

<p>THE ROLE OF A WOMAN IN THE NOVEL OF ROMANTIC PERIOD</p>		<p>Literature</p> <p>Keywords: Women, Romantic Period, Freedom, etc.</p>
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<p>Mirhat Aliu</p>	<p>Faculty of Philology. The Department of English Language and Literature. University of Tetovo “Fadil Sulejmani”. Tetovo, North Macedonia</p>
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Abstract

Women have a very important role in every aspect of life, and that might be the social aspect, the treatment aspect, the communication aspect, or any other aspect of life. Therefore, in this topic of my choice – I will try to define the importance of a woman in the Romantic Period, including some different opinions from different authors on what specifically they applied in terms of the role of women. I will also try to describe at some very important points about how a woman was treated back in the time of Romantic Period, taking on consideration the novel of Jane Austen about *Pride and Prejudice* – to see the importance and the role of a woman. Also I am going to describe how a woman is treated today, and finally I will give the possibility to elaborate on whether a woman has the freedom to give the free thought and the free speech, and exactly all the questions regarding this issue will be given below.

Introduction

During the last decades–feminist literary criticism has increased and also looks back on the past of literary of Romanticism. Romantic novels sell millions of copies per year, and they are written mainly for sale to women by women. The first stage in the feminist consideration was a sustained critique of the ways in which women where represented in poetry of the male Romantic poets–tandem with a consideration of why it was that there were so few women in the canon itself. Regarding to this question about the importance of gender in understanding Romanticism in general comes up. The big growth in the publishing of Romantic novels started in the middle of 60s when Victoria Hold and Dorothy Eden–began writing books targeted towards women, and mentioning the fact, the books for reading were aimed at men and women that they could read only what about was available to them in the man’s and woman’s world.

There are many authors who describes the success of Romantic novels, and who describes the importance of a woman, and it’s clearly mentioned that nowadays or today’s women are too busy to don a diaphanous, low-cut, or satin dress and seduce her man. Romantic novels provide those ideas that a woman in reality it is very precious for everything, and in this studyI will try to explore the portrayal of a woman. In this study I will try to define how a woman was treated previously back in the time of Romantic period, also how a woman is treated now, and what is important for a woman to do about the own rights, is it needed a woman to fight for the rights and to have a normal life, to live the life exactly how it’s needed – and the broader answer to this question will be defined further.

Feminist literary criticism has been a crucial force of the development of what we now more broadly call “gender studies”. The present work – is to elaborate the importance of a woman and clarify the question about the importance of gender in understanding Romanticism. To do so –

further we will take on consideration of what Jane Austen wanted to bring to the society on her famous novel about *Pride and Prejudice*, where we can clearly see that the importance of a woman it is really described in the novel with a very motivated and clear way.

During the Romantic period – an important thing it was that the society began to debate about the proper role of women, not only were male poets and writers writing about their views of women’s changing role, women were increasingly prolific writers – who were writing about their own thoughts and experiences on the topic. Using language that was easy to understand – the women used their experiences in many cases, and the role of women in society was fiercely debated by writers of the period, including Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria Edgeworth and Mary Darcy – who posited for women to be allowed more rights and autonomy over themselves, while Anna Letitia Barbauld wrote affirmatively in favor of the current social norms.

Fighting to obtain better rights, it is explained that the idea of feminine equality followed logically from the arguments, and women back in the time of Romantic period had no political rights, no enough rights about sharing freedom of the thought, they were limited to a few lowly vocations and were legally nonpersons who lost their property to their husband and marriage and were incapable of instituting an action in the courts of law. Analyzing the social situation, Wollstonecraft argues that without women truly gaining a foundational understanding of the reasons of why they should behave in certain ways, not only was women's development constrained, but the virtue of women was based on training and not on reasoned and rational response. Our effort in this paper will be to conceive clearly and understandably the role of a woman in the Romantic period, including the fact that a woman’s value should be based on everything she is doing in life, as women are very valuable to society and to the people, and if this is to be implemented, then a woman must possess freedom and be given the opportunity of free speech and free thought.

The Importance of a Woman – Romantic Period

Claiming the fact – that improper education was one of the main causes of social dysfunction, Wollstonecraft argues that without a proper education and understanding of the world, women are not able to be the partners that their husbands need and to manage the household effectively and educate the children that they were expected to produce. Furthermore – quoting from Shakespeare to underline this point, it is stated that women spend many of their first years of their lives in acquiring a smattering of accomplishments, meanwhile the strength of body and of mind are sacrificed to notions of beauty, and in order to establish themselves when they marry – they act as such children may be expected to act as it’s needed. Other women writers began to debate this issue – influenced by Wollstonecraft’s writings, a woman in the evolving society, need to be educated. All of the authors who contributed to the discussion of women’s issue came from different backgrounds, had different experiences and perceptions, as well as different levels of education, consequently each had different visions of what social improvement for women would look like. In bringing discussion to the forefront of human consciousness, the

writers mentioned above they succeeded the impact of the society – and as for the debates that would occur in the Victorian Era – this remains a topic under discussion and debate as it impacts the women of the present era over two hundred years later.¹

How should women view themselves and do Romantic novels promote social change? The basic plot for most romantic novels is of a single wealthy woman who becomes involved with an aggressive, self-centered man. Woman usually is minding her own business, and in Romantic novels – a woman is to behave in a set way, when a man enters a room, she is to melt into the background, and she does not voice options or challenges about the man in any way. A woman is intuitive, indecisive and emotional, she cries at the drop of a hat – she is allowed to be aggressive in matters regarding her home or her children, and about a woman it is important to now – that she has to treat her husband with respect and dignity. The man is the aggressor in all matters, including sexuality. Although the man is always a gentleman – in the sense of status, knowing just the right maneuvers to enter a female’s heart. He is shrewd, dominance, yet level-headed in his dealing with others, and that he always has a source of money about coming in from an occupation that it’s not stated. About woman – she is not completed until she has a man to love her, a woman it is described as very physically attractive, emotional who often bursting into tears at the slightest provocation. There is a contradiction in relationship in meanings, because when a woman falls in love, it is lasting forever, and when a man does – it has sexual meaning until he realizes he loves her.²

Females should treat men with the greatest respect and admiration, it is very important to be mentioned the fact that men should treat women with decorum and should open doors, pull out chairs, and control their language around women. In important matters, they are expected to make the decisions because women are unable to decide for themselves. Women are young, beautiful and wealthy. They come from respectable families and their fathers took care of their needs, before the man of their dreams arrived. They had dreams of work and success, women should structure their lives around their home, they learn how to act in a situation that requires dining and entertainments skills, their mothers teach them how to attract a man and give them minimal information regarding reproduction. And when they get married, and consummate their marriages, they are ignorant about sexual matters.

While we are talking about the importance of a woman, it is very effectively to be mentioned the issue why do Romance novels continue to be the best seller and what does this say about the women? With the women’s rights movement of the 60s, we believe that women have made tremendous strides toward bettering their status in society – no longer can women be viewed as passive-dependent creatures subject to the desires of men. One hypothesis is that the woman who writes novels have a conservative perspective themselves, yes, it is hard to be radical when you, yourself believe in the way things are, and this could be due to social conditioning. The

¹ Wollstonecraft – A Vindication of the Rights of Women, 2012, New York, p.208.

² Ibid, p.208.

influence of many years of teaching is hard to escape. A very good example is Kathleen Woodiwiss – a successful romance novelist, a housewife, who began writing novels in her kitchen while her children were in school. In this way – she could definitely fulfill society’s expectations of staying at home. Just by focusing on the role of a woman in the time of Romantic period, we can see that Romance novels allow women to escape boring routines and present a guideline for ideal Romantic behavior. Based on my opinion – nothing could be more boring than to be in a closed-up house all day, and anything to divert attention would be welcome. Men in the novels do not share household responsibilities with their wives, they state they love them, but in reality it is only sexual and emotional feelings and does not involve respect for them as individuals.³

In *Lost Love, Last Love* – Ginny has an aunt who is a spinster and remained unmarried, not because she was asking about a choice – but she refused to give up her business. The working woman is viewed negatively and should instead be at home, letting a man deal with the work world. The potential of romance novels and the authors for changing women’s ideal of themselves, in reality is large, the audience it is also large and the age range is vast, from young teens to old age. If novelist could see the opportunity for education, their readers could benefit. In Romanticism – novels should more accurately reflect the changing value of society. Romance novels as they are today do not promote social change, and they should. One cannot ignore the fact that women’s choice in what they read is their own, but the subtle messages to keep with traditional values should change. More women are working today for their own satisfaction than ever, they are taking control over their own lives and striving for independence. A world of fantasy normally that is enjoyable, and when the fantasy is hard to be separated from reality – then life becomes ambiguous. My suggestion would include a more accurate portrayal of the social reality – than is presently in the books.⁴

The Romantic Period – The Injured Woman

The Romantic period – often defined as beginning in 1780 and ending in 1835, and that was a watershed moment for British women’s writing. The Romantic period – has long been characterized as a time of innovation and change in both literary form and content, as well as a momentous era of new political thought and social upheaval. Novels from 1748 publication of Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa* on reinforced tractable sexuality by arguing that while a woman should not be forced to marry a man she does not love, a virtuous woman should not willingly marry a man of whom her parents or guardians do not approve. Burney’s *Cecilia* and Charlotte Smith’s *Emmeline* – for example are just two well-known novels that make this point clear. Getting women to internalize the tractable sexuality, these novels also teach that married women would be less likely to have affairs potentially resulting in the misrecognition of illegitimate offspring as legitimate. The revolutionary in moving to suppress women’s sexuality and to stress their equal potential for rationality – it is a movement which demonstrates that men and women

³ Wollstonecraft – *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, 2012, New York, p.208 – 212.

⁴ *Ibid*, p.208 – 212.

deserved equal rights. As long as one refers only to widely available novels such as Austen's, Burney's, Edgeworth's and Smith's – it is easy to conclude that however good they may be at forwarding women's rights, women's novels from this era other than Jacobin works, cannot assail the class system, precisely because they revolve around heroines whose chaste behavior ultimately supports the dominant ideology and its basis in the class system. Rules on women's sexual behavior in the 18th century have to be viewed in terms of their relation to a whole set of rules, controlling women's bodies and speech and regulating their actions and public appearances. Rules on women's sexual behavior were thus only part of a tightly interwoven web of female behavior addressed by perspective discourse, in order to conduct books and explicit didactic novels. If the novels published at that time were just to focus on rather than virtually suppress the issue of passion, they would risk valorizing a self-assertive female subjectivity, one at odds with the self-effacing femininity held proper for women at that time. Were they to highlight heroines right to passion and sexuality, that is, they would still invoke that code of behaviors prescribed for women precisely to ensure that they remain tractable in their sexuality, so as the best to operate as reliable conduits for men's property.⁵

In 1791 – Anna Letitia Barbauld protested against the role of women in society in her famous poem “The Rights of Woman.” Long time before the time of feminism in England, Barbauld's poem was a call to action, a woman to strive for her rights, to strive for the free thought, and all matters pertaining to the woman to be free. Barbauld hints at the unfair treatment of women by the British law of the era, she calls for women to claim their rightful equality with men. Classmate Katie Rasmussen comments that in her poetry, Barbauld is writing about the role that women have in society and how that is going to change. Women were very oppressed by academic society during the Romantic period in England. Women also could not expect to be offered an education equal to that of men. If they were given any schooling at all, it was in the areas of study which would make them desirable to suitors. Mary Wollstonecraft thought that many of the intellectual shortcomings she saw in the women of her generation could be an attribution to a false system of education. Wollstonecraft believed that this lack of education available to women, to be a deliberate choice by a patriarchal society in order to keep them subservient thought ignorance.⁶

The inequalities in life are evident in the writings of this era as well. Barbauld's poem “Washing Day” documents the depressing reality, a housewife faced when the time came to do the washing for the household, which week, smooth sliding after week, brings on too soon. Women who beneath the yoke of wedlock bend – must bear many burdens for the sake of their husbands and children facing all the petty miseries of life week after week for their entire lives. Wollstonecraft, like Barbauld – calls out to the women of her generation to assert their rights. Wollstonecraft can be considered to be one of the first British feminists, blaming women

⁵ Clayton – *Romantic Vision and the Novel*, 1987, Cambridge University Press, pp.39-45.

⁶ Simpkins – *The Romantic Novel*, 1994, New York, p.197.

themselves for accepting a second-best position in society as well as blaming men for keeping them there.⁷

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

The famous novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen – it's a very famous novel which is published in 1813, it is a novel which presents the love, the role of a woman, how a woman should be treated and very important points. If we go back in the time of the Victorian period – we will see that women did not have many options, their maximal goal or dream that they expected for their lives was to get married, and if it's possible with a wealthy man in order to have a comfortable life. Marriage was an important thing, and it was based principally in economical arrangements, where unfortunately, a woman did not have a chance to decide for herself. Whereas, in the present days, telling the truth – things have changed a lot, we can freely say that it is not that previous time where women did not have many rights as it is described in the Victorian era – and also where women did not had many options for their life, they were living with limited rights. If we are making a comparison of how a woman was treated in previous periods and how a woman is treated nowadays, there is really a difference. Things have changed a lot, nowadays, fortunately women are living free, they have more rights, and thanks to God they are living the life that they want. While we are talking about the importance of a woman, I just want to ask a question, and I will try to give a concrete answer from myself. Why should a woman have always fewer rights? This in my opinion is wrong, the human rights – whether of a man or a woman, must always be equal, equal rights must always be part of humanity. God created all people equal, and equality in my opinion should always exist, and women should normally have equal rights. There should be no discrimination between people, discrimination – unfortunately brings us to another path, which is not useful thing for humanity, but on the contrary is a very negative thing for the society.

Pride and Prejudice – is based specifically in the early 19th century under the Victorian Age. Even when a female representative was ruling the country, women did not have many options for their lives, they were seen as ideal and they had no legal rights. *Pride and Prejudice* was a novel about how love can go through many awkward, hard and difficult situations and still can win after all – which is reflected in the relationship between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. Jane Austen made people believe that despite of many rules and prejudices of society, there is always something that moves the world – there is always something inside of any human which is pure feeling such as love. Love is like an illusion and it completes the happiness of every human being. However, in this novel it is likely possible to see all the dark side of this male centered society. I had to say likely – because this story is covered with romantic scenes and love illusions, facts that every girl would like, for example in the following quotes, where Mr. Darcy appears like a gentleman that every girl, after all, would be in love with.

⁷ Ibid, p.197.

*“In vain I have struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you.” – Darcy to Elizabeth.*⁸

*“You are too generous to trifle with me. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. My affections and wishes are unchanged, but one word from you will silence me on this subject forever.” – Darcy to Elizabeth.*⁹

Nevertheless, this story was under a male-centered society, where men were the biggest favored, they could choose and take the decisions they wanted, they could earn money and have privileges if their wives were wealthy, they could study and make business and keep being successful. This type of thinking – kept happening even when a queen was in charge of the country. Anyway it is not many time ago that this situation started to change thanks to the bravery of women that wanted a change, but that is definitely another topic in itself.

According to the society in the 19th century, ruled by Queen Victoria, there was a society where appearances and social class were really essential. Many had the real power, there were to classify people thanks to appalling social conditions. As it's possible to notice in the book and in the movies as well, it was everything about impressing the social order with the well being and money you had, in order to form a family and to be considered for the society as somebody important, to gain respect and honor as well. Regarding women, they were seeing as ideal for the most part of society, her bodies were pure and they were labeled as saints, her role was to raise a child, to tend the house and they did not have legal rights, for example a woman could not vote and could not own a property. Talking about marriage – it can be said that it was more an economical arrangement than an institution where love was the principal issue. For many women, to get married it was the salvation and to have a comfortable life thanks to the well being that a husband can provide. *Pride and Prejudice* reflects this situation in Charlotte Lucas case.

*“Happiness in marriage is an entirely a matter of chance. If the dispositions of the parties are ever so well known to each-other or ever so similar beforehand, it does not advance their felicity in the last. They always continue to grow sufficiently unlike afterwards to have their share of vexations – and it's better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life.”*¹⁰

As Charlotte said – marriage was a matter of change, to have a better life, since a woman for itself could not own anything, and in this case we deal with the fact that love was not important as long as you live well and with the acceptance of the society. That is why Mrs. Bennet wanted her girls to get married so soon, since the business of her life was to see all her daughters married. Nevertheless, all the possessions of a woman passed to her husband at the moment to get married. To be more specific – to be a woman was really very difficult at that time, it was a life little better than slavery, to say it in some way. When a woman was married and her husband was wealthy,

⁸ Austen – *Pride and Prejudice*, 1813, England – Hertfordshire and Derbyshire, p.236.

⁹ *Ibid*, p.236.

¹⁰ Austen. *Pride and Prejudice*, 1813, England – Hertfordshire and Derbyshire, p.218.

she had to organize parties to meet new people in order to bring prestige to her husband and her family as well. Those social parties were the opportunity to establish new economical relationships. Another point about women and marriage, it was that they must have certain knowledge in different areas to help and educate children. In addition women in Victorian Era were seen like this:

*“Sweetness is to a woman what sugar is to fruit. It is her first business to be happy – a sunbeam in the house, making others happy. True, she will often have a tear in her eye, but like the bride of young Lochinvar, it must be accompanied with a smile on her lips.”*¹¹

As it is possible to notice in the quotation, women seem to be happy and perfect, but what was happening inside it might be really different, regarding to the phrase she will often have a tear in her eye. Women were really suffering, but in that harsh society – nobody could ever hear them. A woman was expected to be perfect, but what about her life, her decisions, her thinking and her feelings. Nevertheless, not everything was so bad for a woman, because this era led some space to Romanticism in terms of courtships. *Pride and Prejudice* – reflects in its plot, a love story of a wealthy man and a poor woman. People in England are recognized as polite, so courtship was followed by codes. Love was always under moral codes, specific ways to treat people, rules of etiquette and so on. Regarding the rules of etiquette – they were really very strict, and sometimes it seems like people's attitudes were not real, due to the fact that there were so many rules that you better do not know if they are serious or they are playing courtship. Consequently, a woman plays the role of being perfect and pure.

Talking about female characters of the novel and their relation with the role of woman in the society of 19th century, there are lots of things that can be discussed. Regarding Elizabeth Bennet, she was the main character of *Pride and Prejudice*, in my opinion, she is the bravest one. She did not mind what to say in order to express herself. She and her sister were under the pressure of her mother in terms of seeking a husband. Elizabeth understood all the stress and difficulty of her family if she did not find a husband, but despite of all the facts, she disagreed to go against her feelings, she wanted to be happy after all. When Elizabeth did not want to get married with Mr. Collins, her mother was so angry and disappointed of her, due to the fact that being single was a totally social disapproval. If a man was a single, it was not seen so badly as a woman single. At least, a man could raise a business and find a wife so easily, but a single woman did not have many options.

Regarding this fact – she was not worried about this issue, but her mother definitely was. On the other hand, Charlotte Lucas – who was Elizabeth's best friend, was also worried about being single. Marriage was seen as an opportunity, and she was conscious about the little options she had at her age. Saying the truth, Elizabeth wasn't in love with Mr. Collins, but she knew that in some way love may come after some events, as long as she has a comfortable life and to feel accepted by the harsh society as well. She was very poor, and sometimes we might feel that in

¹¹ Ibid, p.218.

these novels the point everything is about love, and actually it is, because if one woman can be treated and loved with respect, that woman can gain power to be happy.¹²

Women could stay single, but only those who were very wealthy. Lady Catherine – is another character in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, she was not single, but she was alone. Her husband died leaving her with a daughter. In the case if Lady Catherine was a poor woman, all her possessions would have been under a man hands. She was very powerful and wealthy, and this is the fact that allowed her to be totally independent, and this thing was acceptable for the society, due to the fact of her social position. Everybody was worried about pleasing her, just take an example the behavior of Mr. Collins, and by the way – we do not have to forget that Lady Catherine was also arranging a marriage between her daughter and Mr. Darcy. In the case marriage was not about love, it was just an economical relationship, just an arrangement. Nevertheless, Lady Catherine when she knew about Elizabeth and her relationship with which she wanted her daughter to get married Mr. Darcy, she was so angry, because of the fact that Lady Catherine had the knowledge of the economical situation of Bennet family, and this case leads us that Elizabeth was interested just in money and to save her life economically, just to say it in some way. Do not forget that Lady Catherine belonged to the upper class, where social standing and appearances were truly important.¹³

If we talk about appearances – it is essential then to mention Mrs. Bennet and Miss Bingley. Unfortunately, the role of many women was to be accepted by the society no matter how. In the case of Mrs. Bennet, she was always faking being in some way educated and intelligent. She was very silly with her acting, she used to say to her daughter to act naturally, but that was all a false statement, it was just to impress Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy. It's important to know that Mrs. Bennet had the need to show herself and her family as a probable and a noble choice for wealthy men in order to arrange marriages. According to Miss Bingley, she was very snobby, always worried about her image, her social standing and her prestige. She did not like the idea to be linked with people from middle class. This attitude toward life, and the fact of impressing was really superficial, she was not real at all if we compared her with Elizabeth Bennet, at least Lizzy was real. This behavior in women in 19th century was very common. Situations were demanding a lot of rules codes and etiquette, fake and superficiality.¹⁴

Another topic which was very vital – was the honor to the family. Marriage was an important issue – it was the base of the society at that time. The case of the younger daughter of Bennet's family – Lydia Bennet was the woman who escapes with a man without being married. She committed a mistake that was very horrifying to her family, and she run off with Wickham. Since the English civilization was all male-centered, men could do anything they wanted, they could have many affairs of being free, just as simple as that. However, if a young girl acted like

¹² Oliviera – *The Role of the Woman in the Family and Society in the Novel Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, 2007, Franca – University De Franca, pp.35-50.

¹³ Ibid, pp.35-50.

¹⁴ Ibid, pp.35-50.

Lydia did, that fact would bring many bad consequences to her family. Bennet's family would have lost the prestige at all, if people would know that one of the daughters escape with a man. Nowadays, that situation would no matter, because people's minds have changed. While we are talking about the famous novel of Jane Austen about *Pride and Prejudice* – we should not forget to mention and about Jane Bennet, an ideal woman, she was respectful, very beautiful and she had grace.

Although Jane belonged to a middle class family, she never made a mistake that put into risk her family's prestige. She was in love with Mr. Bingley, a marriage which was seen for most of the people as something economical, but they really were in love. Jane's attitude towards life represented the Romanticism that women lived in that era, even more if they were into a courtship. Although Jane as well as Elizabeth knew about the real intentions of her silly and snobby mother, she was real. She was in love at least with the person that it's mentioned, she was very lucky to be engaged and to be married later with a wealthy man – Mrs. Bingley. Finally, when Mrs. Bennet was informed about this situation, she was very pleased, because in some way she and her family were and will be safe.¹⁵

As for the conclusion, *Pride and Prejudice* reflected the English society during Victorian ages. Saying the truth – money used to rule the world, in terms of shaping and labeling people into social classes. Appearances were really essential at the moment to establish different kinds of relationships. As a male-centered society, women were the basis of the family, but they did not have voice or vote. Her options were pretty limited by the rules code imposed by the people. Role of women were really different as we can notice actually, they were pure but with no rights. Life seemed to be really unfair to them and that was what Jane Austen wanted us to think about. Even when *Pride and Prejudice* was a novel about love – and how it can go through many barriers, women had a very poor role. During the novel and the story revealed, we can see women that are single, married, powerful and poor. All of them had something in common – we can see that for women was very difficult to face life in general. Sometimes society and codes restricted them to be real and to fight for a fair life. Jane Austen – in some way also showed how false people are, especially when they tried to impress and to be accepted by the harsh English society, in order to have a comfortable and happy life. This is the novel that makes us think about women situation in nowadays, normally that things have changed a lot, nowadays one woman have more rights. However, nobody said that being a woman was easy, but it is likable how they face life, taking on consideration all the difficulties that life brought to them.

The Role of Women in the Nineteenth century and their Portrayal in the Novel

To say the truth – women today are almost equal as men. Women in the 19th century did not have the same opportunity, as they have nowadays. They had just few rights, which contributed to the rise of the women's rights and the suffrage movement thanks to which changes

¹⁵ Ross – *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, 2003, New Brunswick – Rutgers, p.44.

occurred in the course of the 19th century – when they gained some rights with regard to marriage and voting. To understand their position better, it is necessary to point out that women, once married, did not have any possession. Everything they owned – became their husband’s possession. This was due to the laws in Britain that were based on the idea that women would get married and that their husbands would care of them. If a woman worked after marriage, her earning also belonged to her husband. If we take a closer look at the position of women, we will see that it is obvious that they were subordinated to men. The only role they were obliged to play – was that of a wife and a mother, especially when it comes to women of the upper class. Since women did not have to work, their only duty was to give birth to their children and to obey their husband. Consequently, it does not surprise that the only things we know of them are usually their names, the dates of their marriages and the number of children they bore. However, women of the 19th century were to some extent in a better position than those before them, they had some leisure, and they had some education. It was no longer the exception for women of the middle and upper classes to choose their own husbands. And it is significant that of the four great women novelists – Jane Austen, Emily Bronte, Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot, any of them did not had a child. As it is stated – women in the 19th century had some education, though not in today’s form. They were educated from books that were at first read to them by their mothers, until they were taught to read. Austen alludes to this many times in *Pride and Prejudice*. When Lady Catherine asks Elizabeth about her education, she says: “We never had a governess”, but their parents still made it possible for them to get an education. Such of us as wished to learn never wanted the means. We were always encouraged to read, and had all the masters that were necessary. Those who choose to be idle certainly might.¹⁶

According to Armstrong, women are the weaker sex by laws of nature, so what eventually determined their social role are probably their physical and psychological differences. They are responsible for making men political and women domestic rather than the other way around, and both therefore acquired identity on the basis of personal qualities that had formerly determined female nature alone. Due to their sensibility and sensitivity – women were perceived as better in housework than men. Nevertheless, Armstrong refers to another important point where men were no longer political creatures so much as they were products of desire and producers of domestic life. As gender came to mark the most important difference among individuals, men were still men and women still women, of course, but the difference between male and female was understood in terms of their respective qualities of mind.¹⁷ As well as in fiction, in the 19th century real life women were much more respected if they were more sensible than others. If we take *Pride and Prejudice* as an example of a realistic depiction of the society of that time, it is clear that those women who acted in accordance with their sense were more appreciated in the society. For example, because of her common sense – Elizabeth did not let herself to be fooled by some characters and she acted the way she thought was the best. With such traits as the brightness of her

¹⁶ Dorothy and Hale – *Women and Fiction*, 2006, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp.120-135.

¹⁷ Armstrong – *The Politics of Domesticating Culture, Then and Now*, 2006, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp.70-105.

mind and sensibility, she is much esteemed by others. Also, during the course of the 19th century – women were becoming more and more recognized as writers. This was a huge step toward, even if many of them had published under pseudonyms, because earlier in history they were not allowed to publish any kind of literary forms. If one tries to analyze the role of women in the novel, it can be seen that it is compatible with the ones previously described. Most of the female characters in the novel – suit their role of a mother and a wife. However, they had one important role – they were in charge of the house and property. They were responsible for the furniture and housekeeping, except when they had servants. Although they did not have their own possession once they got married, they were mistresses of the household and besides being a mother and a wife – it was their most important role.¹⁸

Conclusion

As for the conclusion part, having in mind the topic chosen - I would like to emphasize that in everyday life women possess a very important role in every aspect of life. A woman should be treated with special and exemplary respect. If we consider the role of a wife in marriage, we will see and we will be convinced with what things and with what sacrifices she faces to make the marriage work as it should. She tries to take care of the husband and of the household things, and if in their marriage God gives them children, she tries to take care of them and trying to show what is the right path of life and many other important things. Women in the romantic period as can be seen have not been treated as it should. They have not had the right let alone to vote, or to get a proper education, or, I can say they have not the right to give the free thought for example with whom she wants to marry. In the Romantic period, parents married their daughters to men who were wealthy and who had high estates. They did not take into consideration the other fact which is about love. In my opinion a woman should marry a man she loves, and not a man who has a great fortune. The great fortune can't bring happiness, happiness is built by love. Thankfully things have changed, thankfully things don't work out the way they did in the Romantic period, women today have more freedom, more rights, more freedom to make a living they way they want, and the most important thing is that they have the freedom to do an education and which is a very useful thing both for themselves and for society. If we take as an example the well-known novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, we will see how women should be treated. Austen emphasized in her famous novel what rights belong to a woman, she also showed how much value a woman contains and that the woman will always have the precious and special value even if she does not have all the rights. Without expanding further in terms of the conclusion part, I would like to add that since we as society would like to have a positive existence among humanity, let us make an effort for the woman to possess the rights, let us strive for equality to be between man and woman, since people in this world were born equal and will die equal. Discrimination and racism since they are negative things and lead us to the negativity, let us try not to discriminate against women, but to try the equality to be part between people.

¹⁸ Ibid, pp.70-105.

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