not expect more than was agreed. Unlike Agnes, Jane is not paid

on a regular basis, however, she can count on generosity of her master, which might result from his affection for Jane. Nevertheless, the agreed pay is £ 30, which is considered an average salary.

As for the duties, Agnes is a typical overstrained governess – her duties are not defined, and she has to be generally useful. In her first post, she is even assigned jobs that are generally done by nurses and maids. In contrast with Agnes, Jane does not seem to be overstrained, her main duty is the task of instruction. However, she is sometimes asked to perform tasks not typical for the governess profession, but she does not mind. She appears to help willingly where needed. Perhaps it is because she is happy at her situation, and has better working conditions than Agnes.

Concerning the pupils, there is a wide difference in behaviour of the protagonists' charges. In both of her situations, Agnes faces troubles with her pupils. The Bloomfields are unruly and ill-mannered children. Agnes is tormented by them both physically and mentally. In her second post, the pupils are older and are not that naughty and troublesome like the previous ones. However, Agnes faces a psychological strain since she is tyrannized over by the conceited and self-centered pupils. She suffers emotionally especially when the pupils inhibit Agnes from meeting her beloved Mr Weston. Agnes's task of instruction is made more difficult since she can not count on the employers' support in neither of her situations, on the contrary, the parents of the malicious children are unjust towards Agnes, and do not appreciate her qualities and endeavor. Unlike Agnes's ill-bred pupils, Jane's charge is troublefree and obedient. Jane gets on very well with her pupil. What is also in contrast to Agnes's experience, Jane's employer is satisfied with the results of her instruction, and respects her. However, in the novel, there is some mention of mistreating governesses by pupils. The guests at the party at Thornfield share stories about how viciously they treated their governesses, and how they teased them.

As far as the theme of solitude is concerned, Agnes feels lonely since her only companions are evil and haughty children. She has nobody to talk to except the poor cottager Nancy Brown, to whom Agnes can open her heart and speak freely her thoughts. Besides Nancy, Agnes finds a friend in Mr Weston, the new curate, who at a later time becomes her husband. Agnes appreciates that Mr Weston is respectful to her, unlike other people around. As to the Jane's feelings of loneliness, during the first three

months at Thornfield she feels solitary since the life there is monotonous and still. Later on, when Mr Rochester is present, she is not so lonely. Mr Rochester often seeks her company since he likes to converse with her. Jane befriends also Mrs Fairfax, the housekeeper. Regarding the friends that help the heroine to overcome the difficulties, Jane finds several such friends throughout her life, including Mr Rochester, Jane's future husband; Bessie, the nurse at Gateshead; Miss Temple, the Lowood teacher; Helen Burns, Jane's fellow-student at Lowood School; and the Rivers, Jane's cousins.

The last chapter, which focuses on the heroine's progress towards maturity, shows that both *Agnes Grey* and *Jane Eyre* portray a personal development of the heroine. Both the protagonists triumph over all the difficulties of their lives, and progress towards adulthood and maturity. They finally manage to find their legitimate place in society. Similarly as the most female protagonists of governess novels, they get married.

To conclude, both Anne and Charlotte Brontë knew what it is like to be a governess. They created their governess protagonists out of their own experience as governesses. Therefore, their governesses comport with the traditional roles of the Victorian governess. Both of them are the embodiment of a typical Victorian governess. However, Jane Eyre is believed to be exceptional in some aspects. Although Jane is generally humble and submissive as the governess is expected to be, she possesses qualities that distinguish her from ordinary governesses – it is her assertiveness, strong will, courage and desire for independence. She can therefore be considered an innovative governess protagonist. In comparison to Jane, Agnes lacks her passionate character, and she might seem to be timid and subdued. But in fact, she is also able to defy the authority of her master, especially if her moral principles are affected. However, most of the time she is submissive, and is considered a more conventional governess. What both of the protagonists have in common are their Christian values and moral goodness, which make them superior to the demoralized people around.

Both the novels, *Agnes Grey* and *Jane Eyre*, are regarded as governess novels since they encompass many attributes of the genre. However, from the text analysis it can be inferred that *Agnes Grey* is a more traditional governess novel. The life of the governess is depicted more realistically. As to the traits of the genre that were analysed and compared in this thesis, *Agnes Grey* typifies all of them – Agnes is a daughter of

a clergyman; her family is impoverished; she is forced to seek employment; as a governess Agnes faces a great number of painful situations; her life is made miserable by haughty and prejudiced employers, mischievous and ill-bred pupils, arrogant guests and spiteful servants. The protagonist is excluded from the social sphere and feels isolated. She finally overcomes all the hardship, and becomes a mature woman. She manages to free herself of the governess profession by setting up with her mother their own school, and marrying a clergyman. Concerning *Jane Eyre*, it comprises traits of the governess novel genre but some of the aspects analysed in the thesis depart from the typical features. Like most of the governess protagonists, Jane is a daughter of a clergyman, in addition to this, she is an orphan. As a governess she experiences humiliation on the part of snobbish visitors, and after surmounting all the trials, she progresses towards maturity, and becomes an independent woman. With respect to the aspects that differ from the typical attributes of the genre, it is evident that Jane is not neglected and mortified by her employer, her charge is troublefree, and her working conditions are not as depressing as those of Agnes. In this respect, it can be stated that *Jane Eyre* is an untraditional governess novel.

Agnes Grey was clearly written with the aim to inform the society of the misery of governesses, and thus to improve their situation. As Agnes herself, who actually speaks for Anne Brontë, says in the novel,

my design [...] was not to amuse, but to benefit those whom it might concern [...] if a parent has, therefrom, gathered any useful hint, or an unfortunate governess received thereby the slightest benefit, I am well rewarded for my pains. (Brontë, A. 93)

It is obvious that the author wished to help the vulnerable group of women to cope with their precarious position, and also to urge the employers to treat their governess with respect. In the introduction to *Agnes Grey*, Goreau mentions a certain Lady Amberly, who after reading the novel notes in her diary that it should be given to every family that employs a governess to remind them to be human (47). It should be remarked that in the Victorian age, the literary importance of the novel was overlooked. The contemporary critics unjustly compared *Agnes Grey* to the successful novels written by her sisters, and criticized it for the lack of originality and power. However, after several years the views changed and the novel was finally considered an important piece of literature.

While *Agnes Grey* is valued especially for the down-to-earth portrayal of the governess life, *Jane Eyre* is considered one of the most popular works of English fiction, it was an immediate success after its publication. It is a governess novel, though the plight of the governess is not described so closely; but mainly, it is a passionate love story with mysterious Gothic elements. In her novel, Charlotte Brontë did not intend only to entertain but she also sharply criticized appalling conditions at charity schools and the rigid class-distinction during the Victorian period. It can be stated that both Brontë sisters played a significant role in Victorian literature. Though most of the governess novels are forgotten, *Agnes Grey* and *Jane Eyre* are still read today. But what is equally important, their novels were beneficial also for the Victorian society since the authors criticized discrimination based on social class, and expressed the need for better treatment of governesses and also women in general.

Resumé

Ve viktoriánské Anglii neměly vychovatelky příliš dobrou pověst a společnost jimi opovrhovala. V devatenáctém století došlo k obrovskému nárůstu vychovatelek. Tyto pracující ženy ze střední vrstvy, které byly v rozporu s ideálem ženy viktoriánského období, se staly častým předmětem diskuze ve společnosti. Vznikl tak nový fenomén. Ve společnosti, kde bylo pro ženu střední či vyšší vrstvy nepřijatelné pracovat, měly vychovatelky velmi zvláštní pozici. Na jedné straně to byly ženy urozeného původu, na straně druhé ženy pracující za mzdu. Ve třicátých a čtyřicátých letech devatenáctého století mnoho románů zobrazovalo utrpení vychovatelek. Vychovatelka se stala oblíbenou postavou viktoriánských románů. Vznikl tak nový žánr – viktoriánský román o vychovatelkách. Na rozdíl od české literatury se tento román, jehož hlavní hrdinkou je vychovatelka, rozvinul do samostatného žánru, který se v anglické terminologii nazývá the Victorian governess novel.

Prostřednictvím literatury byla společnost obeznámena s tíživou situací vychovatelek. Mnoho spisovatelek, které psaly o utrpení vychovatelek, čerpaly z vlastních zkušeností, jelikož samy v minulosti pracovaly jako vychovatelky. Mezi autorky, které se nechaly inspirovat svou vlastní zkušeností s vychovatelstvím, patří také slavné sestry Anne (1820-49) a Charlotte Brontëovy (1816-55).

Tato diplomová práce se zaměřuje na zobrazení typických prvků viktoriánského románu o vychovatelkách. S ohledem na tyto prvky jsou srovnány dva romány o vychovatelkách sester Brontëových – *Agnes Grey* (1847) Anne Brontëové a *Jane Eyre* (1847) Charlotte Brontëové. V úvodu práce je nastíněna problematika vychovatelek ve viktoriánské Anglii. Poté následuje definice žánru. Rozbor zvolených románů je rozdělen do šesti kapitol, ve kterých jsou analyzovány některé z charakteristických prvků žánru. Každá kapitola začíná popisem určitého rysu žánru, následně jsou srovnány oba romány s ohledem na daný rys. Kapitoly, které srovnávají jednotlivé prvky žánru, jsou seřazeny podle pořadí, ve kterém se objevují ve většině románů o vychovatelkách. Toto chronologické uspořádání ukazuje, jak podobnou měly romány strukturu, a také zobrazuje život vychovatelek tak, jak je vykreslen v románech.

Typické prvky žánru, které jsou analyzovány, jsou následující – rodinné prostředí hlavní hrdinky; sociální identita zaměstnavatelů a opomíjení vychovatelky;

pracovní podmínky – nízký plat a nejasné povinnosti; žáci – malí andílci nebo zlé povahy?; samota a kamarád, který hrdince pomůže překonat nepříjemnou situaci; vývoj hlavní hrdinky a její cesta k dospělosti.

Cílem diplomové práce je zobrazit, jak oba romány zachycují pozici vychovatelky ve viktoriánské společnosti, a také porovnat, nakolik jsou postavy i romány samotné tradiční či inovativní.

Úvodní kapitola přibližuje problematiku vychovatelek. Ve viktoriánské Anglii žena patřila do domácnosti. Jejím posláním bylo vedení domácnosti a péče o manžela. Bylo nemyslitelné, aby žena pracovala nebo aby měla jiné aktivity mimo domov. Dle viktoriánské konvence se dokonalá žena věnovala výhradně kruhu rodinnému a muž byl povinen svou ženu zabezpečit finančně. Ženám bylo zakázáno pracovat a pobírat plat. Pokud žena nebyla vdaná a její rodina nebyla schopna ji finančně podporovat, byla nucena hledat si práci, aby se uživila. Pro takovou ženu nebylo příliš jednoduché najít si zaměstnání, které by neohrozilo její společenské postavení. Za jediné vhodné povolání pro ženu ze střední vrstvy byla považována práce vychovatelky. Tato práce byla vhodná, jelikož v této pozici splňovala žena svou roli ve společnosti – přestože pracovala, stále svým způsobem byla členem domácnosti ze střední vrstvy. Dále se v kapitole čtenář dozvídá o historii této profese a také, jaké rodiny zaměstnávaly vychovatelky. Je zde také vysvětlen pojem 'vychovatelka'; důvod, proč ženy vyhledávaly tuto práci; a také rozpornost této profese vzhledem k viktoriánským hodnotám. Situace vychovatelek byla velmi tíživá, naštěstí společnost nebyla k jejich neblahému osudu lhostejná. Začaly vznikat charitativní instituce se záměrem pomoci těmto ženám.

Druhá kapitola se zabývá definicí žánru (románu o vychovatelkách) a jeho vývojem. Jeho vznik souvisí se zvýšeným počtem vychovatelek v Anglii devatenáctého století. Vychovatelka se stala sociálním fenoménem a začala se čím dál častěji objevovat v literatuře. Cílem autorů bylo poukázat na tíživou situaci vychovatelek. Pro tento žánr je charakteristické, že romány mají podobnou dějovou linii, dějiště i záměr. Někteří autoři popisují výhradně život vychovatelky, jiní zapojují i prvky jiných žánrů. Dále jsou v kapitole uvedeny charakteristické rysy žánru, jako např. ztráta společenského postavení hrdinky; její nejasná pozice ve společnosti; náhlé ochuzení rodiny; hrdinka je často dcerou kněze nebo je sirotek; zažívá spoustu nepříjemných

situací a čelí ponižování a neuctivému chování ze strany arogantních zaměstnavatelů, pohrdavých hostů a dokonce i služebnictva; její svěřenci ji tyranizují; hrdinka je vyčleněna ze společnosti a cítí se osaměle. Pro žánr je také charakteristický popis vývoje hrdinky a její cesta k dospělosti. Příběh většinou končí svatbou hlavní hrdinky a osvobozením se od profese vychovatelky.

Ve třetí kapitole je srovnáván první z charakteristických rysů žánru – rodinné prostředí ústřední postavy. Obě hrdinky pocházejí z takového rodinného prostředí, které je typické pro román o vychovatelkách. Jejich důvody, proč se staly vychovatelkami, jsou podobné, avšak jejich rodinné situace se liší. Agnes pochází ze slušné a milující rodiny. Je dcerou kněze, který přijde o velké množství peněz. Z tohoto důvodu by se dalo předpokládat, že Agnes byla nucena najít si práci. Ale ve skutečnosti to tak není. Agnes si přeje být vychovatelkou, jelikož chce být samostatná a zažít něco nového. Na druhé straně, Jane nemá žádnou rodinu, zpočátku je vychovávána svou krutou tetou a zbytek dětství stráví na charitativní škole pro sirotky, kde se později stane učitelkou. Přestože jsou životní podmínky obou hrdinek odlišné, Jane se chce stát vychovatelkou z podobných důvodů jako Agnes – nuda a stereotyp na lowoodské škole, touha zažít něco nového a také lepší plat. Co se týče sester Riversových, sestřenic Jane, ty pochází z vážené rodiny, ale jsou nuceny najít si zaměstnání, jelikož jejich otec přišel o velké množství peněz. Tato nepříjemná okolnost je typická pro viktoriánské romány o vychovatelkách.

Následující kapitola se zaměřuje na sociální postavení zaměstnavatelů a opomíjení vychovatelky. Z románů je zřejmé, že rodiny, které najímaly vychovatelky, patřily převážně k vyšším a středním vrstvám. Také obě hrdinky románů *Agnes Grey* a *Jane Eyre* pracují pro lidi z vyšších vrstev. Zaměstnanci Agnes, Murrayovi, patří k uznávaným venkovským rodinám. Pouze Bloomfieldovi jsou výjimkou, tato rodina je zástupcem nižší společenské třídy, přesněji řečeno, patří ke zbohatlíkům. Pan Rochester, zaměstnavatel Jany Eyrové, je bohatý velkostatkář, majitel panského sídla Thornfield. Další dvě postavy románu *Jane Eyre*, Diana a Marie Riversovy, které se jsou vlastně sestřenice Jane, jak se později ukáže, také pracují jako vychovatelky v aristokratických rodinách.

Co se týče opomíjení vychovatelek, u Agnes nezáleželo na tom, zda pracuje pro aristokratickou rodinu, či pro rodinu z nižších vrstev. V obou rodinách je přehlížena

a zaměstnavatelé s ní zacházejí s neúctou. Je vyčleněna z jejich rodinného kruhu. Agnes neponižují pouze zaměstnavatelé, ale také hosté a služebnictvo. Jane pracuje pro šlechtice, a narozdíl od Agnes, je s ní zacházeno s úctou. Také hospodyně a služebnictvo se chovají k Jane kamarádsky. Přesto Jane není ušetřena opovrhování a ponížení, jelikož hosté pana Rochestera, především dámy, jí velmi pohrdají. Kromě nepříjemných situací, které Jane zažije během večírku, který pořádá pan Rochester, musí hrdinka čelit dalšímu pohrdavému chování, když se po několika letech setká se svými sestřenicemi, dcerami paní Reedové. Další vychovatelky, které se v románu objevují, sestry Riversovy, pracují pro aristokratické rodiny, které s dívkami nejednají uctivě a neváží si jejich vlastností a schopností, podobně jako je to u zaměstnavatelů Agnes.

Pátá kapitola se zabývá pracovními podmínkami vychovatelek. Ty jsou rozdílné u obou hrdinek. Pokud jde o plat, obě vychovatelky se zdají být spokojené, přinejmenším si nestěžují. U prvních zaměstnavatelů činí plat Agnes 25 liber ročně, její další zaměstnavatelé jí platí dvakrát víc. Přestože je tento příjem považován za poměrně dobrý plat, Agnes nemá možnost našetřit si moc peněz, protože velká část platu připadne na praní prádla, oblečení a případné cesty domů. Přesto je Agnes šťastná, že si vydělá alespoň nějakou částku. Zaměstnavatelé platí Agnes pravidelně, ale nemůže očekávat, že dostane víc, než bylo domluveno. Narozdíl od Agnes, Jane nedostává plat pravidelně, avšak může se spolehnout na velkorystost svého zaměstnavatele, která pravděpodobně pramení z jeho lásky k Jane. Nicméně, smluvený plat činí 30 liber, což je považováno za průměrný výdělek vychovatelek.

S ohledem na povinnosti vychovatelek, Agnes je typickou představitelkou přetížené vychovatelky – její povinnosti nejsou jasně vymezeny a Agnes musí být všeobecně prospěšná. U prvních zaměstnavatelů jsou jí dokonce přiděleny úkoly, které zpravidla vykonává chůva a služebnictvo. V porovnání s Agnes se Jane nezdá být zahrnuta tolika úkoly. Její hlavní povinností je výuka svěřenkyně. Přesto je Jane příležitostně požádána vykonat úkoly, které nesouvisí s prací vychovatelky. Jane to ale nevdává. Zdá se, že pomůže ráda, když je potřeba. Možná je to tím, že je spokojena se svým místem a že má lepší pracovní podmínky než Agnes.

V šesté kapitole je srovnáváno chování dětí vůči vychovatelce. Svěřenci Agnes se podstatně liší od Adéle, svěřenkyně Jane. V obou rodinách, ve kterých Agnes

pracuje, čelí Agnes problémům s dětmi. Děti Bloomfieldovy jsou neovzvládnutelné a nevychované. Trápí Agnes jak fyzicky, tak psychicky. Děti jejich dalších zaměstnanců jsou starší a nejsou tak zlobivé a problémové jako děti předešlé. Přesto i v této rodině Agnes duševně strádá. Její arogantní a sobecké svěřenkyně Agnes týrají psychicky. Citově strádá Agnes obzvláště, když jí sestry Murrayovy brání v kontaktu s jejím milovaným knězem, panem Westonem. Práce Agnes v obou rodinách je ztížena tím, že nemůže počítat s podporou ze strany svých zaměstnavatelů. Právě naopak, rodiče všech těch zákeřných dětí jsou k Agnes nespravedliví a neváží si jejich vlastností a snahy. Narozdíl od nevychovaných dětí, které má na starosti Agnes, Adéle, svěřenkyně Jane, je poslušná a bezproblémová. Jane a Adéle spolu vycházejí velmi dobře. Další odlišnost spočívá v tom, že zaměstnavatel Jane, pan Rochester, je s Jane spokojen, oceňuje pokroky, které Adéle dělá, a váží si Jane. V románu je přesto zmínka o špatném zacházení s vychovatelkami ze strany dětí. Hosté na večírku pana Rochesterera se baví příběhy, jak kdysi trápili své vychovatelky a jak si z nich dělali srandu.

Sedmá kapitola se věnuje tématu samoty a opuštěnosti vychovatelek. Agnes se cítí osaměle, protože jejími jedinými společníky jsou zlé a domýšlivé děti. Nemá si s kým promluvit, až na Nancy Brown, ubohou obyvatelku chatové osady. S touto ženou si Agnes může otevřeně promluvit a svěřit se se svými starostmi. Kromě Nancy, Agnes nachází přítele v panu Westonovi, novému knězi, kterého si Agnes později vezme za muže. Agnes si cení toho, že pan Weston je k ní narozdíl od ostatních lidí zdvořilý. Co se týče pocitů samoty u Jane, během prvních tří měsíců v Thornfieldu se cítí velmi osaměle, jelikož život je tam velmi monotónní a klidný. Později, když je přítomen pan Rochester, se Jane necítí tak samotná. Pan Rochester často vyhledává společnost Jane, protože s ní rád hovoří. Jane se spřátelí také s paní Fairfaxovou, hospodyní domu. Pokud jde o kamarády, kteří Jane v životě pomohou překonat potíže, potká jich Jane během svého života několik. Patří mezi ně pan Rochester, její budoucí manžel; Bessie, chůva z Gateshead, kde Jane vyrůstala; slečna Templová, učitelka z Lowoodu; Helen Burnsová, spolužačka z Lowoodu; a sestry Riversovy, sestřenice Jane.

Poslední kapitola ukazuje, že oba romány, *Agnes Grey* a *Jane Eyre*, zobrazují vývoj hrdinky a její cestu k dospělosti. Obě protagonistky úspěšně překonávají všechny potíže, které je v životě potkaly, a stávají se z nich dospělé a šťastné ženy. Nakonec se

jim podaří najít své právoplatné místo ve společnosti. Podobně jako většina hlavních hrdinek žánru governess novel se Agnes i Jane vdají za své milované muže.

V závěru práce je shrnuto, jak romány *Agnes Grey* a *Jane Eyre* zachycují pozici vychovatelky ve viktoriánské společnosti. Je zde především vyjádřeno stanovisko, nakolik romány zobrazují tradiční a nakolik netradiční postavy vychovatelek a nakolik jsou oba romány tradiční či inovativní. Z textové analýzy vyplývá, že postavy vychovatelek, které vytvořily sestry Brontëovy na základě svých vlastních zkušeností s touto profesí, se shodují s tradičními rolemi vychovatelky ve viktoriánské Anglii a jsou ztělesněním typické vychovatelky devatenáctého století. Avšak Jane je v některých ohledech považována za výjimečnou. Přestože je Jane pokorná a poslušná, jak je od vychovatelky očekáváno, má vlastnosti, které ji odlišují od ostatních vychovatelek – je to její troufalost, pevná vůle, odvaha a touha po nezávislosti. Proto lze Jane považovat za netradiční postavu. V porovnání s Jane, Agnes má klidnější povahu a může se zdát, že je nesmělá a rezignovaná. Ale ve skutečnosti se nebojí vzepřít autoritě, zvláště, jsou-li dotčeny její morální hodnoty. Většinou je však Agnes pokorná a je považována za mnohem tradičnější vychovatelku než je Jane. Co mají obě hrdinky společného, jsou jejich náboženské hodnoty a dobrota, která je staví nad zkažené lidi, kteří je obklopují.

Agnes Grey i *Jane Eyre* jsou považovány za představitele románu vychovatelkách, jelikož zahrnují mnoho rysů tohoto žánru. Přesto z rozboru románů vyplývá, že *Agnes Grey* je přece jen víc tradičnější román o vychovatelkách. Život vychovatelky je v něm zobrazen realističtěji. Co se týče charakteristických prvků žánru, které byly porovnávány v diplomové práci, *Agnes Grey* slouží za vzor ve všech ohledech – Agnes je dcerou kněze; její rodina přijde o velké množství peněz; Agnes je nucena hledat si práci; v pozici vychovatelky zažívá spoustu nepříjemných situací; Agnes je nešťastná, protože musí čelit arogantním a zaujatým zaměstnavatelům, zákeřným a nevychovaným svěřencům, povýšeneckým hostům a nevraživému služebnictvu. Hlavní hrdinka je vyloučena ze společnosti a cítí se osamoceně. Nakonec překonává všechny těžkosti a stává se z ní dospělá a šťastná žena. Se svou matkou založí svou vlastní školu a provdá se za kněze; podaří se jí tak osvobodit od práce vychovatelky.

Jane Eyre v sobě zahrnuje charakteristické rysy románu o vychovatelkách, ale některé aspekty, které jsou analyzovány v diplomové práci, se liší od typických prvků žánru. Jako většina hrdinek románů, Jane je dcerou kněze, kromě toho je sirotek. Jako vychovatelka zažívá Jane ponížení ze strany snobských hostů a po překonání všech nesnází se z ní stává dospělá a nezávislá žena. Pokud jde o aspekty, které se liší, je zřejmé, že Jane není přehlížena a ponižována svým zaměstnavatelem, její svěřenkyň je bezproblémová a pracovní podmínky nejsou tak deprimující, jak je to v případě Agnes.

Anne Brontëová nepochybně psala *Agnes Grey* se záměrem informovat společnost o utrpení a strádání vychovatelek, a tímto docílit zlepšení situace. Autorka chtěla očividně pomoci bezbranné skupině žen, jak si poradit v tak zoufalé situaci, a také vybídnout zaměstnavatele, aby se ke svým vychovatelkám chovali lidsky. Je nutno podotknout, že román *Agnes Grey* byl v době své publikace přehlížen a nedoceněn. Soudobí kritici jej nespravedlivě srovnávali s romány úspěšných sester Anne Brontëové a kritizovali *Agnes Grey* za nedostatek originality a působivosti. Za několik let se však úhly pohledu změnilly a román začal být považován za významné dílo.

Zatímco román *Agnes Grey* je ceněn především pro realistické zobrazení života vychovatelky, román *Jane Eyre* je považován za jeden z nejoblíbenějších románů anglické literatury, byl úspěšný ihned po zveřejnění. Je to román o vychovatelkách, tíživá situace vychovatelky však není popsána tak podrobně; především je to však vášnivý milostný příběh s tajemnými prvky gotického románu. Charlotte Brontëová neměla v úmyslu pouze pobavit, autorka zároveň ostře kritizovala děsivé podmínky na charitativních školách a přísnou třídní diskriminaci ve viktoriánském období. Lze tedy konstatovat, že obě sestry Brontëovy zaujímají významné místo v anglické literatuře devatenáctého století. Přestože je většina románů o vychovatelkách zapomenuta, *Agnes Grey* a *Jane Eyre* se stále těší velké oblibě mezi čtenáři. Ale co je rovněž velmi důležité, oba dva romány byly přínosné také pro viktoriánskou společnost, jelikož autorky těchto románů kritizovaly třídní diskriminaci a vyslovily potřebu lepšího zacházení s vychovatelkami i s ženami obecně.

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