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Women Characters in Jane Austen's Novels

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Abstract

The thesis focuses on an analysis of women characters of Jane Austen's novels *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Sense and Sensibility*. In the first part it briefly deals with historical background of the turn of 18th and 19th century, and Jane Austen's life and work. In the main part of the thesis themes of social class, marriage, a position of women in society, and reputation that are widely reflected in Austen's novels, are analyzed with a focus on the female characters. Another chapter is aimed at an in-depth analysis of major heroines of the novels, and further at a brief analysis and comparison of minor characters that are divided into groups according to the social roles they perform, and characteristic features they share together.

Key words

Jane Austen; Emma; Mansfield Park; Pride and Prejudice; Sense and Sensibility; theme; motif; symbol; social class; marriage; a women's position in society; reputation; women character; sister; mother; wife; orphan; widow; spinster.

Souhrn

Diplomová práce je zaměřena na rozbor ženských postav v románech *Emma*, *Mansfieldské panství*, *Pýcha a předsudek*, a *Rozum a cit* spisovatelky Jane Austenové. V první části se práce stručně zabývá historickým pozadím přelomu 18. a 19. století, a životu a dílu Jane Austenové. V hlavní části jsou se zaměřením na ženské postavy analyzována témata sociální třídy, sňatku, ženského společenského postavení, a pověsti, která jsou v dílech Austenové nejvíce odrážejí. Další kapitola je zaměřena na podrobný rozbor hlavních románových hrdinek, a dále na stručný rozbor a srovnání vedlejších ženských postav, jež jsou rozděleny do skupin podle sociálních rolí, které ve společnosti zaujímají, a charakterových vlastností, které mají společné.

Klíčová slova

Jane Austenová; Emma; Mansfieldské panství; Pýcha a předsudek; Rozum a cit; téma; motiv; symbol; sociální třída; sňatek; ženské společenské postavení; pověst; ženská postava; sestra; matka; manželka; sirotek; vdova; neprovdaná žena.

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1. Introduction

The main goal of the thesis is to analyze women characters of Jane Austen's novels *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Sense and Sensibility* (in the text also referred to as E, MP, PP, and SS). Firstly, it is analyzed from the perspective of themes, motifs, and symbols reflected in her work and then from the viewpoint of the groups the characters were divided into with respect to their common characteristic features or their social roles to show that Jane Austen depicted a detailed picture of Georgian society.

The first part of the paper deals briefly with historical events of the turn of 18th and 19th century as it was an era of great political, social, and cultural changes that witnessed the clash of the Classicism and the Romantic Movement. Further, it focuses on Jane Austen's life and work to characterize her novels and reveal possible sources of inspiration for her writing both from her own life and work of other writers.

The main part of the thesis consists of two sections. In the first one themes of social class, marriage, a position of women in society, and reputation are analyzed, which are issues widely represented in Austen's work as all her novels are socially oriented, depicting everyday life of middle-class society. The goal of this section is to exemplify and analyze these themes especially from the point of view of female characters, using both primary and secondary literature. The motifs and symbols are touched upon only marginally, within the theme analysis.

The second section is focused on the analysis of female characters. Firstly, major characters are analyzed in detail and compared when possible. Secondly, the thesis focus on a brief analysis and comparison of minor characters that are divided into groups according to certain roles they fulfill in society and characteristic features they have in common – such as a group of “husband-hunters”, innocent young orphans, bad mothers, devoted young mothers and wives, warm-hearted widows, plain and poor spinsters, or snobbish ladies. The aim is to prove that Jane Austen portrayed various types of characters in her novels, and thus enabled readers a deep insight into ordinary life of society at that time, its customs and rules.

The outcomes are summarized in the concluding part of the thesis.

2. Historical background

During the Georgian Period, named after George III, reigning at the turn of the 18th and 19th century, England went through many political, economical, social, and also cultural changes. These changes were caused mainly by three significant revolutions taking place during that period.

First, the British nation had to face the American Revolution in 1770's. Before the revolution, the country had held a lot of overseas colonies all over the world. The situation changed after American colonies had declared war on Britain with intention to break free from its unsatisfactory rule. The empire underestimated the power of its opponents. McDowall notes that "the British army had no respect for [colonists'] fighting ability. The result was a disastrous defeat for the British government. It lost everything except for Canada" (McDowall, 1989, 112). Despite this great loss, the international trade still flourished thanks to its colonies in the West Indies.

By that time, the Industrial revolution had just started to influence everyday life widely, bringing especially social and economic changes into British society. The country dependent largely on agriculture had begun changing into industrial society. With new inventions so-called mass-production was possible, which brought large prosperity to the country. However, the revolution had also its drawbacks because many people lost their job as a consequence of the mass-production that led the unemployed to poverty. "There was also a growing feeling that the prosperity of a small group was brought with the poverty of many" (Schuurkes, 2004).

This feeling was augmented when the French Revolution broke out in 1789. The British government was afraid that the ideas of French rebels might inspire the poor and unsatisfied in Britain. McDowall writes: "[The House of Commons] had no sympathy with the French revolutionaries, and were frightened by the danger of 'awakening' the working classes" (McDowall, 1989, 125).

The era was afflicted also by several conflicts fought against the French Empire led by Napoleon. The wars brought famous victories to the British Empire at Trafalgar in 1805 and then, ten years later, at Waterloo.

In the area of culture, Georgian England witnessed the clash of the Age of Reason and the Romantic Period. The Age of Reason, also known as the Classicism, dominated the eighteenth-century thinking. It revived the ancient times and emphasized

reason as people surrounded by technical progress assumed that everything had its rational explanation. As a reaction to those beliefs, the Romanticism occurred at the end of the 18th century. On the contrary, Romantic writers emphasized feelings and emotions; in the centre of attention was an individual facing society.

3. Jane Austen's life and work

Jane Austen was born on 16th December 1775 in Steventon, Hampshire, as the sixth child and second daughter of the Reverend George Austen and his wife Cassandra. The Austens were regarded by neighbours as a very respectable family. "The Austens had some social status and ranked higher than did most of the rural vicars" (Brown, 1966, 5). Similarly, Tomalin (2000, 87) notes that Jane Austen's family belonged to the group of so-called pseudo-gentry, defining it as "families who aspired to live by the values of the gentry without owning land or inherited wealth of any significance".

Jane, growing up with five brothers and a sister, had a very close relationship towards her siblings. She especially admired her two brothers who served as officers in the British Navy, which was, according to Brown (1966, 27), a very frequent profession among middle-class men.

Nevertheless, the author developed the closest relationship towards her sister Cassandra who became her most faithful companion and adviser till the end of Jane's life. Tomalin writes, "Jane was at once [Cassandra's] child to be protected, her friend to be encouraged, and her sister to be given unconditional love" (Tomalin, 2000, 127). Their close relationship was also augmented by the fact that Jane, as well as her sister, remained unmarried. Although Jane had been proposed to by a brother of her two friends and had accepted the offer, she declined it the following day.

Being a daughter of a rural clergyman and scholar, Jane devoted a lot of time to reading books since her childhood; and after spending some time at boarding school, she was educated by her father at home. Brown notes that "[her father] related that she had excellent French, some Italian, a fair knowledge of English history, and some proficiency in music; [...] and she played the piano well" (Brown, 1966, 6).

Jane Austen, now well educated, influenced and inspired by the books she had been reading, started writing novels herself. While living in Steventon, she wrote three of her novels. In 1797, she completed probably her most famous novel *Pride and*

Prejudice, originally called *First Impressions*, published in 1813. In the same year, she began writing *Sense and Sensibility*, first called *Elinor and Marianne*. This novel of hers was published as her first book in 1811. Not long after completing *Sense and Sensibility*, *Northanger Abbey*, first known as *Susan*, was finished, printed posthumously in 1818. This novel was her last book for a longer period of time. The break was caused by moving away from Stevenson to Bath in 1801, then a year after her father's death in 1805, the novelist moved with her sister and mother to Southampton where they lived for three years before they finally moved to Chawton, Hampshire, in 1809.

The effect on Jane of this move to a permanent home in which she was able to re-establish her own rhythm of work was dramatic. It was as though she were restored to herself, to her imagination, to all her powers: a black cloud had lifted. Almost at once she began to work again (Tomalin, 2000, 211).

In Chawton, the author wrote "her most didactic novel" (Ryle, 1968, 112) called *Mansfield Park*, published in 1814. The publication of *Emma* followed the next year in 1815 with the author's dedication to the Prince Regent. Austen's last completed novel *Persuasion* was published, like *Northanger Abbey*, a year after her death, in 1818. All the novels were published with considerable help and support of one of her brothers.

Around the year 1816, Jane started to complain about her health that was rapidly getting worse with no positive prospect of her full recovery. She died on 18th July 1817 at the age of 41, leaving her other three pieces of work, *Lady Susan*, *The Watsons*, and *Sanditon*, unfinished. Even though her illness was diagnosed as Addison's disease, some doubts have recently arisen because of that when her letters from that period were analyzed. Tomalin (2000, 289) suggests that it was also highly probable that she died of cancer.

As mentioned above, Jane Austen was fond of reading books she found in her father's library and that influenced and inspired her in her own writing. She studied work of classicist writers such as Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson or Dr Samuel Johnson. Not less was she keen on reading contemporary female writers. She read work of Maria Edgeworth, Ann Radcliffe, Anne Wollstonecraft, or Fanny Burney, whose "comic monsters and her dialogue" (Tomalin, 2000, 74) Austen admired.

The turn of the 18th and 19th century is also known as the period in which classicist ideas of ordered and rational society started to mingle with ideas of the Romantic Movement whose “chief emphasis was upon freedom of individual self-expression: sincerity, spontaneity and originality” (Güney, Yavuz, 2008, 523).

Despite this modern movement newly influencing European culture, Jane Austen’s novels are still strongly influenced by the eighteenth-century beliefs. Her anti-romanticism is particularly seen in *Northanger Abbey* in which she laughed at “gothic mysteries of romantic fiction” (Watson, 1964, 538) that occurred, for example, in Ann Radcliffe’s novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Similarly, as Marsh suggests, in *Pride and Prejudice* the author mocks a phenomenon of falling in “love at first sight”, which is also her reaction against sentiment (Marsh, 1998, 233). According to Alexander, almost everybody in *Emma* is blinded by power of their imagination, which again proves the writer’s anti-romanticism in a way (Alexander, 2000, 242).

In *Sense and Sensibility* there is also a conflict of emotions on one side and reason defended by the author on the other. In the same way, as Marsh (1998, 169) points out, the writer advocated traditional moral values and sense of duty against spontaneous, extravagant and often unscrupulous behaviour aimed at personal freedom and needs in *Mansfield Park*. Sanders (2004, 376) claims that the author’s anti-romantic attitude is more evident in this novel more than anywhere else in her work.

However, Watson sees a difference between her own concept of rationalism and that of the eighteenth century. He assumes that Austen’s mind is as rational as that of the Augustan writers she read, yet she is more concrete than they are as she focused only on the domestic life of middle-class society in her writing (Watson, 1964, 538).

Therefore, Jane Austen’s novels are often characterized as domestic novels, depicting ordinary life of her class. She wrote about the way of life she lived herself, choosing only few families to focus on in her novels. Sanders believes that the novelist’s reason for such limitations was done on purpose in order to pass “her moral message of good conduct and good manners” on her readers supposing that such a restriction would enable this more easily (Sanders, 2004, 375). For that reason, she is sometimes referred to as a moralist. Austen let her characters reveal their real nature mainly through dialogues and their behaviour in certain situations to exemplify different types of characters, their virtues and vices.

A certain level of irony penetrates all the Austen's novels, which significantly contributes to uncovering drawbacks, faults and follies of the characters that she portrayed, and at the same time, it served the author as a tool for "a satirical analysis of society" (Marsh, 1998, 238).

Austen's work is also classified as a comedy or a novel of manners. Ousby writes:

In [her] work she chose deliberately to portray small groups of people in a limited, perhaps confining, environment, and to mould the apparently trivial incidents of their lives into a poised comedy of manners (Ousby, 1993, 45).

Nevertheless, there have still been debates among critics on subject of how much her writings were influenced by political events of her time.

The period when Austen wrote her major fiction was a time of revolutionary political upheavals, rapid industrialization, a transition phase in literature and currents of thought, [...], and a period of renewed radical feminism in the 1790s with the works of Mary Wollstonecraft (Bradford, 1996, 223).

There is no doubt that Jane Austen studied carefully Wollstonecraft's writings, especially her famous publication *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and identified in general with Wollstonecraft's ideas and opinions. Güney and Yavuz suggest that Austen contributed to "the evolution of the feminist movement" by considering "women equal to men in every way" (Güney, Yavuz, 2008, 529).

Although Jane Austen lived in the period of raging political changes, as mentioned above, her fiction reflected those events only marginally. She depicted an ordinary life of the rural gentry that remained practically unaffected by the contemporary political situation. "The moral life of her time is clear in her pages, although the history is social not national" (Alexander, 2000, 241).

Miles cites Marilyn Butler's opinion who, on the contrary, claims that Jane Austen was a political writer defending interests of rural Tories (Miles, 2009, 18). However, some political awareness of the author is proved by her touching upon the issue of slavery in *Mansfield Park* as that issue was discussed widely at that time, leading to an abolishment of the Slave Trade in the British Empire.

Last but not least, Austen's sources of inspiration for her writing stemmed also from the events she had experienced in her own life. A parallel between aspects occurring in her fiction and those of her real-life experience can be proved by some examples. Llewelyn (1977, 25), for instance, sees a possible parallel between one of her brothers being adopted by their wealthy relatives and the situation of Frank Churchill in *Emma* who was also brought up by his rich relatives. Similarly, Tomalin (2000, 57) sees connection between theatricals Jane and her family enjoyed at home and the famous scene of rehearsals in *Mansfield Park*.

4. Analysis of themes, motifs, and symbols

Jane Austen's novels are highly socially-oriented. She closely depicts everyday life of members of rural middle-class society, its hardships and gaieties; describes a strict system of social and moral rules dominating people's lives in that period, a women's position in that system, female life expectations; shows efforts of some trying to break established boundaries in order to improve their social status; adverts to social dangers that might ruin especially women's lives forever.

Wright expresses his opinion on the moral viewpoint of Austen's themes saying that "her themes might reflect or embody the morality of her father's generation" (Wright, 1964, 26). He also mentions that the themes have an ironic level (Wright, 1964, 34). The ironic level served the author as a tool for social criticism as she did not fully approve of all established social standards.

In the following chapter, the issues of social class, marriage, a women's position in society, and reputation reflected in four Austen's novels *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Sense and Sensibility* will be analyzed in more detail with the support of both primary and secondary literature. Motifs and symbols will be mentioned and discussed within the theme analysis.

4.1. Social class

Although, the issue of social class penetrates all the author's novels without exception, the theme is mostly represented in the work of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* as well as *Mansfield Park*.

During the 18th century, according to McDowall, as a consequence of political changes, middle-class society strengthened its economic power and started to mingle more easily with members of the gentry and aristocracy (McDowall, 1989, 115).

Nevertheless, despite middle-class and upper-class societies being so close to each other than they had been in the past, certain differences were still taken into consideration. Social status was measured in terms of the family background, connections, reputation, and mainly fortune. Woolf writes about a role of money in Jane Austen's work: "The social standards are almost entirely those of money and snobbery; it is remarkable to what an extent the plots and characters are dominated by questions of money" (Woolf, 1970, 51).

Jane Austen, however, focuses basically on a portrayal of the middle-class and upper-middle-class way of life – the topic she knew most about. The core of the middle class and country gentry is represented especially by families of tradesmen, officers, landowners, or clergymen who, according to Trevelyan (1988, 154), started normally occurring "as one of the upper class" at that time.

The novelist, on the contrary, does not seem to be very interested either in higher social ranks represented by the nobility and aristocracy, or the lower ranks embodied in servants. Wright notes: "Servants appear wherever servants are necessary; at Mansfield, at Hartfield, even at Barton Cottage and in Portsmouth; but they are barely seen, and almost never heard". The situation is similar to those of higher rank. "As for the aristocracy, Jane Austen hardly touches on it; but when she does, its members are usually satirized" (Wright, 1964, 28). A typical example of the satirized person can be seen in Lady Catherine de Bourgh, a snobbish character of the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, who is a representative of aristocratic circles.

Miles believes that the dialogue between Lady Catherine and Elizabeth Bennet on the subject of Elizabeth's possible engagement to Mr. Darcy symbolizes a kind of tense between middle-class society and members of the aristocracy (Miles, 2009, 40).

When Lady Catherine learns about the possible engagement, she rushes to remind Elizabeth where her place in society is. She represents conservative beliefs defending strict adherence to a rigid system of social rules, having "an ancient social hierarchy" (Marsh, 1998, 101) in mind.

She insists on the idea of only people of the same social status deserve each other, having arranged a future match between her daughter and her sister's son when they were born, as it has been usual in upper-class societies, and perceives her nephew and Elizabeth's possible engagement as a totally inappropriate matter negatively affecting and dishonouring her family's social position. At the same time, she offends Elizabeth by speaking contemptuously about her status and family's connections. Elizabeth opposes her insults. The dialogue is as it follows:

'My daughter and my nephew are formed for each other. They are descended on the maternal side, from the same noble line; and on the father's from respectable, honourable, and ancient, though untitled families. Their fortune on both sides is splendid. They are destined for each other [...]; and what is to divide them? – the upstart pretensions of a young woman without family, connections, or fortune. Is this to be endured! But it must not, shall not be! If you were sensible of your own good, you would not wish to quit the sphere in which you have been brought up.'

'In marrying your nephew, I should not consider myself as quitting that sphere. He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter: so far we are equal.'

'True. You are a gentleman's daughter. But who was your mother? Who are your uncles and aunts? Do not imagine me ignorant of their condition' (PP, 1991, 336).

When Elizabeth refuses to assure Lady Catherine of never uniting her life with Mr. Darcy, she continues:

'It is well. You refuse, then, to oblige me. You refuse to obey the claims of duty, honour, and gratitude. You are determined to ruin him in the opinion of all his friends, and make him the contempt of the world' (PP, 1991, 338).

This Lady Catherine's remark shows how easily someone's reputation could be at risk. The issue of reputation will be dealt with in more detail in one of the following chapters.

It is obvious that Lady Catherine is not able to appreciate a genuine personality of an individual; she is interested only in the person's social status. The same idea is expressed by Marsh who claims that "Lady Catherine's idea of society entails fixed relationships between social ranks, not between individual human beings" (Marsh, 1998, 103).

Unfortunately, Lady Catherine's painful objections to Elizabeth's financial situation and mainly the family background are not the only one because two selfish Mr. Bingley's sisters do not miss any occasion to mock and humiliate all the Bennets.

Similarly, Fanny Price, like Elizabeth Bennet, has to face unpleasant situations arising from her rather low origin. She is taken from her home to be brought up by the Bertrams, her wealthy relatives. Nevertheless, they do not intend to treat Fanny as their own child as she is of inferior birth. Sir Bertram, in particular, thinks of preserving some differences between Fanny and his own daughters. He tells his sister-in-law Mrs. Norris:

'There will be some difficulty in our way, [...], as to the distinction proper to be made between the girls as they grow up; how to preserve in the minds of my daughters the consciousness of what they are, without making them think too lowly of their cousin; and how, without depressing her spirits too far, to make her remember that she is not a Miss Bertram. I should wish to see them very good friends, [...], but still they cannot be equals. Their rank, fortune, rights, and expectations, will always be different' (MP, 1992, 11).

After several years, Sir Bertram realizes, when disappointed by his daughters' deeds, that strong moral values and good conduct are rather a matter of an honest and high-principled personality regardless its social status. He then appreciates Fanny's genuine and modest character and treats her as if she was his own child.

Nevertheless, before Fanny's personality is fully acknowledged, she is often overlooked by almost the whole family, and when she is noticed, she has to endure a lot of reproaches and remarks considering her rank from her aunt Mrs. Norris who still reminds her that she has to be very grateful to the Bertrams for all the benevolence they have provided her with:

Mrs. Norris had been talking to [Fanny] the whole way from Northampton of her wonderful good fortune, and the extraordinary degree of gratitude and good behaviour which it ought to produce (MP, 1992, 13).

As for Jane Austen's novel *Emma*, Bradbury divides characters into several groups considering their social status. Society in Highbury is represented by "persons of higher rank", members of "the depressed 'professional' middle class" involving, for

example, Miss Bates or Robert Martin, and “the socially indeterminate characters” such as Harriet Smith or Jane Fairfax (Bradbury, 1970, 79).

Emma’s position in society is from all the studied heroines the highest as she is a member of higher social rank. She is wealthy and well-connected, not worrying about her future expectations because she is aware of her respectable social status. Emma insists on the distinction of rank thinking of lower class with a certain disdain. When Robert Martin proposes to Harriet for the first time, Emma tells Harriet that if she marries him, she will not be able to meet and visit her because Harriet will throw herself “out of all good society” (E, 1991, 51). Therefore, she will not deserve Emma’s company any more.

In Emma’s persuading Harriet not to marry Mr. Martin, she shows her bad judgement. When talking to Mr. Knightley, she says: “Mr. Martin is a very respectable young man, but I cannot admit him to be Harriet’s equal”. On the contrary, Mr. Knightley’s opinion is much more impartial as he replies: “Not Harriet’s equal!” [...] “No, he is not her equal indeed, for he is as much her superior in sense as in situation” (E, 1991, 59). Similarly, when Emma insults Miss Bates on their trip to Box Hill, Mr. Knightley censures Emma for her improper behaviour, emphasizing Miss Bates’ bad position that is to be pitied:

‘She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and, if she lives to old age, must probably sink more. Her situation should secure your compassion. It was badly done, indeed!’ (E, 1991, 384).

In Jane Austen’s times, the social position was a crucial criterion for assessing both material and also human values as many considered those of higher rank and considerable fortune “better” people, which meant, as already mentioned above, that human beings were mostly judged in terms of the group they belonged to rather than in terms of their personal qualities. Nevertheless, Jane Austen did not approve of those beliefs, as Llewelyn (1977, 83) writes: “People had to win her respect as individuals – rank did not help them”.

The theme of social class is inseparably connected with the issue of marriage, which will be analyzed in the following chapter.

4.2. Marriage

Marriage is another issue widely discussed in Jane Austen's work as it plays a considerable role in her novels. Woolf notes that "the axis of the plot in every novel [...] is money and marriage or rank and marriage" (Woolf, 1970, 51). Similarly, Marsh sees the author's characters "imprisoned within a rigid materialist system of courtship and marriage" (Marsh, 1998, 136).

In the author's times, the only possibility for women to climb up the social ladder and thus ensure some financial security and more respectable social position was to marry well. Marsh, for example, suggests that "marriage was a woman's livelihood" and "her life's work" (Marsh, 1998, 18). Similarly, Tomalin sees in women's getting married "a crowning point of their lives" (Tomalin, 2000, 114). To marry meant for a woman to reach her destiny; gain financial independence from her parents or relatives; and avoid the unpleasant fact of spinsterhood. Mrs. Bennet must have been very well aware of the fact as she devoted her life to the idea of all her daughters well settled.

As the marriage was perceived by society as a women's life priority, and "the social standard, ideal, the duty of a woman is assumed to be to marry as high or as rich as possible" (Woolf, 1970, 51), there is a question to what an extent love was present in the relationship of a man and a woman under the burden of such social demands and expectations.

As exemplified in the previous chapter, social rank was a crucial factor in considering appropriateness of the match. Therefore, 'marriage de convenance' was a common phenomenon in Georgian Britain, especially among members of higher circles.

Moler (1977, 157) and Miles (2009, 34) see the main source of pressure and objections against marriage of those of inferior birth with those of higher social rank in the socially superior parents or relatives who try to gain an advantage from the matches they selfishly promote to the prejudice of their own children's happiness.

The author seems to disapprove of such an approach as she often lets forced and loveless engagements fail in favour of happy marriages. Mrs. Ferrars, a character of *Sense and Sensibility*, forces her son Edward to marry "the Hon. Miss Morton, only daughter of the late Lord Morton, with thirty thousand pounds" (SS, 1992, 215). When she learns Edward has been engaged to Lucy Steele, a girl of lower rank and no fortune, she is absolutely horrified and temporarily disinherits him. Upon learning that Edward

wants to marry Elinor, the girl he loves but who is still not equal to him, though more suitable than Lucy Steele, Mrs. Ferrars first tries to persuade her son not to marry her but eventually, even though unwillingly, approves of the match:

Mrs. Ferrars at first reasonably endeavoured to dissuade him from marrying Miss Dashwood, by every argument in her power; - told him, that in Miss Morton he would have a woman of higher rank and larger fortune; [...], but when she found that, thought perfectly admitting the truth of her representation, he was by no means inclined to be guided by it, she judged it wisest, [...], to submit – and therefore, after such an ungracious delay as she owed to her own dignity, and as served to prevent every suspicion of good-will, she issued her decree of consent to the marriage of Edward and Elinor (SS, 1992, 360-361).

Similarly, Lady Catherine de Bourgh is not successful in enforcing her nephew Mr. Darcy to marry her daughter even though she insists on their being “destined for each other” (PP, 1991, 336). She has no other choice but to cope with the fact that the nephew has preferred love and happiness to duty and dullness that would probably enter his life if he married Miss de Bourgh.

Austen disapproves of marriages without love, though she admits money as an important assumption, along with love, for a happy future life. Therefore, love is not enough in the marriage, she justifies also reasonable considerations. David Cecil writes about the author: “Love itself, though she understood its workings admirably, did not rouse her enthusiasm unless it was justified by reason, disciplined by self-control” (Cecil, 1970, 34).

When Elizabeth Bennet for the first time visits Mr. Darcy’s noble estate Pemberley in Derbyshire that symbolizes, according to Brower, Darcy’s personality, taste, and behaviour towards other people (Brower, 1970, 58), she starts to feel, besides an increasing affection towards him, that “to be mistress of Pemberley might be something!” (PP, 1991, 228). In a few days, when Elizabeth visits the estate again, Austen writes about her:

[S]he felt a real interest in his welfare; and she only wanted to know how far she wished that welfare to depend upon herself, and how far it would be for happiness of both that she should employ the power, which her fancy told her she still possessed, of bringing on the renewal of his addresses (PP, 1991, 248).

The extract proves that Elizabeth was not driven only by her emotions but she also considered the material point of view. She also understands that a marriage based primarily only on love and passion is not sufficient having seen a typical example in her parents' weary relationship.

To focus more on the affectionate side of marriage, Myers introduces "brotherly" love in Jane Austen's work, which is love that "should be based on the kind of intimate knowledge and friendship which one might find between people who had grown up rather closely together" (Myers, 1970, 231). This kind of love can be found, for instance, in the relationship of Emma and Mr. Knightley or Fanny and her cousin Edmund in *Mansfield Park*.

As mentioned earlier, reasons for getting married were economically and socially determined. A married woman fulfilled the expectations of society, avoided loneliness and financial dependence on her own family, or even poverty. Nevertheless, a woman from a wealthy and respectable family did not feel the pressures of society to marry so much as a woman of lower rank. The well-connected woman could afford to choose a future husband more properly, without having to be afraid of future economic hardships if she remained unmarried. That was also Emma Woodhouse's case. When talking to her friend Harriet about marriage, Emma tells her that she has no intention to marry unless being in love because it is not necessary for her to wed in her situation:

'I have none of the usual inducements of women to marry. Were I to fall in love, indeed, it would be a different thing! But I never have been in love; it is not my way, or my nature; and I do not think I ever shall. And, without love, I am sure I should be a fool to change such a situation as mine. Fortune I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want: I believe few married women are half as much mistress of their husband's house, as I am of Hartfield; and never, never could I expect to be so truly beloved and important; to always first and always right in any man's eye as I am in my father's' (E, 1991, 84).

Emma's situation is, however, very different from Charlotte Lucas's situation. Charlotte, the best friend of Elizabeth Bennet, is a twenty-seven year old, not very handsome, girl of small fortune and no connections depending largely on her parents' financial support. She is aware of her limited prospects and being desperately afraid of her future loneliness and misery, she accepts the first man who proposes to her even though she is not in love with him at all. Charlotte explains her act to Elizabeth:

‘I am not romantic, you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins’s character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage state’ (PP, 1991, 120).

Jones sees Miss Lucas’s decision as “a realistic choice in a world in which marriage is the only career for a woman in Charlotte’s social position” (Jones, 1997, 43). So whereas Emma can afford to wonder why a woman should accept the first marriage proposal (E, 1991, 58), and wait until she realizes her true feelings towards her old friend by exclaiming that “Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!” (E, 1991, 418), Charlotte can not afford such a luxury.

For Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park* and Lucy Steele in *Sense and Sensibility* money is much more important than love as they would do anything to marry as profitably as possible – Mary immediately thinking of Edmund’s inheriting all the family possession supposing Tom, the eldest son of the Bertrams, dies. In the same way, when Lucy learns her fiancé Edward is disinherited, she dissolves the engagement and marries Edward’s brother who inherits the money from his mother instead of Edward.

Jones defines Austen’s novels as “romantic comedies” as they are all “love stories with happy endings” (Jones, 1997, 50). It is very often love of a poor girl and a wealthy man who fall in love with each other and have to overcome all the hardships and obstacles that a rigid system of social rules and expectations, often augmented by disagreeable parents or relatives, has prepared for them. However, in the end, all the heroines are blessed with both love and money for patience and consistency of their moral values. Such a pattern can be seen in the relationships of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, Elinor Dashwood and Edward Ferrars, or Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill.

According to Jones, the marriages in the author’s work provide “a significant culmination of the moral concerns of the plot” (Jones, 1997, 50). Similarly, Brown sees the issue of marriage as a symbol of “successful maturation of human relationships within each novel” (Brown, 1973, 337-338).

As already mentioned, Austen was highly in favour of marriages based on mutual affection and friendship, but she also viewed fortune as an important and pleasant circumstance in the marriage as long as it is not the main reason to wed. Cecil writes: “It was wrong to marry for money, but it was silly to marry without it” (Cecil, 1970, 34).

Jane Austen herself followed the idea and refused to marry only for money, without being in love. “Evidently, for Jane, the prospect of impoverished spinsterhood in Georgian England was preferable to being ‘well married’ to a man she did not love” (Llewelyn, 1977, 60). Such a decision needed courage as a position of women, mainly those unmarried, in society at that time was not easy, and their expectations were much more limited than those of men. The women’s social position will be dealt with in the following chapter.

4.3. Women’s position in society

In Jane Austen’s time, a women’s position in society was very restricted as the society was highly patriarchal. Women were generally perceived as not equal to men.

McDowall quotes a contemporary lord’s statement: “Women are only children of larger growth... A man of sense only plays with them... He neither tells them about, nor trusts them, with serious matters” (McDowall, 1989, 116). The similar idea is expressed by Davidoff who also comments on the female position: “The feminine ideal was to be dependent, young, weak and childlike, encouraged by the widening age gap between spouses” (Davidoff, 1990, 84).

An example of marriage of a wider age gap is exemplified in the relationship of Emma and Mr. Knightley who has always guided her since she was a child. Emma is grateful to him for his guidance, saying: “I am sure you were of use to me, [...], I was very often influenced rightly by you – oftener than I would own at the time. I am sure you did me good” (E, 1991, 473). The same pattern is seen in *Mansfield Park*. Fanny is guided by her older cousin Edmund, her future husband, who “corrected her judgment” (MP, 1992, 23) when she was a little girl.

For according to Evans, “the family and marriage were central to contemporary British social, political, and cultural concerns between 1700 and 1850”, society required women to “love, honour, and obey their husbands” (Evans, 2005, 57-58), produce children and thus fulfill their primary social role. Typical obedient wives and devoted mothers are embodied in characters of Isabella Knightley or Anne Weston in *Emma*.

On the other hand, the author lets mothers of almost all her main heroines fail their expected roles of caring parents. For example, when Fanny comes to visit her family after many years living in Mansfield Park, she is full of expectations and looks

forward to seeing her mother and the other family members. After the arrival, however, she is very disappointed about her mother's indifference towards her.

As Evans suggests in her article that the mother's duty was also to look after her children's education (Evans, 2005, 68), another failure can be seen in Mrs. Bennet's character. When Lady Catherine learns from Elizabeth that they have never had any governess, she assumes that their mother must have been very busy to educate them. Elizabeth replies that it was not so, meaning that their mother has never been interested in educating her daughters (PP, 1991, 156).

Husbands were also supposed to respect and support their wives. That attitude was influenced, according to Miles, by the ideal of marriage based on friendship occurring at that time. This ideal based on mutual understanding is depicted by Austen in her novels in which romantic love of most of her main characters has found its way regardless family expectations (Miles, 2009, 159). Marsh also suggests that Austen believed in men's being able to "recognize and liberate [women's] own 'feminine' qualities, and to value a woman for herself, in an open and equal relationship" (Marsh, 1998, 261).

Nevertheless, no matter how regardful the relationship between partners was, a man was always more respected in society than a woman. McDowall quotes a gentleman who wrote around 1800: "The husband and wife are one, and the husband is that one" (McDowall, 1989, 137).

Married women, however, ensured some economic security and ceased to be burdens to their parents, and ideally, gained a higher social position, too. Those motives, in particular, occupied minds of all Austen's "husband-hunters", such as the Steele sisters', Mary Crawford's who claims that "every body should marry as soon as they can do it to advantage" (MP, 1992, 44), but also Miss Bingley's, Charlotte Lucas's, or even Mrs. Bennet's whose biggest wish is to marry all her daughters as advantageously as possible.

After marriage, husbands provided their wives with new home and women became in charge of running their household. Mr. Knightley, in dialogue with Emma, says:

'A man would always wish to give a woman a better home than the one he takes her from, and he who can do it, where there is no doubt of her regard, must, I think, be the happiest of mortals' (E, 1991, 438).

Women's destiny was oriented towards domestic life, managing household matters, and motherhood. Men's concern, on the contrary, was that of running business and ensuring financial security of all family members.

Women were completely dependent on their husband's money, because, according to Evans, "women and everything they owned, became the property of their husbands" after the marriage (Evans, 2005, 58).

Jane Austen, however, portrayed another problem women had to face, which was widowhood that, according to Hufton, "carried immense social, economic, and psychological consequences for a woman" (Hufton, 1993, 42). When a male owner of a property died, the property passed on another male family member or relative. Therefore, in the first chapters of *Sense and Sensibility* readers witness Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters' hardship as they are forced to move from their home after Mr. Dashwood's death because the property was inherited by his son whose selfish spouse "degraded" the women "to the condition of visitors" (SS, 1992, 7). Similarly, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Mrs. Bennet does not hesitate to vow Elizabeth to Mr. Collins, a distant relative of theirs, to save herself and her daughters from destitution supposing Mr. Bennet dies.

Therefore, the financial situation was not easy for middle-class women. Those who did not marry, or had no one to support them, usually had to work as governesses in wealthy families to earn their living. Such fate would have had to face also Jane Fairfax, an orphan girl from the novel *Emma*, had not she been saved by marrying a rich man.

The wealthy spinsters, however, were supposed to look after other family members or relatives. When Harriet asks Emma about how she would employ herself if she remains unmarried, Emma replies, "I shall be very well off, with all the children of a sister I love so much, to care about" (E, 1991, 86).

Besides being in charge of household management, instructing servants, being careful and loving wives and mothers, a women's duty was also visiting friends and relatives, and charity work. Tomalin notes: "Ladies knew they had a duty to give charity to village families, in the form of blankets, clothes, and children's and baby things" (Tomalin, 2000, 101). Emma's visiting poor is portrayed merely as a duty that is expected from her as a woman of higher rank. She laments over wretchedness of the

poor but she stops immediately after she meets, together with Harriet, Mr. Elton. All the daunting thoughts of hers disappear (E, 1991, 87).

Austen a bit satirizes a married women's role in the characters of Mrs. Elton and Lydia Bennet who both complain about their lack of time since being married. Mrs. Elton regrets her giving up music because as a married woman she has no time to practice (E, 1991, 281). It is the same case with Lydia. When she leaves her parents and sisters to live with her husband in the north of the country, Mrs. Bennet begs her to write often to them. Lydia replies: "As often as I can. But you know married women have never much time for writing. My sisters may write to me. They will have nothing else to do" (PP, 1991, 310).

Jones introduces Mary Poovey's 'Proper Lady'. The Proper Lady was the ideal contemporary society believed in. It was a woman "responsible for the dissemination of domestic virtue throughout society" by being "a properly decorous and domesticated wife" (Jones, 1997, 149). This ideal shows how limited the women's position was.

The ideal of the Proper Lady as a woman "imprisoned" in her own house had been constantly criticized by Mary Wollstonecraft, a contemporary women's rights advocate and a feminist writer. Jones writes that Jane Austen, as well as Mary Wollstonecraft, "defended women as 'rational creatures' with a right to self-expression" and denied the beliefs of society that "domestic sphere was the only appropriate place for even the most 'accomplished' woman" (Jones, 1997, 142).

Jane Austen, as a pre-feminist writer, does not agree with the idea of men being superior to women and expresses her attitude on the subject in her novels. Marsh notes, "Jane Austen's understanding of the oppression of women, and her critical attitude towards male domination, in her society, are generally agreed among the critics" (Marsh, 1998, 261).

In her novels Austen depicts mostly strong women struggling for their independence and freedom by asserting, as Güney and Yavuz (2008, 529) note, "their own identity within a male-dominated society".

In *Mansfield Park*, for instance, the author opposes the male-dominated world in which Sir Bertram, a symbol of patriarchal powers, forces Fanny to marry Henry Crawford despite her repulsive feelings towards him. Similarly, Lady Bertram expresses her opinion concerning the matter by saying to Fanny that "it is every young woman's

duty” (MP, 1992, 342) to accept the offer. Nevertheless, Fanny refuses to obey men’s commands. She decides to follow her own feelings, adhere to moral values she recognizes, and thus break the contemporary social barriers, gaining independence from men’s dominance. The independence of the author’s female characters, according to Güney and Yavuz (2008, 529), is “a basic element for the advance of women within society”.

4.4. Reputation

In the rigid social system of the Georgian era in which all human actions were judged in terms of an extent of adherence to its strict rules, reputation was, together with wealth, connections and the family background, a crucial criterion in measuring one’s social status. Reputation was an extremely fragile matter that could have been damaged very easily and in many cases, concerning especially a women’s situation, even irretrievably lost by becoming an object of constant public disgrace.

The mortal enemy of one’s reputation was gossiping. Gossips had the power of spreading quickly around and significantly influencing, mostly negatively, the general public’s opinions concerning the victim of the gossips.

Elinor Dashwood comments on the power of being influenced by opinions of others: “Sometimes one is guided by what [people] say of themselves, and very frequently by what other people say of them, without giving oneself time to deliberate and judge”. Her sister Marianne replies, “But I thought it was right, Elinor, [...], to be guided wholly by the opinion of other people” (SS, 1992, 89-90).

Nevertheless, gossips were inseparable from everyday life being a central concern of each social gathering or visit paid to friends or relatives. Llewelyn writes: “Morning calls were an indispensable part of daily routine; essential for keeping up with the latest news and gossips” (Llewelyn, 1977, 104).

In case a ball or any other social event had taken place, it was discussed on the first occasion possible. For instance, in *Pride and Prejudice*, after an assembly in Meryton, the Bennets were visited by their neighbours to talk about the previous event:

That the Miss Lucases and the Miss Bennets should meet to talk over a ball was absolutely necessary, and the morning after the assembly brought the former to Longbourn to hear and to communicate (PP, 1991, 15).

Therefore, in order to avoid the reputation of a bad hostess and satisfy demands of often starched guests, the hostess had to ensure certain standards already established in their circles. When Sir John in *Sense and Sensibility* contrives a small ball for a group of about twenty young people, his wife, Lady Middleton, strongly opposes to it. The author explains:

In the country, an unpremeditated dance was very allowable; but in London, where the reputation of elegance was more important and less easily attained, it was risking too much for the gratification of a few girls, to have it known that Lady Middleton had given a small dance of eight or nine couple, with two violins, and a mere side-board collation (SS, 1992, 163).

Even the social events themselves are occasions in which many gossips come to an existence. Marsh, for example, suggests that in one of the chapters of the novel, “Emma is full of private and public conversations speculating about other’s behaviour”, meaning especially the speculations about Jane Fairfax’s pianoforte that was sent, in Emma’s opinion, by Jane’s family friend as a declaration of love (Marsh, 1998, 31).

As mentioned above, one’s reputation is also judged within an area of social status. For example, when Elizabeth, a girl of inferior birth, refuses to promise Lady Catherine that she will never marry Mr. Darcy, her ladyship angrily asks her: “Do you not consider that a connection with you must disgrace him in the eyes of every body?” (PP, 1991, 338). It shows that if a person chose a partner of lower social status, the reputation of the person could be ruined as well.

Jane Austen satirizes a constant human quest for sensation and various affairs that would bring something new or even unusual into their stereotype and often boring lives. She also criticizes how easily people change their opinions about other people’s character, being often influenced merely by a changed situation of the people discussed, and how easily they are attracted by newly occurring distractions. In *Emma*, Austen writes: “Human nature is so well disposed towards those who are in interesting situations, that a young person, who either marries or dies, is sure of being kindly spoken of” (E, 1991, 184).

The sudden shift in public’s interest from one person to another can be seen in the situation in which Frank Churchill, a recent object of public discussions, falls into

the shade of Mr. Elton whose “wedding-day was named” (E, 1991, 271) and therefore, he stands in the centre of interest instead of Frank.

Reputation is often very closely related to prejudice towards individuals or a certain group of people. Elizabeth in a dialogue with her sister says about Mr. Darcy whose reputation is really damaged by various speculations and gossips: “The general prejudice against Mr. Darcy is so violent, that it would be the death of half the good people in Meryton, to attempt to place him in an amiable light” (PP, 1991, 213).

On the contrary, praising and paying respects to a person can be a source of admiration and a motive for reconsideration of the previous judgements. When visiting Pemberley, Elizabeth is not impressed only by Mr. Darcy’s estate, but also an old servant’s pleasing speech about her master. Therefore, as Miles suggests, Elizabeth first falls in love with his reputation, not with the real Darcy (Miles, 2009, 119).

As for women, Llewelyn mentions: “There were customs which dictated the way a young lady should, or should not, behave” (Llewelyn, 1977, 105). It was totally inappropriate when a young unmarried girl corresponded with a young unmarried man unless they were engaged. Therefore, when Marianne corresponds with Willoughby, her sister is convinced that “they must be engaged” (SS, 1992, 154).

However, women’s reputation was even more fragile than that of men’s. Men’s misconduct was generally more tolerated by contemporary society as the public eye judged women’s deeds more severely. When Willoughby seduces Colonel Brandon’s ward and leaves her, she is thrown into an extremely difficult situation and is forced to live with her illegitimate child in the country, away from all public events, with her prospects ruined forever whereas her seducer’s life remains publicly unaffected by his sins and he even finds a woman to marry. Jones claims:

[M]en’s sexual adventures were largely taken for granted and overlooked, even if they were not approved of; for women on the other hand any sexual misdemeanour meant disgrace unless followed by marriage to the man concerned, and even then it might take society a long time to forgive and forget (Jones, 1997, 30-31).

Probably the worst sin a woman, married or unmarried, could commit was to elope with another man. The motif of elopement is dealt with especially in the novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park*. Austen, according to Jones, deals with the

issue of elopement in her plots to warn of “the dire consequences of wrong judgement” (Jones, 1997, 31).

The act of elopement was a very serious matter, for some even worse than death, affecting negatively not only the woman herself, but also her whole family that immediately became an object of deepest public disgrace, if revealed. Therefore, the family’s first concern was to conceal it from public knowledge as long as possible.

When Fanny learns the news about the elopement of Maria, her married cousin, with Mr. Crawford, she thinks only of “indubitable family-misery which must envelope all, if it were indeed a matter of certified guilt and public exposure” and it occurs to her that “the greatest blessing to every one of kindred with [Maria] would be instant annihilation” (MP, 1992, 455). Similarly, Mr. Collins comments on Lydia’s misconduct that disgraced the whole family in a letter addressed to Mr. Bennet: “The death of your daughter would have been a blessing in comparison of this” adding that “this false step in one daughter will be injurious to the fortunes of all the others, for who, [...], will connect themselves with such a family?” (PP, 1991, 278).

Fortunately for the Bennets, Lydia is saved from a lifelong loss of good reputation and constant public condemnation by her marrying Mr. Wickham, the man she ran away with. The wedding was arranged by Mr. Darcy who himself prevented his sister Georgiana from elopement with Mr. Wickham a few years earlier and thus saved her from the public disgrace and desperation, too.

In this novel, Jane Austen again adverts to the variability of one’s reputation. When Mr. Bingley, a wealthy gentleman, proposes to Jane Bennet after the Lydia matter is solved, the Bennet family is at once “pronounced to be the luckiest family in the world” even though a few weeks ago they were “proved to be marked for misfortune” (PP, 1991, 331).

Similarly, Julia Bertram, who follows her sister Maria and elopes with a man, saves herself from constant disgrace by marrying him. On the contrary, Maria Bertram’s ill-judged act ruins her life forever. She is forced to live “in another country – remote and private, [...], shut up with little society” (MP, 1992, 479), condemned not only by public, but also her own family.

5. Analysis of women characters

In her novels, Jane Austen satirized the society she was living in through her characters that served her as a tool for social and moral criticism. Güney and Yavuz (2008, 527) write: “In her fiction, Jane Austen uses irony and ridicule to describe the social manners and behaviour of her characters, and her novels turn into a kind of comedy of manners”. Harding, who divides Austen’s characters into real people and caricatures, continues by suggesting that the comic situations Austen ensured by “bringing the caricatures into direct contact with the real people” (Harding, 1970, 47).

According to Lauber, fools have an entertaining function and help “in the development of action and theme” (Lauber, 1974, 512). Simpson further suggests that they are not always foolish in terms of “their intellect” but rather in terms of their “moral understanding” (Simpson, 1970, 18).

Austen’s characters are generally well-developed and rather complex, never depicted as flawless human beings, but people with their faults and follies, like those Austen was meeting with during her life. Although she focused on a restricted number of families and characters, she portrayed a wide range of different personalities who, as Bradford suggests, “reveal themselves through their words” (Bradford, 1996, 224). Therefore, dialogues and social interactions are crucial for Austen’s characters in order to understand their real nature.

This part of the thesis will deal with an analysis of female characters in the novels *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Sense and Sensibility*, as women dominated her fiction, men having only a complementing function. Wright introduces W. F. Pollock’s remark about Jane Austen’s work: “Men do not appear, except in the company of women” (Wright, 1964, 29).

The female characters will be divided into groups according to either their social roles they perform or some features they have in common. Their personalities will be analyzed and compared, where possible, in the following chapter.

5.1. Major women characters

Firstly, the main heroines will be analyzed. They are young and “independent women who share ideals in a male-dominated society” (Güney, Yavuz, 2008, 526), and

who have to undergo personal sufferings “on their way from misery to joy” (Shaw, 1975, 290), and some of them have to succeed in the process of self-knowledge to deserve the man they love as a reward.

5.1.1. Sister companions

In *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*, readers witness very close relationships between Elizabeth Bennet and her older sister Jane, and Elinor and Marianne Dashwood. Whereas in *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth is the one who “dominates the action” (Wright, 1964, 110) and overshadows Jane, the Dashwood sisters are both equally important to the plot, though Lerner (1970, 101) claims that it is Marianne who is “the true heroine” in the novel.

It is also highly probable that the close relationships between the Bennet and the Dashwood sisters reflect an extraordinary and warm relationship between the author and her sister Cassandra.

5.1.1.1. Elizabeth Bennet

Elizabeth Bennet is probably Austen’s most famous heroine. She is the second of five daughters of the Bennet family, a darling of her father and, on the contrary, “the least dear” (PP, 1991, 99) to her mother. She is, as all Austen’s major heroines, not very accomplished, claiming that she “knew nothing of the art” (PP, 1991, 233) and that she is not good at playing the piano admitting that she “would not take the trouble of practicing” (PP, 1991, 166), but she is intelligent and quick-witted, with “a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in any thing ridiculous” (PP, 1991, 9). She is not afraid to speak for herself and courageous enough to express her opinions in the society dominated by men. Considering the situation of women at the turn of 18th and 19th century, Elizabeth can be thought of as a modern girl that is a long way ahead of her time by possessing these qualities.

Moreover, she is determined to marry for love, which makes her a romantic heroine, and insists also on mutual understanding among partners, which was a phenomenon widely discussed at Austen’s times, influenced by feminist ideas asserting equality of sexes. As for Elizabeth, Marsh expresses the same opinion: “It appears that

Elizabeth began the novel with a straightforward emphasis on love and mutual understanding, [...], centered on an individual's feelings" (Marsh, 1998, 105).

Elizabeth follows her principles she set for marriage when she denies Mr. Collins's proposal, a ridiculous and pompous cousin of hers, saying to him: "You could not make me happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who would make you so" (PP, 1991, 102).

She preferred uncertainty of her life prospects and a rupture with her mother to being unhappily trapped in marriage with the man she can not stand, even though she would ensure a kind of protection and economic security.

According to Myers, Elizabeth refuses Mr. Collins, and later even Mr. Darcy because she, unlike her friend Charlotte Lucas, is not threatened by "age, poverty and spinsterhood." And another reason for Mr. Collins's refusal can be, as Myers continues, that Elizabeth does not want "to make a mistake that will echo the pattern of her parents' marriage" who simply do not understand each other (Myers, 1970, 228).

In the scene where Mr. Collins is proposing to Elizabeth, Austen lets Elizabeth apply the "playful disposition" (PP, 1991, 9) she possesses despite a serious nature of the dialogue. From the very beginning of the dialogue, Elizabeth's feelings are "divided between distress and diversion" (PP, 1991, 100), the latter reaching its peak after Mr. Collins's emotional outburst of feelings. Elizabeth is amused by his speech:

The idea of Mr. Collins, with all his solemn composure, being run away with by his feelings, made Elizabeth so near laughing that she could not use the short pause he allowed in any attempt to stop him farther (PP, 1991, 100).

However, Elizabeth is not amused at all by shameful behaviour of almost all her family members, especially by her mother's manners which leave Elizabeth deeply mortified so much the more she is aware of Darcy's perception of these manners:

Her mother would talk of her views in the same intelligible tone. Elizabeth blushed and blushed again with shame and vexation. She could not help frequently glancing her eye at Mr. Darcy, though every glance convinced her of what she dreaded; for though he was not always looking at her mother, she was convinced that his attention was invariably fixed by her (PP, 1991, 95).

These situations are a real torture for Elizabeth and her pride. She, however, is fully aware of her being proud from the beginning of the novel. When she overhears

Mr. Darcy's not very complimentary remark about her looks (PP, 1991, 9), she later, still hurt by his comment, tells her friend Charlotte about Darcy: "I could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine" (PP, 1991, 17). Similarly, when Elizabeth refuses the first Darcy's marriage proposal, which takes him by surprise because he didn't expect she would refuse him, he tells Elizabeth that she could have accepted the offer, "had not [her] pride been hurt by [his] honest confession of the scruples" (PP, 1991, 181) he revealed to her.

As for Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth is prejudiced against him from the start. Her attitude towards him is influenced by negative public opinion of him, strengthened by her personal experience, and especially by a young handsome, though mendacious and fortune seeking, militia officer George Wickham who invents his own story about Darcy's cruel and unfair behaviour toward him. Elizabeth, charmed by his personality, believes him because "there was truth in his looks" (PP, 1991, 81), and her antipathy towards Darcy even increases, whereas Wickham wins her sympathy.

Later, when Elizabeth learns about Darcy's endeavour to separate Mr. Bingley and her sister Jane who love each other, her astonishment is immense and she is determined not to see Darcy again. Under the impression of such feelings, she decidedly refuses Mr. Darcy's marriage offer a few moments later when he proposes to her and they both part in anger. After his departure, Elizabeth is left in the room confused, overwhelmed by a mixture of feelings: "The tumult of her mind was now painfully great. She knew not how to support herself, and from actual weakness sat down and cried for half an hour" (PP, 1991, 183).

Is this Elizabeth's emotional outburst a result of the intense dialogue accompanied by feelings of mere anger and vexation, or is there something deeper that causes the "weakness" she feels without being able to realize it yet? As Wright notes, this is "the beginning of Elizabeth's very gradually successful efforts to know herself thoroughly" (Wright, 1964, 117).

When she receives a letter from Mr. Darcy in which he explains his involvement in the matter of Mr. Bingley and Jane's separation and advocates his reasons for behaving towards Wickham the way he did, Elizabeth, as Marsh claims, is facing "a conflict between her better reason and her prejudice" (Marsh, 1998, 35). She is confused and tries to find the truth:

She put down the letter, weighed every circumstance with what she meant to be impartiality – deliberated on the probability of each statement – but with little success. On both sides it was only assertion. Again she read on. But every line proved more clearly that the affair, which she had believed it impossible that any contrivance could so represent, as to render Mr. Darcy's conduct in it less than infamous, was capable of a turn which must make him entirely blameless throughout the whole (PP, 1991, 193-194).

From this extract it is obvious that Elizabeth tends to trust Mr. Darcy's claims rather than Mr. Wickham's, and her reason starts gaining victory over her prejudice. It is highly probable that the Elizabeth's shift from prejudice to reason is provoked by her feelings towards Darcy, though she is not still able to define them. The similar opinion is suggested also by Marsh who writes that "there is something more in Elizabeth's heart than she is aware of" (Marsh, 1998, 37).

After reading the letter several times and considering all the communications that have passed between her and Wickham, Elizabeth now believes Mr. Darcy completely, realizing her mistakes and misunderstanding in this matter: "She grew absolutely ashamed of herself. – Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think, without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd" (PP, 1991, 196).

After such an awakening, Elizabeth has to cope with her feelings on her own, missing her beloved sister Jane dreadfully. When they finally meet after a long time, Elizabeth describes Jane her feelings about the letter:

'I was very uncomfortable, I may say unhappy. And with no one to speak to of what I felt, no Jane to comfort me and say that I had not been so very weak and vain and nonsensical as I knew I had! Oh! How I wanted you!' (PP, 1991, 212).

The sisters are very close to each other, revealing their secrets, opinions and feelings to each other, with a deep concern for each other's happiness. When Jane asks Elizabeth when her love for Mr. Darcy started, she replies: "It has been coming on so gradually, that I hardly know when it began. But I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley" (PP, 1991, 353).

Not only did Elizabeth fall in love with Darcy's reputation of a perfect master, she considers also his wealth and social position. Marsh continues, suggesting that although Elizabeth's original emphasis was on "an individual's feelings", she now

“collides with parts of the social system [...] and realizes that Darcy occupies an important social position”, which would lead also to her social advancement if she married him (Marsh, 1998, 105).

An irony of life Elizabeth encounters comes when she, after Lydia’s elopement, fully acknowledges her falling in love with Mr. Darcy and has to face the prospect of never seeing him again due to the Lydia’s deed that would ruin all her sisters’ prospects as well: “[N]ever had she so honestly felt that she could have loved him, as now, when all love must be vain” (PP, 1991, 259). And whilst she did not want to see Darcy again after learning that he had separated the young couple, now she longs for his presence and the desire increases with gratitude to him for saving Lydia and also the whole her family from public condemnation. Brower writes: “Elizabeth’s response to Darcy is not just conventional ‘love’, but this special kind of gratitude” (Brower, 1970, 60).

Elizabeth’s independence and her extraordinary courage to speak for herself is most vivid in the dialogue between her and Lady Catherine through which Elizabeth sends a kind of message to Darcy, implying a possible change in her feelings towards him, and leading to their happy marriage (see 4.1).

Elizabeth, like Darcy, realizes her mistakes and admits that she was blinded by her pride and her prejudice, being corrected by the process of self-knowledge.

5.1.1.2. Jane Bennet

Jane Bennet is the eldest of all Bennet sisters, being very close to her sister Elizabeth. However, she is only “a shadowy accessory” (Wright, 1964, 110) in the novel in comparison with Elizabeth.

Jane is considered a real beauty not only by her mother Mrs. Bennet who claims: “I do not like to boast of my own child, but to be sure, Jane – one does not often see anybody better looking” (PP, 1991, 40), but also by proud Mr. Darcy, talking of her as “the only handsome girl in the room” (PP, 1991, 9), and Mr. Bingley alike with his appraisal of her being “the most beautiful creature [he] ever beheld!” (PP, 1991, 9).

Jane is not admired only for her beauty, but also for her sweet angelic nature that makes everybody like her, even Mr. Bingley’s snobbish sister before she learns that her brother is in love with Jane. She is perceived as too good and warm-hearted to see any fault in anyone. Elizabeth says to her:

‘Oh! You are a great deal too apt, you know, to like people in general. You never see a fault in anybody. All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in my life’ (PP, 1991, 12).

However, Dadlez (2009, 97) sees in Jane’s personality “a serious flaw in her ability to regulate her sympathy or adopt a general point of view”. Similarly, Beer (1974, 58) defines Jane’s “forgiving spirit” as “a neurotic inability to blame anyone” and she continues by claiming that her effort “to find excuses for Miss Bingley’s part in separating her from Mr. Bingley, is not so much good as simple-minded”.

Harding also comments on Jane’s sweet goodness by noting that though Jane’s character is meant to be serious, her constant tendency to advocate everyone’s behaviour is rather funny (Harding, 1968, 84).

When Elizabeth reveals to Jane the dialogue that has passed between her and Wickham about Mr. Darcy’s cruel behavior towards him, Jane immediately tries to find excuses for them both. She says: “They have both, [...], been deceived, I dare say, in some way or other, of which we can form no idea” (PP, 1991, 80). Her tendency to advocate everybody’s deeds can make readers laugh as her arguments are naïve and highly improbable. In this respect, she may be considered her sister’s opposite because Elizabeth, on the contrary, tends to create, often unfair, prejudices about others.

In her goodness and innocence Jane also believes that Miss Bingley is not able of “deceiving anyone”, maybe being “deceived herself” (PP, 1991, 114). Later, however, her eyes are opened and she is able to see Miss Bingley differently. She admits being “entirely deceived in Miss Bingley’s regard for [her]” (PP, 1991, 140).

Jane, except being beautiful and good-hearted, is also extremely shy, which may appear as indifference in some situations. It is Mr. Darcy who wrongly interprets Jane’s behaviour as indifferent towards Mr. Bingley whom she, in fact, loves deeply, and he causes Bingley and Jane’s separation because of the misinterpretation. Elizabeth, however, must admit that “Jane’s feelings, though fervent, were little displayed” (PP, 1991, 197).

When Mr. Bingley leaves Nerherfield Park so suddenly, Jane suffers throughout the novel in silence, still “cherish[ing] a very tender affection for Bingley” (PP, 1991, 214), and finally reconciling with the idea of never marrying him, even though talks

about Bingley do not stop hurting her heart mightily. She reveals her feelings to Elizabeth:

‘I could see [Bingley] with perfect indifference, but I can hardly bear to hear it thus perpetually talked of. My mother means well; but she does not know, [...], how much I suffer from what she says’ (PP, 1991, 313).

However, Jane’s suffering is finally ended and she becomes “the happiest creature in the world” (PP, 1991, 327) when Mr. Bingley proposes to her. She, as all Austen’s heroines, finds her happiness beside a beloved husband and, like Elizabeth, improves her social and financial position.

Brower (1970, 60), however, sees a difference in love Jane feels for Bingley and Elizabeth’s love for Darcy, “Jane is conventionally in love with a conventional lover”, whereas Elizabeth’s love for Darcy is more sober, influenced by her “gratitude” towards him.

Jane and Bingley’s love is much less complicated in comparison with her sister and Darcy’s relationship because they love each other from the very beginning, whereas Elizabeth and Darcy have to find themselves to appreciate qualities of the other.

5.1.1.3. Marianne Dashwood

Marianne Dashwood and her elder sister Elinor are major characters of the novel *Sense and Sensibility*, Elinor representing “sense” and Marianne “sensibility”.

Wright, however, points out that the sisters “interchange their positions” throughout the novel because Marianne “does gradually acquire sense” and Elinor “becomes increasingly sensitive” (Wright, 1964, 93).

Although the sisters are equally important to the novel as their story lines go in a parallel and it is rather difficult to distinguish the real heroine of the book, it is probably Marianne whom this attribute is ascribed because she finally, like Elizabeth Bennet or Emma Woodhouse, realizes her mistakes, overcomes her painful experience, and goes through the process of self-knowledge successfully:

Marianne Dashwood was born to an extraordinary fate. She was born to discover the falsehood of her own opinions, and to counteract, by her conduct, her most favourite maxims. She was born to overcome an affection formed so late in life

as at seventeen and with no sentiment superior to strong esteem and lively friendship, voluntarily to give her hand to another! (SS, 1992, 365).

After death of their father, Marianne lives with her two sisters Elinor and Margaret and their mother Mrs. Dashwood with their relatives at Barton. Marianne, strongly resembling her mother in temper, is very emotionally disposed, leading from her heart, not the head:

She was sensible and clever; but eager in every thing; her sorrow, her joys, could have no moderation. [...]: she was every thing but prudent. The resemblance between her and her mother was strikingly great (SS, 1992, 7).

She is very keen on music and reading books, viewing the less interested as very insensible, and she insists her future partner has the same interest for these passions as she does. She claims: “I could not be happy with a man whose taste did not in every point coincide with my own. He must enter into all my feelings; the same books, the same music must charm us both” (SS, 1992, 17). This confident conviction of hers that she would not be satisfied with someone without the same taste for music and books as herself is a bit comic, considering she finally marries a man whom she herself firstly describes as a man of no “genius, taste, nor spirit” (SS, 1002, 50).

Marianne, influenced by her own strong imagination, resembles Elizabeth Bennet in terms of making prejudices about other people. Nevertheless, it is much easier for Marianne to judge others because her prejudices are based on mere trifles. For instance, as mentioned above, people not interested in music as much as she is, are automatically, in her opinion, lacking sensibility and any taste. The targets of her painful remarks are often also Edward Ferrars and Colonel Brandon who is an object of prejudice only due to his wearing a flannel waistcoat. For Marianne, “a flannel waistcoat is invariably connected with aches, cramps, rheumatism, and every species of ailment that can afflict the old and the feeble” (SS, 1991, 37).

The plot focuses especially on the sisters’ love affairs with men they love and the way they handle it. Jones writes that *Sense and Sensibility* deals with “the ways in which two rather different personalities react to their experiences of love and society in general” (Jones, 1997, 27).

Marianne falls deeply in love with Willoughby, a charming and attractive, but sinful young man, who helps her when she sprains her ankle in the rain. She, being a romantic and emotional spirit, loves him ardently and admires everything he does or says: "When he was present she had no eyes for anyone else. Every thing he did, was right. Every thing he said, was clever" (SS, 1992, 52). She even does not hesitate to break social rules when she, unchaperoned, goes for a trip with him, and corresponds with him secretly, which provokes speculations about their possible engagement.

In this novel, according to Tomalin, the author deals also with a question of openness and to what an extent the openness can be tolerated by society (Tomalin, 2000, 157). When Elinor reproaches Marianne for her too open and thus inappropriate behaviour towards Willoughby, Marianne, surprisingly aware of her manners, replies:

'I have been too much at my ease, too happy, too frank. I have erred against every common-place notion of decorum; I have been open and sincere where I ought to have been reserved, spiritless, dull and deceitful: - had I talked only of the weather and the roads, and had I spoken only once in ten minutes, this reproach would have been spared' (SS, 1992, 46).

Here, readers may sympathize with a young girl who just wants to break chains of social duty and reserve so demanded at that time and free herself by expressing her opinions and feelings openly. Tomalin assumes that by Marianne's desire to speak openly and the refusal to tell lies when required, the opinion of the author herself is expressed (Tomalin, 2000, 158).

However, openness could have also been very dangerous, especially in contemporary society limited by strict rules where people were forced to oppress their true feelings, and by demonstrating Marianne and Willoughby's relationship, Austen warns against too much openness and sincerity that might damage one's reputation.

Marianne's happiness suddenly ends when Willoughby leaves her without an explanation. She is immediately overwhelmed by deep sadness and desperation, grieving and weeping over his departure, and feeding her torture even more by self-destructive behaviour and constant recalls of their time spent together.

She was awake the whole night, and she wept the greatest part of it. She got up with a headache, was unable to talk, and unwilling to take any nourishment; giving pain ever moment to her mother and sisters, and forbidding all attempt at

consolation from either. Her sensibility was potent enough! [...] She spent whole hours at the pianoforte alternately singing and crying; her voice often totally suspended by tears. In books too, as well as in music, she courted the misery which a contrast between the past and present was certain of giving. She read nothing but what they had been used to read (SS, 1992, 80).

Marianne's behaviour shows signs of selfishness towards other people when she grieves. She focuses only on her own suffering, not caring about feelings of others, not considering fears of the dearest about her health and overall state of her mind. She is rude to them, especially to Mrs. Jennings, a warm-hearted woman, who looks after her, and to her sister Elinor who tries to console her, though in vain.

In general, her way of expressing her feelings is rather exaggerated and inadequate considering the whole situation she is in. Ryle writes: "Marianne lets her joy, anxiety or grief so overwhelm her that she behaves like a person crazed" (Ryle, 1968, 107).

However, it does not mean, as Wright points out, that Marianne lacks "intelligence and good sense" (Wright, 1964, 94). Similarly, Beer compares Marianne's love for Willoughby to Fanny Price's love for Edmund, which is, according to Beer, not less warm, but Marianne's love is "wilder and more frantic in its expression" (Beer, 1974, 128). Her desperation and self-destructive tendency show themselves fully when she thoughtlessly goes for walks even in the worst weather and catches a terrible cold as a consequence, which leads almost to her death.

After learning about Elinor's same nature of suffering that Elinor, however, bore bravely in silence, without complaints, and recovering from her illness that make her reflect on her irresponsible behaviour, Marianne realizes her mistakes and her selfishness, she feels ashamed and angry with herself: "I cannot express my own abhorrence of myself" (SS, 1992, 333), and she is determined to improve her future behaviour, to "live solely for [her] family" (SS, 1992, 334). She is also prepared to regulate her remembrance of Willoughby "by religion, by reason, by constant employment" (SS, 1992, 335), and most surprisingly, she decides to marry Colonel Brandon, her devoted admirer, whom she has never loved and who was a frequent object of her cruel remarks and prejudices and whose presence she has often tried to avoid.

The reason why Austen lets Marianne marry without passion is probably to prove that Marianne's sensibility has become weaker and she has started to take into consideration also her sense, moving closer to a more suitable medium and to her sister Elinor. Therefore, the main implication of the book is that it is not good to be driven merely by reason or merely by heart, but the fusion of these two is highly desirable.

5.1.1.4. Elinor Dashwood

Elinor Dashwood, another major character of *Sense and Sensibility*, is Marianne's elder sister, sharply contrasting with her sister and mother in disposition, being a supporter of both:

Elinor, [...], possessed a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgment, which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counselor of her mother, and enabled her frequently to counteract, to the advantage of the all, [...]. She had an excellent heart; - her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them (SS, 1992, 6).

Nevertheless, she is not, as mentioned above, considered to be the main heroine of the novel even though, as Miles points out, the plot is largely viewed from her perspective (Miles, 2009, 31). Wright further suggests that Elinor is the heroine on "the didactic level" of the book (Wright, 1964, 92), always acting and behaving as expected by society, and adhering to moral and social codes.

Elinor disagrees with Marianne's too open relationship with Willoughby, and wishes their relationship "were less openly shown" (SS, 1992, 51). She does not hesitate to warn Marianne against an inappropriateness of her behaviour. Jones claims:

Elinor seems to stand for the view that to behave in a socially acceptable way is at least as important as being true to [one's] own feelings; in the opposition between self and society she is on the side of society (Jones, 1997, 29).

Nevertheless, when Willoughby leaves Barton and she sees her sister's distress, she thinks of Marianne "with the tenderest compassion" (SS, 1992, 74) because she is touched by the event.

Elinor is, like her sister, unhappily involved in a love story, but Elinor's reaction to the situation is bore with much greater calmness, self-command, and patience, considering that her inner suffering has lasted longer than Marianne's, almost

throughout the whole scope of the book, and after learning that Edmund, the man she loves, is engaged to another woman, Elinor's prospects of ever marrying him starts to dissolve. Wright notes: "Elinor's distress has been longer in duration, more profound in scope, and much less likely to be relieved – Edward is engaged to be married; Willoughby, at least, is not" (Wright, 1964, 96).

Elinor's behaviour, compared to Marianne's, is also much less selfish because she is thoroughful, always bearing in mind the pain that would afflict her family if she told them about her misery. She later reflects on the decision not to confide to her dearest: "[W]hile the comfort of others was dear to me, I was glad to spare them from knowing how much I felt" (SS, 1992, 253).

In general, Elinor's inner suffering is more concealed to others and to see the true core of her personality, her thoughts and feelings is much more difficult in comparison with her sister's manners because Elinor suffers in silence and tries to hide her true feelings, always behaving as she ought to behave, fulfilling her duty to society, and even willing to lie "when politeness required it" (SS, 1992, 116).

Her effort seems to be successful as even her sisters fails to recognize whether Elinor is in love with Edward or not as there is only coldness apparent in manners of both: "To Marianne, indeed, the meeting between Edward and her sister was but a continuation of that [...] coldness which she had often observed at Norland in their mutual behaviour" (SS, 1992, 83).

There is a difference between, for example, Elizabeth Bennet or Emma Woodhouse in the sense that Elinor is, like Jane Bennet or Fanny Price, aware of her love to the man she finally marries from the very beginning. Moreover, she is, unlike Fanny Price, sure of being an object of Edward's love, and her conviction remains unshaken also when she learns he has been engaged to another woman for a long time.

Kavanagh compares Elinor's situation with that of Fanny Price from *Mansfield Park*:

The judicious Elinor is, indeed, conscious that she is beloved; but her lover is not free, and he long thinks him lost. Fanny is her lover's confidante, and must be miserable when he is blest, or happy when he is wretched (Kavanagh, 1970, 11).

No matter how much Elinor is assured of Edward's love, she is "mortified, shocked, confounded" (SS, 1992, 129) when she hears the news because she now sees

no hope of every marrying him because Edward, like her, is prepared to fulfill his social duty, which is adhere to his promise and marry Lucy Steele, the girl he ceased to love.

However, even the shocking and surprising news about the engagement does not stop Elinor from her extraordinary determination to behave as expected and not to reveal her true feelings to the outside world, though with difficulties:

[F]or a few moments, she was almost overcome – her heart sunk within her, and she could hardly stand; but exertion was indispensably necessary, and she struggled so resolutely against the oppression of her feelings, that her success was speedy, and for the time complete (SS, 1992, 128).

She also finds courage to learn as much of the matter as possible by asking Edward's fiancée about a state of her engagement to Edward. Here, Miles points out that this Elinor's action is selfish in nature as her real intention is only to learn what her chances, if any, are in the matter (Miles, 2009, 110).

Elinor finally finds the burden that troubles her too heavy and she tells Marianne about her deep suffering she has had to undergo since the day she knew about Edward and Lucy. When Marianne asks her about how she has managed to cope with her feelings, Elinor replies: "By feeling that I was doing my duty" (SS, 1992, 252). By saying so, she proves that she has preferred a public opinion to her own feelings. Nevertheless, in the moment Elinor tells Marianne about her ordeals, the sisters, as Todd suggests, cease to grieve in "secrecy and solitude" and start to "grieve together" (Todd, 2006, 54).

When Marianne falls ill with a terrible cold, Elinor is still not sensible enough and "felt no alarm" (SS, 1992, 295) at the beginning but she starts to be frightened after some time, taking care of her poor sister. The first sign of Elinor's acquired sensibility is seen in her emotional outbursts when a doctor assures her of her sister's recovery. The news "gave her confidence, comfort and tears of joy" (SS, 1992, 303).

Another outburst of feelings comes when she learns that it is not Edward whom Lucy married but his brother Robert. Elinor experiences such a relief and joy that she has never felt before: "Elinor could sit no longer. She almost ran out of the room, and as soon as the door was closed, burst into tears of joy, which at first she thought would never cease" (SS, 1992, 347).

By undergoing all these events, Elinor becomes more sensible than ever before and thus she also moves closer to the medium and to her sister Marianne. Wright comments on the last volume of the book and the sisters' change: "In the final – [...] – volume Elinor and Marianne become increasingly like each other, a process which makes both of them more rounded and complete people" (Wright, 1964, 97).

Austen again demonstrated on Elinor's character the necessity of possessing a combination of sense and sensibility to live a satisfactory life.

5.1.2. Individual heroines

Emma Woodhouse and Fanny Price, the heroines of this part, struggle with their hardships and doubts largely on their own, without a sister so close to them to trust with their problems, and in Fanny's case even without a confidante or family to support her.

5.1.2.1. Emma Woodhouse

Emma Woodhouse is rather an extraordinary character comparing her to all the other Austen's heroines. Her uniqueness lies in her disposition that is furthest from flawless. Despite being "handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition" (E, 1991, 1), she is willful, vain, snobbish, and likes to manipulate other people's lives. Austen describes Emma's drawbacks as it follows, using her specific language with signs of irony: "The real evils [...] of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself" (E, 1991, 1).

Bradbury sees Emma as "a violator of Jane Austen's moral scale" and therefore wonders how Emma could have been created as a heroine by the author at all (Bradbury, 1970, 86). What is even more surprising is the fact that Austen herself liked the heroine very much. Austen's statement about Emma is cited by Goodheart in his essay *Emma: Jane Austen's Errant Heroine*: "I am going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like" (Goodheart, 2008, 589), which proves the author's certain identification with Emma.

Emma is Austen's most complex character who is awakened from her blindness, learns to respect other people and as a reward finds her happiness by marrying the man

she loves despite her former intentions of never getting married at all (see 4.2) because, as she explains: “it is not my way, or my nature” (E, 1991, 84).

Emma can afford to decide whether she gets married or not because she is, unlike the other major heroines of Austen’s novels, financially independent, occupying a high social position, and therefore “she does not have to enter the marriage market” (Goodheart, 2008, 602) to improve her situation in life.

Emma likes to be in the centre of attention and enjoys her role of a social leader of Highbury. Tomalin (2000, 252) suggests that another reason for Emma’s decision not to marry stems from her unwillingness to leave her unique position of the queen of local society.

Emma lives with her old father Mr. Woodhouse and her governess Miss Taylor who replaces Emma’s dead mother by falling “little short of a mother in affection” (E, 1991, 1). After Miss Taylor’s leaving to marry a man from neighbourhood, Emma suffers “from intellectual solitude” (E, 1991, 3) and boredom. Therefore, she finds a kind of diversion in Harriet Smith, a young orphan girl of obscure origin, whose naivety and submissive nature satisfies Emma’s vanity and tendencies to organize other people’s lives. Emma makes Harriet her friend and treats her like a puppet, intending “to detach [Harriet] from her bad acquaintance, and introduce her into good society; [...] form her opinions and her manners” (E, 1991, 21), and so Emma’s career as “a misarranger” (Goodheart, 2008, 589) of Harriet’s life starts.

She decides, encouraged by a successful match between her governess and Mr. Weston, that Emma ascribes wrongly to her own merit, to make a match between Harriet and a pompous clergyman Mr. Elton, and discourage Harriet from marrying a yeoman Robert Martin who would be a more suitable husband for her as their social positions are more similar and therefore the marriage would be socially more acceptable.

Here, Emma shows her immature and at the same time “snobbish judgement about social status” (Goodheart, 2008, 600) when she ignores the significant social gap between Harriet and Mr. Elton and on the other hand, wrongly sees Robert Martin as Harriet’s inferior (see 4.1). This Emma’s primary conviction based on wrong reasons and assumptions turns to be an object of Austen’s irony because Emma, when she

realizes all her mistakes in the end, claims: “It would be a great pleasure to know Robert Martin” (E, 1991, 486). Now, she would not mind meeting him any more.

Marsh sees Emma’s relationship with her friend as “that of patriarchal father, manipulating and bending Harriet to her will” (Marsh, 1998, 257). She even uses a kind of emotional constraint on Harriet by telling her that supposing she becomes a wife of Mr. Martin, it would be, as Emma says, “the loss of a friend to me” (E, 1991, 50). Similarly, Sir Betram in *Mansfield Park* also uses an emotional pressure to make Fanny marry the man he wants her to wed, and Elizabeth’s mother, Mrs. Bennet, alike when she forces her daughter to marry Mr. Collins otherwise she “will never see her again” (PP, 1991, 106), though Mrs. Bennet’s threats can not be taken so seriously.

Emma is blinded by her own self-deception and imagination; her judgments about others are negatively affected by a lack of life experience, often leading to prejudices, and her self-centredness prevents her from perceiving things and situations as they are. Moler also ascribes her blindness to “her tendency to fictionalize the real world around her” (Moler, 1977, 175-176). As a result, she completely fails to see that it is her who is Mr. Elton’s object of love, not Harriet. When her brother-in-law tells her about possibility of Mr. Elton’s being in love with her and accuses her of ignorance and blindness for not being aware of it, Emma is amused by the idea and assures him that is not so:

‘I thank you; but I assure you you are quite mistaken. Mr. Elton and I are very good friends, and nothing more;’ and she walked on, amusing herself in the consideration of the blunders which often arise from a partial knowledge of circumstances, of the mistakes which people of high pretensions to judgment are for ever falling into; and not very well pleased with her brother for imagining her blind and ignorant, and in want of counsel (E, 1991, 112).

This situation is again very comic, considering her brother-in-law’s assumption is proved right when Mr. Elton really proposes to Emma a few days later and Emma herself has to admit her blindness. She considers the proposal incredibly daring as “she was greatly his superior” (E, 1991, 136). She feels sorry for Harriet and decides to give up matchmaking: “It was foolish, it was wrong, to take so active a part in bringing any two people together [and] she was quite concerned and ashamed, and resolved to do such things no more” (E, 1991, 137).

When Jane Fairfax, a beautiful and accomplished young girl, comes to visit her relatives in Highbury, Emma does not like her because she feels that Jane's qualities could overshadow her own personality and therefore Jane represents a real threat to her. Wright writes about the nature of Emma's relationship towards Jane: "Emma, for the first time, has a competitor" (Wright, 1964, 149). Although Jane Fairfax's accomplishments, especially singing and playing the piano, "was infinitely superior to her own" (E, 1991, 230), which is not pleasant experience for Emma, dancing is the only activity in which "she need not blush to compare herself with Jane Fairfax" (E, 1991, 251).

Emma loves dancing and social gatherings because it is a great opportunity for her to enjoy herself as an object of all admiration. Llewelyn, for example, compares Emma's reaction on her position at the ball with that of Fanny Price, the heroine of *Mansfield Park*. Whereas Emma only unwillingly becomes reconciled with the fact that she is not in the centre of attention at one of the balls which takes place in the honour of a Mr. Elton's new wife, Fanny Price hates being looked at when a ball takes place in her honour (Llewelyn, 1977, 111).

However, Austen ascribes also a compassionate soul to Emma. When she learns about Jane's difficult situation and her future life in which she would have to earn her living, Emma is determined "that she would dislike her no longer" (E, 1991, 168) because "it seemed impossible to feel any thing but compassion and respect" (E, 1991, 169) in her situation.

Emma's process of self-deception continues with an arrival of Frank Churchill, a stepson of her former governess. Yet before his coming, Emma looks forward to him and idealizes his personality: "My idea of him is, that he can adapt his conversation to the taste of every body, and has the power as well as the wish of being universally agreeable" (E, 1991, 150).

This positive prejudice influences Emma's judgement. She enjoys being flattered by Frank, and even flirts with him openly, which is highly undesirable. As a result of her life inexperience she believes for a while that she is in love with him, and her inability to observe real circumstances make her believe that Frank is in love with her, too.

This Emma's wrong interpretation of the circumstances is a source of probably the most ironic situation in the novel, realizing that Emma herself has become a victim of Frank's game to decoy attention away from his real feelings towards Jane Fairfax. The same opinion is expressed by Wright who comments on the situation: "The entire pattern of [Frank's] behaviour while at Highbury is a camouflage by which Emma, who preens herself on her own penetration, is completely taken in" (Wright, 1964, 147).

Nevertheless, when she later realizes that she does not love him, she starts thinking of making a match between Frank and Harriet, which puts strength of her will and seriousness of her decision about the matchmaking after the first failure in question.

A crucial moment of Emma's realization of her feelings, her faults, snobbery and a lack of respect for others comes when she insults Miss Bates, a poor, talkative but warm-hearted spinster during a trip to Box Hill, and by showing a lack of tact "fails the test of social intelligence" (Goodheart, 2008, 590).

She is criticized for her behavior by Mr. Knightley (see 4.1), who is "one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them" (E, 1991, 7), and whose opinion Emma appreciates more than she is firstly aware of. Mr. Knightley's reproach has a mighty effect on her: "Never had she felt so agitated, mortified, grieved, at any circumstance in her life. She was most forcibly struck" (E, 1991, 385). Here, Emma's signs of affection for Mr. Knightley start to show openly to the reader for the first time, but Emma herself is not able to realize it yet, because, as she herself later says, "ha[s] been doomed to blindness" (E, 1991, 435).

Emma's full awakening from her emotional blindness and realization of her true feelings towards Mr. Knightley, however, comes rather soon after the Box Hill expedition when Emma, having thought that she encourages Harriet in her love for Frank Churchill, though not so eagerly as the previous relationship with Mr. Elton, learns that it is in fact Mr. Knightley who is an object of Harriet's love. The information shocks her deeply. She wonders:

Why was it so much worse that Harriet should be in love with Mr. Knightley, than with Frank Churchill? [...] It darted through her, with the speed of an arrow, that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself! (E, 1991, 418).

Ironically, as Wright claims, this time Emma is punished for her slight matchmaking tendencies more severely than in the previous case with Harriet and Mr.

Elton, for she dreads that the man she loves is in love with Harriet instead of her (Wright, 1964, 153).

Fortunately, Emma is assured of Mr. Knightley's long-lasting ardent affections towards her and she finds herself "in an exquisite flutter of happiness" (E, 1991, 444). After all, she becomes a mistress of Donwell which she respects as "the residence of such true gentility, untainted in blood and understanding" (E, 1991, 367). Considering Donwell as a wealthy and respectable estate, Emma resembles Elizabeth Bennet in her concern for Pemberley.

Emma and Knightley's relationship is very similar to those of Fanny Price with Edmund Bertram and Marianne Dashwood with Colonel Brandon by being based on mutual understanding and friendship that is supported by a significant age gap between partners, often even resembling the relationship of a teacher and a pupil. Tomalin comments on such a kind of relationship seen in Emma: "[...] Emma says she will never address her husband as George, [...], preserving the master – pupil relationship which is so satisfying – even delicious – to her" (Tomalin, 2000, 253).

By admitting her faults and taking responsibility for her deeds, Emma gets closer to her husband whom she perceives as "infinitely the superior" (E, 1991, 422).

However, her admission of the mistakes and determination to learn from these mistakes "does not entirely overcome the burden of impression that her behaviour has left" (Goodheart, 2008, 595). Therefore, Emma's amendment and its duration is from all the Austen's major heroines least convincing.

5.1.2.2. Fanny Price

Fanny Price is Austen's least lively heroine. By being of a serious spirit, strictly and unconditionally adhering to her moral and social principles, she may be perceived by readers as an uninteresting, priggish and plain woman, "with no glow of complexion, nor any other striking beauty; exceedingly timid and shy, and shrinking from notice" (MP, 1992, 12).

However, the determination to follow her principles, her extraordinary steadiness in adhering to them, and her "faultless virtue" (Marsh, 1998, 189) are a key to her happy future life. She is, like all Austen's heroines, rewarded for overcoming her hardships and persistence against social pressures by marrying the man she loves. Her

journey to happiness, however, is one of the most difficult ones, and can be described as “heroic” (Tomalin, 2000, 231).

The difficulty, as Shaw suggests, stems from Fanny’s isolated and insecure social position, for she has to face her misery alone, without a family to support her, whereas Emma, Elinor and Elizabeth “never cease to be ‘somebody’ in their families and villages” and “their present position in society is always safe” (Shaw, 1975, 290).

Since her childhood Fanny has had to endure strict and cold treatment in the family of her wealthy relatives in Mansfield Park where she has been brought up since she was a ten-year-old girl. By taking responsibility for Fanny’s upbringing and education, her uncle Sir Bertram and her two aunts want to help Fanny’s poor parents who have had to bring up other eight children.

However, from the very beginning she is homesick, feels unhappy, isolated and alienated from almost all members of the Bertram family. She is a constant object of her cousins’ mockery who “thought her prodigiously stupid” (MP, 1992, 18), Mrs. Norris’s cruel remarks, and she is disappointed by rather cold manners of Lady and Sir Bertram.

Fanny, whether near or from her cousins, [...], was equally forlorn, finding something to fear in every person and place. She was disheartened by Lady Bertram’s silence, awed by Sir Thomas’s grave looks, and quite overcome by Mrs. Norris’s admonitions. Her elder cousins mortified her by reflection on her size, and abashed her by noting her shyness; [...]; and when to these sorrows was added the idea of the brothers and sisters among whom she had always been important as play-fellow, instructress, and nurse, the despondence that sunk her little heart was severe (MP, 1992, 14-15).

Fanny’s feeling of isolation is influenced also by her “ambiguous position within the social hierarchy of the house” (Bradford, 1996, 225). Being of an inferior social position, she is treated accordingly in her new home as both Sir Bertram and Mrs. Norris plan to preserve a certain social difference between their niece and the Bertram children (see 4.1). In addition, Mrs. Norris’s constant cruel remarks reminding her of her inferiority and “of peculiar good fortune” (MP, 1992, 15) she has been provided with and she should be gratified for are “a source of added emotional pressure” (Jones, 1997, 91) to Fanny.

The main reason of Fanny’s misery is, according to Jones, the conflict of inner feelings represented by her and materialism represented by the Bertrams who expect

that the luxury and wealth should make Fanny happy. She is in fact not interested in their possession. She misses her own family and grieves over not being with them (Jones, 1997, 91).

Nevertheless, the only person who understands her and does not treat her like nobody is her elder cousin Edmund. He becomes her only companion in her solitude and helps her overcome her early personal suffering and hardships in the Bertram family: “[Fanny] felt that she had a friend, and the kindness of her cousin Edmund gave her better spirits with everybody else. The place became less strange, and the people less formidable” (MP, 1992, 17). Moreover, Edmund is also a kind of teacher to Fanny because “he recommended the books which charmed her leisure hours, [...], and heightened its attraction by judicious praise” (MP, 1992, 23).

Undoubtedly, Edmund’s kind behaviour and concern about her comfort has had a mighty effect on Fanny’s falling in love with him, leading afterwards to marriage of brotherly love (see 4.2) and the teacher-pupil relationship, resembling the partnership of Emma and Mr. Knightley in particular, based on mutual understanding, which the author herself considered important.

Fanny’s moral superiority shows itself openly during preparations for theatricals in Mansfield Park which is organized by her eldest cousin Tom who takes advantage of Sir Bertram’s long-lasting absence from England. Whereas all company of young people agrees on the plan and wishes Fanny to play, she strongly opposes to its realization, though she doubts about the propriety of her decision for a moment, still haunted by the gratitude she is supposed to feel and by her lack of self-confidence.

‘Was she right in refusing what was so warmly asked, so strongly wished for? What might be so essential to a scheme on which some of those to whom she owed the greatest complaisance, had set their hearts? Was it not ill-nature – selfishness – and a fear of exposing herself?’ (MP, 1992, 156).

Austen’s decision to make Fanny doubt about her actions makes her character more humanlike, not only a heroine that makes no mistakes.

However, she is steady in her decision and she refuses to participate in the play, following her moral principles and beliefs of what she think is right because as she says, “every thing of higher consequence was against [the theatricals]” (MP, 1992, 135). It is

not an easy decision, though, for it makes her feel miserable: “She alone was sad and insignificant; she had no share in any thing” (MP, 1992, 162).

The fact that Fanny prefers following her moral standards and beliefs to satisfying demands of the whole group of actors, resulting in the unpleasant feeling of exclusion proves, as Jones further suggests, that Fanny is not as passive as it might seem because otherwise she would be finally persuaded, like Edmund, to do what everyone else is doing (Jones, 1992, 102).

Fanny’s main reasons for disapproving of the theatricals are of both social and personal nature. Firstly, she is convicted that her uncle Sir Bertram would also strongly oppose to it because he is, like Fanny, strict in his sense of decorum, and also because she is concerned about her cousin Maria who has already been engaged, and performing a love scene with another man as planned in the play would be socially inappropriate, and even dangerous to her reputation because her situation “require[s] particular notion and delicacy” (MP, 1992, 132).

Secondly, she personally does not want to see Edmund and Miss Crawford, Fanny’s rival in love for the whole course of the book, playing their scene together because “she had known it would irritate and distress her – she had known it her duty to keep away” (MP, 1992, 175). Fanny is vexed and jealous of Mary Crawford but she is able, like Elinor Dashwood, to hide her true feelings and behave as expected of her.

Fanny also hates being in the centre of attention. When she is to attend a ball that where she should “be regarded as the Queen of the evening” (MP, 1992, 273), she is not pleased like Emma Woodhouse would certainly be because, as she claims, she “had not been brought up to the trade of coming out” (MP, 1992, 273). Her shyness is connected also with her uncomfortable feelings when she is to speak out, therefore she prefers being silent. Tomalin writes about Fanny’s nature: “Not only is she the least joyous of all Austen’s heroines, she is the most reluctant to open her mouth; when she does she speaks in a stilted and wooden manner” (Tomalin, 2000, 234).

Therefore, it is rather surprising that Fanny draws attention of Henry Crawford, a wealthy and vain young man, who enjoys flirting with other women. Fanny does not like his character mainly because she has disapproved of his inappropriate behaviour towards her two cousins whom he has made fall in love with him.

She tries not to encourage his feelings but Mr. Crawford is steady in his intentions and proposes to her, having arranged a promotion of her beloved brother William in the British Navy, which makes Fanny feel gratitude again. She is, however, distressed by his proposal and does not believe very much Mr. Crawford is serious in his intentions to marry her.

She was feeling, thinking, trembling, about every thing; - agitated, happy, miserable, infinitely obliged, absolutely angry. It was all beyond belief! He was inexcusable, incomprehensible! – But such were his habits, that he could do nothing without a mixture of evil. He had previously made her the happiest of human beings, and now he had insulted – she knew not what to say – how to class or how to regard it. She would not have him be serious, and yet what could excuse the use of such words and offers, if they meant but to trifle? (MP, 1992, 309).

Crawford's proposal is not the only distressing situation Fanny has to face. She also has to resist her uncle's anger with her at not accepting Mr. Crawford's offer, which afflicts her soul deeply. In this conflict Sir Bertram represents a kind of parental power (see 4.3) when he tries to force Fanny to marry Mr. Crawford against her will by means of emotional pressure, which was not an uncommon situation in Jane Austen's times.

Her uncle emphasizes Crawford's considerable fortune and his high social status that would lead to an improvement of her social position as well, accusing her of ingratitude and folly in so far that "she did feel almost ashamed of herself, [...], for not liking Mr. Crawford" (MP, 1992, 324). Nevertheless, Fanny opposes to his arguments, emphasizing, as a typical Austen's heroine, love by saying that she does not like him "well enough to marry him" (MP, 1992, 324), and mutual understanding: "[I]n her opinion their dispositions were so totally dissimilar, as to make mutual affection incompatible; and that they were unfitted for each other by nature, education, and habit" (MP, 1992, 336).

This lack of understanding lies also in different environments they both come from. Marsh compares situation of Henry Crawford and his sister Mary with the situation of Fanny and Edmund. He claims: "The Crawfords are proponents of the new attitudes of town, while Edmund and Fanny represent traditional country life and virtues" (Marsh, 1998, 189).

Sir Bertram develops his plan to send Fanny to visit her own family in Portsmouth in order to realize her mistakes, change her mind and accept the Crawford's marriage proposal. His plan, though, is only partially successful.

Fanny's visit in Portsmouth is according to Wright "solid testimony of Jane Austen's realism" (Wright, 1964, 132). Fanny is looking forward to her family, especially her mother, and hopes that the visit will help her to forget about the misery she has to undergo in Mansfield because of the unpleasant marriage offer. However, after her arrival, the sad reality is waiting for her. All her hopes about her family disappear as she sees that it is "abode of noise, disorder, and impropriety. Nobody was in their right place, nothing was done as it ought to be" (MP, 1992, 400). She realizes that living with the Prices in Portsmouth is much more difficult than living with the Bertram family in Mansfield Park:

In Mansfield, no sounds of contention, no raised voice, no abrupt bursts, no tread of violence was ever heard; [...]; every body had their due importance; every body's feelings were consulted (MP, 1992, 404).

When are these two places compared, she concludes that "Portsmouth was Portsmouth; Mansfield was home" (MP, 1992, p. 443).

In one moment it seems that the Sir Bertram's plan will not be wasted because under the impression of her unpleasant abode in Portsmouth, Fanny starts changing her opinion of Mr. Crawford and is "willing to allow he might have more good qualities than she had been wont to suppose" (MP, 1992, 417). Nevertheless, she is still determined not to accept his marriage proposal.

Surprisingly, although she hopes Crawford will forget about her soon, she does not want him to know her Portsmouth family closer because she is ashamed of them and "to have had him join their family dinner-party and see all their deficiencies would be dreadful" (MP, 1992, 420) even though this situation might discourage Mr. Crawford in his intentions.

Fanny shows also her selfishness when she learns of her cousin's elopement with Mr. Crawford, which saves Fanny from having to face other Crawford's courtships, and at the same time she hopes this event would also separate her beloved Edmund and Miss Crawford.

Moreover, this is the point that makes Mr. Bertram ask Fanny to return to Mansfield. Despite the fact that this event afflicts deeply all the Bertrams, Fanny is happy. “To-morrow! to leave Portsmouth to-morrow! She was, she felt, she was, in the greatest danger of being exquisitely happy, while so many were miserable” (MP, 1992, 456). Moreover, she admits that the elopement matter “could not dwell on her mind. She was obliged to call herself to think of it, and acknowledge it to be terrible and grievous, or it was escaping her” (MP, 1992, 456-457). This Fanny’s reaction to the elopement also proves she is not very concerned about her cousins, thinking only of her own advantage that could arise from consequences of the event, proving her inclinations to selfishness.

Fanny’s assumption proves to be right as Edmund realizes Miss Crawford’s shallowness after the incident, and proposes to Fanny, acknowledging “sweetness of her temper, the purity of her mind, and the excellence of her principles” (MP, 1992, 482).

Lewis suggests that though Fanny “commits no errors” and “falls into no such self-deception and passes through no such awakening” (Lewis, 1970, 72), she is, like all the other Austen’s heroines, rewarded by marrying the man she loves, improving her social status and reaching her destiny.

The greatest irony of *Mansfield Park* is the fact that Fanny, originally destined to be educated and treated differently from their cousins to preserve the social gap between them, is finally treated by the Bertrams as their daughter, whereas their own daughters fall into disfavour.

5.2. Minor women characters

Minor characters play a very important role in Jane Austen’s novels as they, according to Marsh, “contribute to [...] understanding of the more complex principal characters” (Marsh, 1998, 31).

The author portrayed a wide range of women of various characters, both real figures as well as fools through which she could satirize silliness and bad moral standards of contemporary society. Bradbury comments on Jane Austen’s morality in her novels: “[T]here are [...] superior and inferior people in moral as well as social terms” (Bradbury, 1970, 81).

It is known that the author inspired herself by her own life when writing her novels, and tried to depict “Everyman and particularly Everywoman” (Brown, 1966, 47) of her time.

The following chapter will briefly deal with the minor female characters that will be divided into groups according to their social roles or common characteristic features with the aim to prove that by the depiction of her characters the author gave a detailed picture of the society she lived in. The characters will be analyzed and compared mainly from the point of view of the group criteria.

5.2.1. “Husband-hunters”

“Husband-hunters” are one of the most frequent types occurring in Jane Austen’s novels. They are all young women who most appreciably feel “all-pervading social pressures to define themselves in terms of ‘femininity’, so that they will find a husband and marry” (Marsh, 1998, 144). However, they are usually eager to marry as advantageously as possible, regardless being in love or not, to improve their social position or avoid future loneliness. They all share flaws in their morality and do not hesitate to risk their reputation, dignity and purity to reach the goal.

The typical “husband-hunters” are Kitty and Lydia Bennet, the youngest Bennet sisters, and “ignorant, idle and vain” (PP, 1991, 201) coquettes, interested only in local rumours, balls, shopping and a regiment of young officers who occupy their minds for a few weeks.

Kitty, though being “weak-spirited, irritable, and completely under Lydia’s guidance” (PP, 1991, 201), is not under the bad influence of her foolish and irresponsible sister all the time, which saves her from a scandal and leads to her final improvement.

In Lydia’s character, however, Lauber sees “a dangerous type of fool” (Lauber, 1974, 517). The danger, as Tauchert notes, stems from the fact that Lydia “feels without reasoning” (Tauchert, 2003, 150).

After going to Brighton, she elopes with Mr. Wickham, a charming young officer, being totally ignorant of possible consequences of her actions to herself and her family, having only her own lover and marriage in mind, wondering only about “whether [Wickham] would be married in his blue coat” (PP, 1991, 299).

She, unlike Kitty, remains unchanged, still “untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy, and fearless” (PP, 1991, 296). Moreover, she is not ashamed of her behaviour, remaining “pleased with herself and her situation” (Tomalin, 2000, 167) for she never fully experiences the consequences she would have to face in case she was not saved by generosity of others who pay Wickham to marry her and thus spare her from public condemnation.

The only thing that could justify Lydia’s behavior is her youth, silliness, and inability “to think on serious subjects” (PP, 1991, 265). However, almost all the other husband-hunting girls are fully aware of their motives which are based on mere self-interest and calculation.

Charlotte Lucas, a character of *Pride and Prejudice*, is one of them. She is twenty-seven years old, fearing of becoming a spinster. Her desperate situation forces her to marry without love, “solely from the pure and disinterested desire of establishment” (PP, 1991, 116). She sees marriage as “the only honourable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune” (PP, 1991, 117), and wants thus ensure some financial security and gain a social position as a married woman, which was considered to be every woman’s destiny.

According to Jones, Charlotte is an example proving that “women’s choices in Jane Austen’s society were severely limited” (Jones, 1997, 51), and the fact that she is fully satisfied with running her own household, weakens the sad impression from her decision to live her life in loveless marriage.

Mary Crawford’s situation from *Mansfield Park*, however, is totally different from Charlotte’s. She is a young woman of significant fortune so her social position is much easier as she can not be afraid of future poverty.

She is a beautiful, lively, very accomplished girl, which is “enough to catch any man’s heart” (MP, 1992, 66), but she is also “emotionally and spiritually hollow” (Moler, 1977, 129). Her desire is to marry as advantageously as possible: “Matrimony was her object, provided she could marry well” (MP, 1992, 43). She can afford to choose her husband whereas Charlotte accepts the first opportunity that occurs.

After her arrival to Mansfield, she immediately starts to be interested in Tom Bertram, the eldest son of the Bertram children, knowing that as the eldest, he is to inherit the family estate and a large amount of money. Later, however, she starts to

prefer his younger brother Edmund, which is sort of vexation for her and she is “heartily sorry for it” (MP, 1992, 117) because Edmund is going to be a clergyman, and she does not like the idea because he would not earn enough money in such a profession and “she despises penniless clergymen” (Donoghue, 1968, 43). She would not be happy with him because, as she claims: “A large income is the best recipe for happiness I ever heard of” (MP, 1992, 218).

Her shallowness and bad moral principles, that are ascribed to her bad education, show itself when she, after returning back to London, almost forgets about Edmund but starts to be interested in him again when she learns about his elder brother’s serious illness, which would bring Edmund significant wealth if the brother died. Her plan, however, is thwarted by Maria’s elopement with Mary’s brother Henry.

Julia and Maria Bertram are similarly spoiled but they are, according to Moler, and in contrast to Mary Crawford, unable to hide their real characters (Moler, 1977, 136). They receive similarly shallow education and faulty upbringing like Marie does, based only on acquiring feminine accomplishments to make them attractive for an opposite sex. Although they are beautiful and accomplished, they are totally unprincipled, coldhearted, selfish, and “believing they had no faults” (MP, 1992, 35).

Moreover, they both lack kind sisterly feelings for each other, being alienated by mutual jealousy as they both compete for Mr. Crawford’s favour, each believing “herself the favourite” (MP, 1992, 118). Beer comments on the situation: “[...] Maria and Julia Bertram give way to the most unpleasant and spiteful rivalry, closing ranks again only when both have been deserted by Henry Crawford” (Beer, 1974, 76).

When they stop being Crawford’s objects of amusement, Maria, whose pride is hurt by Crawford’s behavior, marries her wealthy fiancé whom she can not stand and moves with him and Julia to the city.

There, both, negatively influenced by the city life, elope with other men. The scandals severely damage their reputation, especially that of Maria, who is forced to live “shut up together with little society” (MP, 1992, 479) until the end of her life. Ryle writes about her: “Maria marries for the wrong reasons and destroys her marriage for worse ones” (Ryle, 1968, 113). Julia, having committed less serious “crime”, because she at least was not married at the time of the elopement, is saved, like Lydia Bennet, by marrying the man she has eloped with.

There is a difference, however, between Lydia Bennet's and the Bertram sisters' elopements. Whereas the main motive for Lydia's behaviour is her narrow-mindedness and immaturity, Julia and Maria, though intelligent and even wealthy, are "led astray [mainly] by vanity and greed" (Tomalin, 2000, 228).

Lucy and Anne Steele, the "husband-hunters" of the novel *Sense and Sensibility*, are also, as well as Charlotte Lucas, girls of small fortune, with no other choice for improving their social status than by a way of advantageous marriage.

Anne is a stupid, almost a thirty-year-old caricature, whose only function in the novel is, according to Harding, to reveal a secret about the engagement of her sister with Edward Ferrars (Harding, 1968, 93). And her only wish is to be constantly asked about a Dr. Davis whom she is interested in and whom she wants to attract to marry her.

Her sister Lucy is more complex character. She is "illiterate, artful, and selfish" (SS, 1992, 134). Her calculating disposition enables her to scrape acquaintance with people of fortune and higher rank in hope of being "honourably distinguished" (SS, 1992, 224).

She is spiteful in her intentions and when her wealthy fiancé is disinherited by his own mother for being engaged to her, she immediately uses her cunning and promptness to marry his younger brother who becomes an inheritor of the family possession. By marrying him, she successfully "achieves the position in society she has set herself to win" (Tomalin, 2000, 160).

5.2.2. Innocent young orphans

Another group of Austen's minor characters is devoted to innocent young girls who has already become orphans or whose parents are unknown, so they lack their support in life. The girls are all more or less victims of a rigid system of social rules of that time; their innocence having sometimes been used by others. Moreover, they are all in a way unhappily involved in a love affair.

Georgiana Darcy, a very accomplished girl, is Mr. Darcy's younger sister and from the very beginning, her innocence is used by others to reach their own selfish goals.

As a very young girl, she desperately falls in love with Mr. Wickham who is interested only in her money, and plans to elope with him. Fortunately, their plans are

thwarted and her reputation is finally saved. Further, Miss Bingley, for example, by talking of her beauty and accomplishments, means to discourage Jane Bennet in her love for Mr. Bingley, and Mr. Wickham later unjustly describes her as “very, very proud” (PP, 1991, 77) to denigrate her.

In fact, she is not proud, but only very shy, kind and warm-hearted. By being the sweet sister for whom “there is nothing [Darcy] would not do” (PP, 1991, 233), she helps his brother reveal to Elizabeth his real character and thus show her that he is also capable of genuine feelings. Georgiana’s position is, however, much easier for her because she is a girl of fortune and high rank in contrast to Jane Fairfax and Harriet Smith, characters of *Emma*.

Jane Fairfax shows her moral superiority in her difficult life situation. She is an orphaned girl of no fortune, depending upon kindness and generosity of others. Marsh comments on her situation: “Jane Fairfax is extremely beautiful and highly accomplished, but she is in the position of dependence that makes her a victim in the patriarchal system” (Marsh, 1998, 257).

Having lived in a family of her dead father’s friend, she has been “given an excellent education” (E, 1991, 165) that should help her in her profession of a governess because, as mentioned above in the text, penniless women who had no one to support them financially had to earn their living themselves, which was sometimes perceived as humiliating for them, especially when they had not been used to work before. This is also Jane’s case. She dreads the day she will have to start working, perceiving it as the day when she will “retire from all the pleasures of life, of rational intercourse, equal society, peace and hope, to penance and mortification forever” (E, 1991, 166).

In addition, her poverty is a reason for another suffering. She has to keep a secret about her engagement to Frank Churchill, a rich but rather irresponsible young man, because their marriage would not be allowed by Frank’s rich and snobbish aunt who would not come to terms with her low social rank.

She feels miserable, having to lie and deceive everyone, being punished by not knowing “the blessing of one tranquil hour” (E, 1991, 428) since the engagement. Moreover, her reversed and anxious behaviour contributes to Emma’s inventing a story about Jane’s love to her friend’s husband and thus makes her a victim of gossips, too.

Her unpleasant situation is finally resolved by a sudden death of the rich aunt, which leads to her marriage with Frank and saves her from the terrible prospect of work. However, her strict moral principles make her feel guilty for her hypocritical, though involuntary, behavior: “I have been acting contrary to all my sense of right; [...] , and the kindness I am now receiving, is what my conscience tell me ought not be” (E, 1991, 429). Although, Jane marries man she loves and at the same time improves her social position, she will always be painfully aware of her insincerity, which troubles her. She, however, had no other choice in starched and intolerant society of that time.

Harriet Smith is, like Jane Fairfax, a poor but very beautiful girl. Being of obscure origin, “the natural daughter of somebody” (E, 1991, 20), she is brought up at a local school in Highbury. The obscurity of her parentage and poverty make her position in society very difficult and her future expectations are limited because there is little possibility she would marry at all, or even marry well.

Although she is “intellectually empty” (Lauber, 1974, 520) and highly indecisive, she is good-natured, innocent, and spontaneous. Her “innocent helplessness” (Lauber, 1974, 521), childlike naivety, submissive disposition, and her good looks draw Emma’s attention. She becomes a victim of Emma’s manipulative tendencies, and serves her as a tool for banishment of her boredom, and by “lacking [...] any kind of judgement” (Wright, 1964, 44), she allows Emma to control and operate her life: “Harriet certainly was not clever, but she had a sweet, docile, grateful disposition; [...], and only desiring to be guided by any one she looked up to” (E, 1991, 23).

Harriet’s friendship with Emma is rather harmful for Harriet because her future prospects are even more closing for her because Emma uses “Harriet’s habits of dependence and imitation” (E, 1991, 88) to influence her in her decision not to accept a marriage offer of a young yeoman who is in fact her superior, though Emma does not think so (see 4.1.), and Harriet’s position would unexpectedly improve if she married him. On the contrary, Emma encourages her in the relationship with Mr. Elton, a local clergyman, who would never marry a woman of such low rank and obscurity.

Harriet, prepared to “love somebody or other – no matter who” (Lauber, 1974, 520), obeys. Her childlike innocence is particularly obvious when she idealizes Mr. Elton, “thinks him all perfection” (E, 1991, 142), and especially when she collects and keeps trifles like a pencil or plaster that once belonged to him.

Emma's influence also causes that Harriet starts to think too much of herself and becomes very self-confident because after being rejected and later humiliated by Mr. Elton at the ball, she starts thinking of Mr. Knightley, the most respectable man in Highbury, explaining that "there had been matches of greater disparity" (E, 1991, 416).

Her opportunity to marry well, however, is not lost forever as Mr. Martin proposes to her for the second time. Harriet accepts him this time, being happy with him.

5.2.3. Bad mothers

As it has already been mentioned above, although every woman's role expected of her in society was to be a devoted and caring mother, in charge of her household, in Jane Austen's novels almost all major heroines' mothers fail in some respect their roles, being alienated from their children. One of the possible explanations can probably be the fact that the author herself was closer to her sister rather than her mother.

One of the mothers failing her primary role of caring mother is Lady Bertram, a foolish character of *Mansfield Park*. Although she is a rather kind and good-hearted in disposition, her extreme indolence and placidity is startling. She seems to be interested in nothing, apart from her little dog, not caring even for her children's education, which was expected of each mother at that time:

To the education of her daughters, Lady Bertram paid not the smallest attention. [...]. She was a woman who spent her days in sitting nicely dressed on a sofa, [...] thinking more of her pug than her children (MP, 1992, 20).

In her indolence and interest only in her own comfort, which makes her "as selfish as her sister and daughters" (Edwards, 1970, 94), she willingly passes her own responsibilities for upbringing her daughters and running her own household to her snobbish and mean sister. She also gives up her social role of a chaperon of her daughters at social gatherings because "she was too indolent do accept a mother's gratification in witnessing their success and enjoyment at the expense of any personal trouble" (MP, 1992, 35). According to Wright, by neglecting her daughter's upbringing and education, she contributed very significantly to their moral misconduct (Wright, 1964, 183).

However, Austen also ascribes her as a woman capable of motherly feelings, missing all her children, when she experiences “the real solicitude” (MP, 1992, 440) after they all leave their home; and in the relationship with her niece Fanny who prefers her to her own mother.

Mrs. Price, the Fanny’s mother, is very similar to her sister Lady Bertram both in disposition and in good looks, but, as Austen writes, Mrs. Price’s appearance is much more faded as her life has been much more difficult (MP, 1992, 420).

Although she is described as “not unkind” (MP, 1992, 401), she totally fails her maternal role, preferring, like Mrs. Bennet, some her children to the others: “Her daughters never had been much to her. She was fond of her sons” (MP, 1992, 401). She is feeling-weary, has no time for her children, and does not manage her household properly, which is a serious shortcoming:

[Mrs. Price] was a partial, ill-judging parent, [...], who neither taught nor restrained her children, whose house was the scene of mismanagement and discomfort from beginning to the end (MP, 1992, 402).

Fanny is very disappointed with her mother after she comes to visit her family and realizes that her aunt Lady Bertram is much closer to her than her own mother.

Mrs. Bennet is one of the greatest fools of *Pride and Prejudice*, and also of all women characters in Jane Austen’s novel in general. The author portrays her as it follows:

She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news (PP, 1991, 3).

Although she is depicted as rather simple-minded, she is calculating in her intentions to marry her daughters, meaning to marry them as advantageously as she possibly can, considering money a very important condition. She does not hesitate to use all means she can, even to gamble with her eldest daughter’s health, or to use the emotional pressure, in Elizabeth’s case, to reach her goal: “She talked to Elizabeth again and again, coaxed and threatened her by turns” (PP, 1991, 107).

Her silliness and the effort to insinuate into favour of people of higher social rank are particularly vivid at balls when she boasts with her daughters and would-be

high living standards of her family, which is a constant source of abashment for her two elder daughters and a source of mockery for present snobbish ladies.

She, like Lady Bertram, neglects her daughters' education despite being it her duty (see 4.3.), being interested only in local respectable and rich potential bridegrooms for her daughters, balls, gossips, and clothes, more than in anything else.

She shares "superficial materialism" (Jones, 1997, 51), shallowness and narrow-mindedness with her two youngest daughters, especially with Lydia who is her favourite child. She supports them in their vain behaviour, contributing to Lydia's going astray.

Her absolute ignorance of moral principles and her limited life ambition to get her daughters married at any cost cause that she is equally happy with vicious Mr. Wickham, as well as with respectable and wealthy Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley because to her "a marriage is a marriage" (Lauber, 1974, 517).

5.2.4. Devoted young mothers and wives

Jane Austen depicts also women who fulfill their roles of devoted mothers, wives and successful managers of their household. They are usually very young, having small children. Surprisingly, they are, except Mrs. Weston, rather foolish characters.

Lady Middleton is "an insipid fool" (Lauber, 1974, 513) of the novel *Sense and Sensibility*. Her manners are elegant, but cold, reserved, and selfish. She is not interested in anything except her four little children. Ryle notes: "Lady Middleton's feelings are few and are concentrated entirely on her own children" (Ryle, 1968, 108). She spoils her children by giving them exaggerated attention; and boasts about them in public. In her cold-heartedness, she is able to like only those who flatter her or her children.

Lady Middleton and her husband enjoy keeping company in their house and having parties there, which, as Austen explains, "supported the good spirits of Sir John, and gave exercise to the good-breeding of his wife [because she] piqued herself upon the elegance of her table, and of all her domestic arrangements" (SS, 1992, 31), showing her as a good hostess, which was expected of every woman in charge of her household.

Isabella Knightley, Emma's elder sister, is "a model of right feminine happiness" (E, 1991, 140), living her life only for her family. The author describes her as "a devoted wife, a doating mother, and so tenderly attached to her father and sister

that, [...], a warmer love might have seemed impossible” (E, 1991, 92). She is deeply concerned, even anxious, about her and her four children’s health, always looking after their comfort.

As for her husband, she loves him deeply, adopting willingly a submissive position in the marriage, supporting him and following him everywhere. She obeys her husband’s decisions and “always thinks as he does” (E, 1991, 37). However, she seems to enjoy her social role enormously as she claims: “I am sure nobody ought to be, or can be, a greater advocate for matrimony than I am” (E, 1991, 95).

Isabella Knightley is certainly a prototype of the ideal woman of Georgian society. Though, in the novel she is sometimes perceived as a foolish character, often exaggerating her motherly devotion.

Although Mrs. Weston is not so young as Lady Middleton and Isabella Knightley, she is also known for her great devotion to her family, especially to her husband.

Mrs. Weston, formerly Miss Taylor, used to be Emma’s governess with whom she developed the mother-daughter relationship, referring to Emma and her sister Isabella as “my two daughters” (E, 1991, 121).

Later, she becomes wife of Mr. Weston, a very respectable man from neighbourhood, which she perceives as a good luck, considering her age and her position of a poor governess because her chance to get ever married was closing, and on the contrary, the prospect of becoming a spinster was opening before her. She, like Isabella Knightley, loves and respects her husband. She claims about herself and her husband that “there will be little merit in making a good wife to such a man as Mr. Weston” (E, 1991, 35).

Her sweet temper and loving kindness show themselves in particular when she adopts Mr. Weston’s son Frank and treats him like her own: “She thought well of Frank in [...] every respect, and, what was more, she loved him very much” (E, 1991, 430). She is also able to forgive him, together with her husband, all the sins he has done.

In the end of the novel, she even gives birth to a healthy daughter, which makes her “one of the happiest women in the world” (E, 1991, 479). By having her own child, she fulfills the basic woman’s role in life.

5.2.5. Warm-hearted widows

Widowhood meant for many women a significant change in their lives. They did not have to cope only with a loss of their husbands and psychological consequences of such a loss, but they also have to face, supposing they were not wealthy enough to be able to afford the same living standard, an unpleasant prospect of limited financial resources, becoming very often dependent on help and support of others. An example of both a poor widow and a rich one can be seen in characters of Mrs. Dashwood and Mrs. Jennings, both occurring in the novel *Sense and Sensibility*.

Mrs. Dashwood, the mother of Marianne and Elinor, is described as a very kind and loving mother, a woman of “an excellent heart” (SS, 1992, 6) and strong feelings.

Therefore, when her husband dies, she is overwhelmed by deep grief and sorrow for a long time. In her sadness, she also has to face, together with her children, prospects of financial uncertainty because the family possession is inherited by the eldest son of her dead husband, which was a usual process at that time. She has to “rel[y] on the liberality of his intentions” (SS, 1992, 14) to provide her and her beloved daughters with a suitable income. Unfortunately, he and his wife are mean and ensure them only a very small income.

At the time when the living of Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters together with the new selfish owners of the house becomes unbearable, Mrs. Dashwood is offered a small house to live by their wealthy distant relative Sir Middleton, a Mrs. Jennings’s son-in-law, which she perceives as “a blessing, in comparison of the misery of continuing her daughter-in-law’s guest” (SS, 1992, 23) and accepts the offer gratefully.

On the contrary, Mrs. Jennings is in a different situation. Being a widow “with an ample jointure” (SS, 1992, 35), she leads a comfortable and untroubled life, being in want of a company all the time, interested only in gossips and matchmaking of the young people, wishing them happy. She is a cheerful, kind, but not very intelligent, and too talkative sort of lady. Wright describes her as it follows:

[S]he is a woman who leads a trivial existence, her gossipy curiosity is positively painful, [...]. But her heart is unfailingly kind, and her instinctive generosity stands in clear contrast [...] to the coldly selfish Lady Middleton (Wright, 1964, 180).

Her warm-heartedness and guileless nature is particularly revealed when she invites Elinor and Marianne to stay with her in her house to help Marianne forget about her unhappy love affair; and when she, after Marianne's falling ill, endeavours, "by her own care, to supply to [Marianne] the place of the mother she had taken her from" (SS, 1992, 296).

5.2.6. Plain and poor spinsters

When a middle-class woman remained unmarried, not only she failed her most expected social role in the centre of family life, but also she often had to more or less struggle with poverty, being financially and socially dependent on help of others.

The author herself knew very well how the life of spinster looked like as she experienced it herself. The difficult position of spinsters in Georgian society can be particularly seen in the character of Miss Bates. Mary Bennet deserves her place in this group as a young spinster.

Mary Bennet, though very young, has not many chances to marry at all because she is poor, plain and extremely boring. Marsh comments on her future possibilities:

[...] Mary Bennet could never occupy the social position Elizabeth attains, however hard she tries. To put it very bluntly, she doesn't have the brains, she doesn't have the looks, and she can't sing and play well enough (Marsh, 1998, 106).

She is so stupid and uninteresting that she even does not draw attention of pompous Mr. Collins in spite of the fact that "[s]he rated his abilities much higher than any of the others" (PP, 1991, 119). He prefers Charlotte Lucas instead.

Mary tries to compensate her lack of self-confidence by "work[ing] hard for knowledge and accomplishment" (PP, 1991, 21). She tries in vain, though, making rather "a fool of herself with her extracts and quotations" (Beer, 1974, 52) from the books she constantly studies and thinks herself superior because of it.

In the end, Mary is the only one of all her sisters who remains at home with her parents, which foreshadows the fact that she is doomed to spinsterhood.

Miss Bates, a foolish character of *Emma*, is very similar to Mrs. Jennings in disposition. She is also warm-hearted, cheerful, “well-meaning, but rather irritatingly talkative elderly woman” (Jones, 1997, 54) of gossip talks and no great intellect.

Though her situation as a spinster is not easy, the author describes it using a certain level of irony:

[Miss Bates] enjoyed a most uncommon degree of popularity for a woman neither young, handsome, rich, nor married. [...]. She had never boasted either beauty or cleverness. Her youth had passed without distinction, and her middle of life was devoted to [...] the endeavour to make a small income go as far as possible (E, 1991, 18).

She lives with her old mother, having to rely on a good will of others for help, and she is lucky enough to have a lot of wealthier friends who provide her and her mother with food or a carriage when needed, which make Miss Bates overpower them with words of gratitude.

Miles assumes that Miss Bates underestimates herself, which is a result of being aware of her social dependency on others (Miles, 2009, 69). Her pitiable situation is also a subject of Mr. Knightley’s reproach to Emma when he asks her how she could be so unfeeling “to a woman of her character, age, and situation” (E, 1991, 384).

5.2.7. Snobbish ladies

The last type of the Austen’s characters analyzed in the thesis is snobbish and shallow caricatured women who are usually of higher rank, thinking themselves superior and ridiculing or contemning those of lower social status. They judge people according to their social position, not their personal qualities. In addition, they almost all try to prevent marriage between a rich man and a woman of inferior connections.

Lady Catherine de Bourgh, a character of *Pride and Prejudice*, is “a bigoted, snobbish woman” (Marsh, 1998, 99), a member of the aristocracy. She is extremely arrogant, and “her manners [are] dictatorial and insolent” (PP, 1991, 79). Moreover, she is convinced of her own self-importance and superiority, and loves being admired and flattered by others. However, Lauber points out that her “greatness” is appreciated only by other fools, such as Mr. Collins (Lauber, 1974, 518).

Her insolence and false feelings of self-importance and human superiority give her a seeming right to ask those of inferior rank about whatever she likes and give them advice about whatever she wants. The author describes the scene when she comes to visit Mr. Collins and his wife: “She examined into their employments, looked at their work, and advised them to do it differently” (PP, 1991, 159).

Her snobbery and a strong belief in a social hierarchy reveal themselves fully when she learns about a possible engagement of her nephew Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth, and tries to prevent their marriage by reminding Elizabeth of their great social inequality, and thus, according to her, absurdity of their possible marriage (see 4.1).

Another character of the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, Miss Caroline Bingley, is “[a] snobbish, domineering, self-consequential” (Wright, 1964, 177) sister of Jane Bennet’s future husband.

She courts Mr. Darcy, whom she desires to marry as he is a very rich and respectable man, by constant flattering and praising his sister and his large estate, and by defending all his opinions and pretending she has the same taste for books as he does by choosing a book only because “it was the second volume of his” (PP, 1991, 50).

Though pretending civility, she in fact disdains the Bennet family because they are of lower rank, and when she starts to perceive Elizabeth as a rival in love, she ridicules her appearance, her behavior and her poor family in an attempt to “injure her in Darcy’s opinion” (PP, 1991, 252).

She also tries to prevent the relationship of her brother Charles and Jane from developing because “[The Bennets] are not rich enough, or grand enough, for [her]” (PP, 1991, 113-114). Fortunately, she is not successful in her attempts and has to accept Jane as her sister-in-law and reconcile with the idea that Elizabeth has become a mistress of Pemberley instead of her.

Snobbery is also a characteristic feature of Fanny Dashwood and her mother Mrs. Ferrars, characters of *Sense and Sensibility*. They, as Lauber notes, lack “both sense and sensibility” (Lauber, 1974, 513), and both do their best to prevent Edward, their brother and son respectively, from marrying socially inferior Elinor.

Fanny Dashwood is a wife of Elinor and Marianne’s half-brother John. She is portrayed as “a strong caricature of [her husband] – more narrow-minded and selfish” (SS, 1992, 5).

Her mean calculation and a quest for gathering family possession cause that she persuades her husband not to pay his sisters so large an income from his heritage as he promised to his dying father, for he would rob himself and his only child of a great sum of money (SS, 1992, 8). Moreover, her unpleasant and arrogant behaviour makes the Dashwoods to move away as soon as possible.

Fanny is also very insincere and hypocritical, by which she strongly resembles Miss Bingley. It is obvious in her behaviour towards the Miss Dashwoods when she has to undergo “the unpleasantness of appearing to treat them with attention” (SS, 1992, 238) and particularly in her behaviour towards Anne and Lucy Steele. Firstly, she is extremely fond of them and invites them to stay with her family. However, when she learns that the poor and inferior Lucy has been her brother’s fiancée, “she [falls] into violent hysterics” (SS, 1992, 249) and banishes them from her house immediately. Similarly, Miss Bingley finds Jane very kind but when she faces prospects of Jane’s becoming her brother’s wife, she stops meeting her at once.

Mrs. Ferrars is very much the same as her daughter in disposition. She is a woman whom was given “the strong characters of pride and ill nature” (SS, 1992, 223).

She tends to manipulate her son’s life, wishing him to be an influential public figure. She ignores his own plans and wishes to live a quiet private life (SS, 1992, 15) and plans his marriage with a daughter of an aristocrat.

In the moment when Edward resists her plans and she learns about his engagement with Lucy, her cruelty and heartlessness makes her behave as an unreasonable and ill-natured parent. Lauber (1974, 514) even sees a monstrous figure in her because she not only disinherits him, but also threatens him by seeing to that if he finds any profession, he will never advance in it.

However, she “becomes a dupe herself” (Tomalin, 2000, 160) when she, by giving the income originally belonging to Edward to her younger son Robert, enables him to marry the same girl she has disinherited Edward for.

Although Mrs. Norris is, like most women in this group, a symbol of “social and economic snobbery” (Jones, 1997, 91), she is, according to Lewis, the only Jane Austen’s character who can be described as “genuinely evil” (Lewis, 1970, 73).

She is a mean, officious, selfish, and odious woman who loves being in the centre of all happening and in charge of everything that is connected with Mansfield

Park and its inhabitants, which supports her feelings of self-importance; and whose “love of money was equal to her love of directing” (MP, 1992, 8).

She brings up the Bertram sisters and thus contributes to their vanity, conceit, and coldheartedness by a constant reminding them of their high social status, which she also perceives, like for example Lady Catherine, as a sign of human superiority.

However, she deserves her attribute as “the most hateful character in Jane Austen’s novels” (Lauber, 1974, 514) for her cruel behavior towards her niece Fanny. Not having the slightest affections for her, she constantly attacks her with reproaches and remarks about her low origin, and reminds her of “extraordinary advantages” (MP, 1992, 279) she has experienced by being raised in the luxury. She is also probably the person most responsible for Fanny’s rather low self-esteem and a lack of self-confidence. Tomalin (2000, 232) even assumes that Mrs. Norris bullies others in order to strengthen “her own position” and Fanny is “an easy target” for her.

Finally, she is punished for her deeds when Maria, her favourite niece, ruins her reputation by the elopement. She becomes “an altered creature, quieted, stupified, indifferent to every thing that passed” (MP, 1992, 461), being “regretted by no one at Mansfield” (MP, 1992, 479).

Mrs. Elton, a character of *Emma*, is a vulgar wife of Mr. Elton, a Highbury clergyman, symbolizing, according to Moler, Mr. Elton’s refusal of the role Emma chose for him when she wanted him to marry her poor friend Harriet (Moler, 1977, 176). Jane Austen portrays her character as it follows:

Mrs. Elton appeared [...] self-important, presuming, familiar, ignorant, and ill-bred. She had a little beauty and a little accomplishment, but so little judgment that she thought herself coming with superior knowledge of the world, to enliven and improve a country neighbourhood (E, 1991, 285).

She is also extremely snobbish and shallow, interested only in her clothes, enjoying herself in the centre of attention, and constantly boasting of Maple Grove, a noble place where her friends live, and comparing it to Hartfield. She satisfies her self-importance and officiousness by trying to help Jane Fairfax find a family in which she could work as the governess. Here, as Lauber (1974, 522) suggests, her tendencies to manipulate Jane’s life mirrors Emma’s tendencies to control Harriet’s life.

6. Conclusion

At the turn of the 18th and 19th century Georgian Britain had to face great political, economical, social, and cultural changes that occurred as a consequence of three significant revolutions that took place during that period, influencing life of British society. In the cultural area, the changes brought the Romantic Movement, emphasizing human feelings and emotions that appeared as a reaction to the Age of Reason, asserting knowledge and rational explanation.

However, Jane Austen paid almost no attention to political events of the time, except a slight allusion to slavery in *Mansfield Park*. Her novels are purely aimed at a portrayal of everyday life of middle-class society in England's rural areas, which was a topic she was familiar with as she, a daughter of a rural clergyman, spent all her life among members of the middle class and the country gentry. As for her work, it is not easy to classify it. Although, she was rather an anti-romantic writer, and her writing was influenced by the eighteenth-century beliefs and inspired by many classicist writers, her art is more innovative, with elements of realism.

In Jane Austen's time, society was strictly divided into social classes, and strongly male-oriented, women being generally perceived as inferior humans. Therefore, their only possibility to climb up the social ladder and improve their social status was to marry advantageously. As a consequence of their inferiority, women were judged more severely by society than men in case they broke social rules. Therefore, all Jane Austen's novels are penetrated by themes of social class, marriage, the limited position of women in society, and the fragility of reputation.

Social status and class were extremely important indicators of one's wealth and connections. In general, members of higher social rank were more respected by society, often seen as superior human beings. The most typical example of a member of upper class who believes in a social hierarchy and a God-given order of social rank is Lady Catherine de Bourgh in *Pride and Prejudice*. In Austen's novels many characters of upper classes try to prevent a rich man's marriage to a girl of low origin whose status, lack of connections, and fortune are serious reasons for disapproving the match.

The issue of marriage is closely and inseparably connected with the previous theme of social class, as marriages of almost all her major heroines are unequal in terms of the status and therefore often disapproved of by parents or relatives of their partners.

Marriage was, as mentioned above, the only opportunity for a woman of lower rank to improve her social position and ensure economic security. Moreover, it was each woman's destiny to marry and thus it was expected of her to find a husband. The author asserts marriages based on love and mutual understanding, showing it, for instance, in the relationship of Fanny Price and Edmund Bertram in *Mansfield Park*. As a realist, she also considers reason and money as important attributes for satisfactory life, unless, of course, money are the only motive for marriage, as it is exemplified on some of her characters who would marry any man supposing he was wealthy.

In patriarchal society women's life opportunities were very limited. A woman's expected position was in the centre of family life as a devoted mother, an obedient wife, and a household manager, whereas a husband was in charge of financial support. Austen shows the qualities of an ideal woman, for example, in the character of Isabella Knightley in *Emma*. The author also deals with a difficult situation of widows and spinsters as there was no husband to support them. As Jane Austen is sometimes referred to as a pre-feminist writer, she identified herself with most ideas of contemporary women's right advocates and therefore asserted equality between a man and a woman demonstrated in marriage by mutual understanding and respect.

Reputation was an extremely fragile matter, especially for women, being judged according to its adherence to strict social rules. It could be very easily at risk by gossips or, as Austen described in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park*, by elopement with another man, which doomed every woman to irretrievable social exclusion, supposing the woman did not marry the man she had eloped with. By including the motif of elopement into her novels, Austen wanted to warn against cruel consequences of bad judgement.

Jane Austen's characters are complex and well-developed, portrayed also with their follies, drawbacks, or even evils. Although the author always focused only on a few families in her work, she depicted a wide range of different characters that can be distinguished into real characters and caricatures. The caricatures in particular served her as a tool for social and moral criticism, having primarily an entertaining function by being brought into contact with the real characters. She used irony to satirize her characters and let them reveal their real nature through dialogues and social interactions. Therefore, her work is often classified also as a comedy of manners.

Jane Austen's major characters are intelligent and independent young women, who do not want to blindly fulfill what is expected of them and submit to pressures and demands of patriarchal society, but they are usually not afraid to express their opinions and they are steady in their inner convictions. Austen enables readers to look deep into her heroines' thoughts and thus recognize their inner world, their doubts, desperation, sadness, or on the contrary, their feelings of happiness, joy, and love.

They are almost all (except Emma) women of lower origin who become involved in a love affair with a man of higher social rank, though some are not aware of their real feelings from the beginning. They usually have to overcome certain obstacles caused by society; have to go through a process of self-knowledge to realize their faults and true feelings, and finally, they are all rewarded for their patience and strength by marrying the man they love and respect, being loved and respected themselves.

Through her minor characters, Austen introduced various types of characters and social roles women represented, giving a detailed description of middle-class society at that time. She portrayed the ideal of "femininity" seen in devoted mothers and wives, or on the contrary, mothers who failed their expected role for various reasons. Further, she depicted possible hardships of widowhood; and a difficult social situation and position of plain and poor spinsters. She focused also on fates of marriage-seeking and calculating women who wanted to avoid spinsterhood at any cost and ensure economical security by marrying almost anybody; and a situation of innocent young orphans as victims of a strict and cruel system of social rules, or evil of individuals. Last but not least, the author portrayed snobbery and shallowness of rich ladies, considering those of higher rank as superior, insisting on perseverance of class distinction.

7. Resumé

Diplomová práce se zabývá rozbohem ženských postav románů *Emma*, *Mansfieldské panství*, *Pýcha a předsudek*, a *Rozum a cit* anglické spisovatelky Jane Austenové. Po nastínění problematiky v úvodu je v první části práce (kapitola 2-3) nejprve charakterizováno období autorčina působení, její život a dílo. Hlavní část práce (kapitola 4-5) si klade za cíl analyzovat zmíněné romány a ženské postavy těchto románů především z hlediska témat, a okrajově i motivů a symbolů, které se v jejich dílech odrážejí. Dalším krokem je podrobně analyzovat hlavní hrdinky románů a poté stručně analyzovat a porovnat vedlejší ženské postavy z hlediska skupin, do kterých byly rozděleny na základě stejných povahových rysů a sociálních rolí, které ve společnosti zaujímají. Cílem rozboru je ukázat, že vylíčením široké palety postav Austenová podala podrobný a věrohodný obraz života anglické středostavovské společnosti a venkovské šlechty té doby.

Autorka práce se nejprve krátce věnuje historickým událostem přelomu 18. a 19. století, aby nastínila dobu, v níž spisovatelka žila. Přestože se georgiánské období vyznačuje velkým množstvím změn v oblasti politické, ekonomické, sociální a kulturní, život venkovské šlechty zůstal těmito změnami prakticky nezasážen, a proto se dobové události v dílech Jane Austenové téměř nevyskytují. V kulturní sféře došlo k prolínání klasicismu, jež prosazoval společenský řád, kázeň, rozum a logické vysvětlení jevů a věcí, s právě nastupujícím romantismem, který naopak zdůrazňoval lidské city a emoce; ve středu zájmu byl jedinec čelící společnosti.

Následující kapitola se zabývá životem spisovatelky a charakterizací jejího díla, jež jsou důležitá pro pochopení společnosti a prostředí, v němž žila, a které jí bylo inspirací k tvorbě. Všechny její romány jsou bezvýhradně společensky orientovány, popisující každodenní život anglické venkovské vyšší střední třídy, k níž autorka sama patřila, a je tedy jasné, že čerpala inspiraci nejen z děl svých současníků, ale především ze svého vlastního života.

Jane Austenová je považována za anti-romantickou spisovatelku, zesměšňující přehnaný sentimentalismus typický pro romantická díla. Její romány jsou ovlivněny spíše klasicistními ideály logického myšlení a pevné morálky, jež jsou nejvíce patrné v románu *Mansfieldské panství*. Pro morální podtext svých děl je také autorka často označována za moralistku. Jane Austenová je představitelkou tzv. rodinného románu,

kdy se ve svých románech zaměřuje vždy pouze na realistické vyličení života a zvyklostí omezeného počtu rodin středostavovské společnosti. Svou konkrétností se tedy liší od klasicistního pojetí tvorby, což také brání jejímu zařazení k typickým autorům klasicismu; její styl je netradiční a inovační.

Diplomová práce se ve své 4. kapitole zabývá rozbořem témat sociální třídy, sňatku, ženského postavení ve společnosti a pověsti; okrajově také motivů a symbolů, která se v dílech Austenové odrážejí. Témata jsou rozebrána za pomoci sekundární literatury a poté doložena příklady z literatury primární, aby autorka práce ukázala, že jsou tato témata v románech spisovatelky opravdu zastoupena.

Nejprve je probráno téma třídního dělení společnosti. Přestože během 18. století pozice středních tříd posílila a přiblížila se více k vyšší vrstvě společnosti, stále převládalo přísné třídní dělení, které nebylo jednoduché překonat a bylo jedním z kritérií, společně s bohatstvím, rodinným prostředím a pověstí, k posuzování sociálního statusu jedince. Austenová se věnovala vykreslení života střední třídy, členové aristokratických vrstev ji zajímali jen okrajově, a to pouze jako nástroje kritizování snobství, povrchnosti, a jako symbol napětí mezi zmíněnými vrstvami. Typickým příkladem snobské nadřazenosti je postava románu *Pýcha a předsudek* Lady Catherine de Bourghová, jejíž názory a přesvědčení o sociální hierarchii a podřazenosti lidí nižších vrstev se nejvíce projevují v rozhovoru s hlavní představitelkou románu Elizabeth Bennetovou, dívkou z relativně nižších poměrů. Stejný tradiční odstup je zřejmý například také v rodině Sira Bertrama v přístupu k jejich neteři Fanny Priceové nebo v chování snobské hlavní hrdinky Emmy Woodhouseové. Pro spisovatelku samotnou však příslušenství k určité sociální třídě není kritériem k posuzování lidských kvalit jedince, nýbrž jeho charakterové vlastnosti.

Dále se práce věnuje tématu sňatku, který úzce souvisí se společenským postavením, protože jediným způsobem, jak si mohla žena zajistit lepší sociální postavení a finančně se zabezpečit, bylo právě výhodné manželství. Zatímco se ženy nižšího postavení snažily výhodně se vdát, majetní rodiče či příbuzní potenciálních manželů se často takové sňatky snažili svým dětem překazit. I tyto situace se v románech Austenové vyskytují – například v osobě nepřející matky paní Ferrarsové z románu *Rozum a cit* nebo již zmíněné Lady Catherine de Bourghové. Jane Austenová prosazuje manželství založené na lásce a vzájemném pochopení, a proto ho nakonec

dopřává i svým hlavním hrdinkám. Dále si však uvědomuje, že pouhá láska nemusí zaručovat štěstí a spokojený život, ale že je důležitý také rozum a finanční jistota, pokud ovšem nejsou peníze jediným důvodem pro uzavření manželství, což se mnohdy stávalo. Tyto případy spisovatelka také popisuje a demonstrovuje je na mnoha svých vedlejších postavách jako jsou např. sestry Steelovy, které by si z touhy po manželství a finančním zajištění vzaly téměř kohokoliv. I své hlavní románové postavy však nechává Austenová uvědomit si majetkové poměry svých budoucích manželů. Například Elizabeth Bennetová si uvědomí svou lásku k panu Darcymu až po návštěvě jeho honosného sídla Pemberley symbolizujícího Darcyho osobnost.

Dalším krokem diplomové práce je rozbor společenského postavení ženy tehdejší doby, jež často vysvětluje chování a jednání jednotlivých postav. Společnost byla v období autorčina života silně patriarchální. Ženy byly považovány za méněcenné bytosti, závislé společensky i finančně na mužích a jejich možnosti ve společnosti byly velmi omezené, s čímž spisovatelka jako pre-feministická autorka nesouhlasila a prosazovala rovnost manželského soužití. Jejich hlavním úkolem a jediným posláním bylo vdát se, být pečlivou a oddanou matkou, manželkou a paní ve své domácnosti. Ženy, jež byly ideálem „ženskosti“ tehdejší společnosti, se odrážejí například v postavách Emminy sestry Isabelly Knightleyové nebo její guvernanky Anny Westonové. Jane Austenová však popisuje i situaci vdov či neprovdaných žen, jejichž situace nebyla vůbec jednoduchá, pokud nebyly dobře finančně zajištěny.

Posledním tématem, kterým se autorka této práce zabývá je, téma pověsti ve společnosti. V tehdejší době, kdy byla společnost sešňorována nejrůznějšími společenskými pravidly, byla pověst velmi křehkou záležitostí, a to především pro ženy, k nimž byla společnost mnohem méně tolerantní než k mužům, což bylo následkem jejich podřadného společenského postavení. Nejvíce pověst ohrožujícím jevem byly pomluvy, které byly každodenní součástí života, a které ovlivňovaly všeobecné společenské mínění. Austenová ve svých románech poukazuje na tendence společnosti hledat senzaci, a na rychlou změnu názoru v závislosti na změně situace, v níž se jedinec či dokonce jeho rodina nachází. Pověst byla velmi úzce spojena se společenským statutem člověka, a proto si mohl i společensky vážený muž poškodit pověst sňatkem s dívkou z nižších poměrů. Na tuto skutečnost spisovatelka poukázala například v románu *Pýcha a předsudek*, kde Lady Catherine vysvětluje Elizabeth, že

pokud si vezme jejího synovce pana Darcyho, zničí mu tím pověst. Jedním z nejhorších činů, kterých se mohla žena dopustit, a který vedl k poškození pověsti, či k jejímu úplnému zničení a následnému vyloučení ze společnosti, byl útěk s jiným mužem. Austenová se věnuje tomuto motivu v románech *Pýcha a předsudek* a *Mansfieldské panství* a varuje tím tak před neuváženými činy, jejichž důsledky mohou být nevratné.

Pátá kapitola se věnuje rozboru jednotlivých ženských postav, které jsou rozděleny do skupin podle určitých kritérií. Cílem je prokázat, že autorka skrze své postavy, jejich chování a jednání podala realistický obraz georgiánské společnosti, jejich hodnot a ideálů. Postavy Jane Austenové jsou dobře vyvinuté osobnosti, vylíčené se všemi svými chybami a nedostatky. Velmi často jsou také postavy Austenové děleny na tzv. „skutečné postavy“ a karikatury, které mají v románech pomoci rozvinout témata a pobavit čtenáře tím, že je jejich komičnost zdůrazněna přímým kontaktem se „skutečnými postavami“. Vzhledem k tomu, že komičnost jejich karikatur spočívá většinou spíše v jejich nemorálnosti než v nedostatku intelektu, slouží spisovatelce také k sociálnímu a morálnímu kriticizmu, k němuž Austenová mistrně využívá ironie. Její romány jsou proto často označovány jako komedie mravů. Navíc pro skutečné poznání autorčiných postav je důležitá ústní interakce mezi těmito postavami, protože jejich charakter je odkrýván prostřednictvím jejich promluvy.

Hlavní ženské postavy jsou inteligentní, nezávisle smýšlející a morálně silné ženy, které se touží prosadit ve společnosti ovládané muži a odmítají se slepě podvolit všemu, co od nich společnost očekává. Všechny jsou do jisté míry schopny odolat tlaku okolí a prosadit svoje vlastní zásady a názory, jež se nebojí vyjádřit. Hlavní hrdinky touží po lásce a vzájemném porozumění, v čemž se odrážejí názory samotné autorky a dá se říci, že téměř všechny její hrdinky jsou pokrokové ženy ve vztahu ke společnosti, ve které žijí. Jde většinou o ženy nižšího společenského postavení, které se zamilují do majetného muže vyššího postavení. Avšak některé, například Elizabeth Bennetová nebo Emma Woodhouseová, si svou lásku nejprve neuvědomují a musí se naučit přiznat své chyby, poznat samy sebe, aby rozpoznaly své pravé city. Za svoji trpělivost, odvahu a sílu překonávat překážky kladené společností jsou nakonec všechny hrdinky odměněny sňatkem s mužem, kterého milují.

Vedlejší ženské postavy románů diplomová práce rozdělila do sedmi skupin podle sociálních rolí a charakterových vlastností, kterými se postavy vyznačují, a to

tedy na vdavek chtivé ženy, nevinné mladé sirotky, špatné matky, oddané mladé matky a manželky, dobrosrdečné vdovy, nehezké a chudé staré panny a na snobské ženy. V každé ze spisovatelčinych postav je možno vidět odraz tehdejší společnosti, protože jejich chování a jednání je ovlivňováno a motivováno dobovým společenským systémem a pravidly. Vdavek chtivé ženy jsou většinou postavy z nižších společenských kruhů, které se snaží výhodně se vdát, aby si zajistily finanční podporu, lepší společenské postavení a hlavně dosáhly svého primárního poslání – sňatku, a vyhnuly se tak budoucímu životu v osamění. Navíc téměř všechny pozbývají pevnou morálku a jsou odhodlané dosáhnout svého bez ohledu na následky, které jejich chování přinese. Druhou skupinou jsou nevinné osiřelé dívky, které žijí bez podpory rodičů, jsou (kromě Georgianny Darcyové) nemajetné a nízkého postavení, což je činí oběťmi předsudků a krutého společenského systému. Navíc jejich nevinnost a naivita je často zneužita jinými k dosažení jejich sobeckých cílů. Jane Austenová dále ve svých románech vyobrazila postavy, které selhaly určitým způsobem ve svých rodičovských povinnostech, ať už zanedbávaly výchovu a vzdělávání svých dětí, nestaraly se dostatečně o domácnost, nebo dokonce upřednostňovaly některé své děti před ostatními. Naopak ideál tehdejšího ženství představují v románech především mladé ženy, které jsou dobrými matkami svým dětem, oddanými manželkami svým mužům, výbornými hostitelkami a hospodyněmi svých domácností. Na postavě paní Dashwoodové spisovatelka ukázala problémy a starosti, kterým musely některé ženy čelit, pokud ovdověly, a naopak na bohaté vdově paní Jenningsové ukázala její bezstarostnost a zájem o pomluvy a senzace. Autorka dále vylíčila těžkou situaci chudých neprovdaných žen, která je úzce spojena s jejich sociální závislostí na pomoc a dobrou vůli jiných lidí. V poslední skupině se autorka práce zabývá rozborem snobských a povrchních finančně a společensky dobře zajištěných žen, které se povyšují nad jedince nižšího postavení, trvají na zachování určitého třídního rozdílu a odmítají sociálně nerovné svazky.

Zjištění, kterých bylo v diplomové práci dosaženo, jsou shrnuta v závěru práce.

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