

A Comparison of Approaches to the Past in George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* and Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*

Aneta Šebáková

Bachelor's thesis
2019



Tomas Bata University in Zlín
Faculty of Humanities

Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně
Fakulta humanitních studií
Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur
akademický rok: 2018/2019

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **Aneta Šebáková**
Osobní číslo: **H16851**
Studijní program: **B7310 Filologie**
Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro manažerskou praxi**
Forma studia: **prezenční**

Téma práce: **Srovnání přístupů k minulosti v románech *Červený mlýn* George Eliota a *Sestřička Carrie* Theodora Dreisera**

Zásady pro vypracování:

Shromáždění odborné literatury
Studium vybrané literatury
Formulace cílů práce
Analýza vybraných děl v souladu s cíli práce
Shrnutí a formulace závěrů práce

Rozsah bakalářské práce:

Rozsah příloh:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam odborné literatury:

Amigoni, David. Victorian Literature. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011.

Dreiser, Theodore. Sister Carrie. London: Penguin Books, 1995.

Eliot, George. The Mill on the Floss. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995.

Gogol, Miriam. Theodore Dreiser: Beyond Naturalism. New York: New York University Press, 1995.

Jedrzejewski, Jan. George Eliot. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2007.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Ewald Mengel
Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

Datum zadání bakalářské práce:

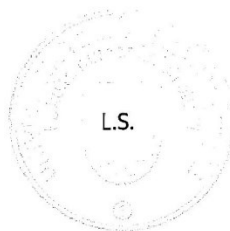
9. listopadu 2018

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce:

3. května 2019

Ve Zlíně dne 22. ledna 2019

doc. Ing. Anežka Lengálová, Ph.D.
děkanka



Mgr. Libor Marek, Ph.D.
ředitel ústavu

PROHLÁŠENÍ AUTORA BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Beru na vědomí, že

- odevzdáním bakalářské práce souhlasím se zveřejněním své práce podle zákona č. 111/1998 Sb. o vysokých školách a o změně a doplnění dalších zákonů (zákon o vysokých školách), ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, bez ohledu na výsledek obhajoby ¹⁾;
- beru na vědomí, že bakalářská práce bude uložena v elektronické podobě v univerzitním informačním systému dostupná k nahlédnutí;
- na moji bakalářskou práci se plně vztahuje zákon č. 121/2000 Sb. o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon) ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, zejm. § 35 odst. 3 ²⁾;
- podle § 60 ³⁾ odst. 1 autorského zákona má UTB ve Zlíně právo na uzavření licenční smlouvy o užití školního díla v rozsahu § 12 odst. 4 autorského zákona;
- podle § 60 ³⁾ odst. 2 a 3 mohu užít své dílo – bakalářskou práci - nebo poskytnout licenci k jejímu využití jen s předchozím písemným souhlasem Univerzity Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně, která je oprávněna v takovém případě ode mne požadovat přiměřený příspěvek na úhradu nákladů, které byly Univerzitou Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně na vytvoření díla vynaloženy (až do jejich skutečné výše);
- pokud bylo k vypracování bakalářské práce využito softwaru poskytnutého Univerzitou Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně nebo jinými subjekty pouze ke studijním a výzkumným účelům (tj. k nekomerčnímu využití), nelze výsledky bakalářské práce využít ke komerčním účelům.

Prohlašuji, že

- elektronická a tištěná verze bakalářské práce jsou totožné;
- na bakalářské práci jsem pracoval samostatně a použitou literaturu jsem citoval. V případě publikace výsledků budu uveden jako spoluautor.

Ve Zlíně 30.4.2019

1) zákon č. 111/1998 Sb. o vysokých školách a o změně a doplnění dalších zákonů (zákon o vysokých školách), ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, § 47b Zveřejňování závěrečných prací:

(1) Vysoká škola nevydělečně zveřejňuje disertační, diplomové, bakalářské a rigorózní práce, u kterých proběhla obhajoba, včetně posudků oponentů a výsledku obhajoby prostřednictvím databáze kvalifikačních prací, kterou spravuje. Způsob zveřejnění stanoví vnitřní předpis vysoké školy.

(2) Disertační, diplomové, bakalářské a rigorózní práce odevzdané uchazečem k obhajobě musí být též nejméně pět pracovních dnů před konáním obhajoby zveřejněny k nahlížení veřejnosti v místě určeném vnitřním předpisem vysoké školy nebo není-li tak určeno, v místě pracoviště vysoké školy, kde se má konat obhajoba práce. Každý si může ze zveřejněné práce pořizovat na své náklady výpisy, opisy nebo rozmnoženiny.

(3) Platí, že odevzdáním práce autor souhlasí se zveřejněním své práce podle tohoto zákona, bez ohledu na výsledek obhajoby.

2) zákon č. 121/2000 Sb. o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon) ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, § 35 odst. 3:

(3) Do práva autorského také nezasahuje škola nebo školské či vzdělávací zařízení, užije-li nikoli za účelem přímého nebo nepřímého hospodářského nebo obchodního prospěchu k výuce nebo k vlastní potřebě dílo vytvořené žákem nebo studentem ke splnění školních nebo studijních povinností vyplývajících z jeho právního vztahu ke škole nebo školskému či vzdělávacímu zařízení (školní dílo).

3) zákon č. 121/2000 Sb. o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon) ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, § 60 Školní dílo:

(1) Škola nebo školské či vzdělávací zařízení mají za obvyklých podmínek právo na uzavření licenční smlouvy o užití školního díla (§ 35 odst.

3). Opírá-li autor takového díla udělit svolení bez vážného důvodu, mohou se tyto osoby domáhat nahrazení chybějícího projevu jeho vůle u soudu. Ustanovení § 35 odst. 3 zůstává nedotčeno.

(2) Není-li sjednáno jinak, může autor školního díla své dílo užít či poskytnout jinému licenci, není-li to v rozporu s oprávněnými zájmy školy nebo školského či vzdělávacího zařízení.

(3) Škola nebo školské či vzdělávací zařízení jsou oprávněny požadovat, aby jim autor školního díla z výdělku jim dosaženého v souvislosti s užitím díla či poskytnutím licence podle odstavce 2 přiměřeně přispěl na úhradu nákladů, které na vytvoření díla vynaložily, a to podle okolností až do jejich skutečné výše; přitom se přihlédne k výši výdělku dosaženého školou nebo školským či vzdělávacím zařízením z užití školního díla podle odstavce 1.

ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá romány *Červený mlýn* George Eliota a *Sestřička Carrie* Theodora Dreisera s cílem porovnat hlavní hrdinky, které mají rozdílné přístupy ke své minulosti a kořenům. Tato práce představuje podrobnou analýzu vybraných děl, která je založena na kořenech hrdinek a snaží se porovnat anglickou a americkou kulturu a jejich vliv na hodnoty jednotlivých postav. Práce vybírá stěžejní momenty jejich životů, které ovlivňují vztah těchto žen ke své vlastní historii.

Klíčová slova: George Eliot, Theodore Dreiser, *Červený mlýn*, *Sestřička Carrie*, viktoriánská éra, pozlacený věk, minulost, rodina, mravnost, hodnoty, materialismus, americký sen, identita

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis deals with the novels *The Mill on the Floss* by George Eliot and *Sister Carrie* by Theodore Dreiser with aim to compare their two heroines, who have different approaches to their own past and roots. The thesis provides a detailed analysis of the selected novels, which is also based on the two protagonist's roots, and looks to compare English and American cultures and their influences on each character's values. The work gives key moments of their lives that influence their attitude to their own history.

Keywords: George Eliot, Theodore Dreiser, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Sister Carrie*, Victorian era, Gilded Age, past, family, morality, values, materialism, The American Dream, identity

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Ewald Mengel, for his willingness to guide me during the process of writing this thesis. Also, I would like to thank my family and boyfriend for their love and support.

I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's/Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	9
1 VICTORIAN ERA.....	11
1.1 GEORGE ELIOT AS REALIST WRITER	12
2 THE GILDED AGE	14
2.1 THEODORE DREISER AS NATURALIST WRITER	15
2.2 THE AMERICAN DREAM	16
3 THE MILL ON THE FLOSS.....	17
3.1 MORAL DILEMMA.....	21
3.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PAST	22
4 SISTER CARRIE.....	24
4.1 MORAL BLINDNESS	26
4.2 THE AMERICAN DREAM	28
5 THE COMPARISON OF MAGGIE AND CARRIE.....	29
CONCLUSION	33
BIBLIOGRAPHY	34

INTRODUCTION

The protagonist of the first novel, *The Mill on the Floss*, is headstrong Maggie Tulliver – a young woman, who does not meet the ideal of a woman at the time of the Victorian age. Middle-class women of this era have clear responsibilities. Once married, the central woman's role is to be a housewife, but Maggie is not able to fit in with such an environment. She can be described as a rebellious angel – 'the angel in the house' as well as a rebel against the image of the Victorian angel. Throughout the novel, Maggie comes into conflict with British moral principles. Despite following her own interests she submits to her family's wishes and sticks to her roots in the end. The novel describes Maggie's sense of morality which is deeply rooted in her family and local community.

As a realist writer, Mary Anne Evans, under the pseudonym George Eliot, portrays the struggle for identity in focussing on a moral choice. Although the author advocates the moral basis of realism, that people should accept the imperfect, real state of an individual, she still believes in the importance of the development of humility and morality.¹ She presents the character and setting in real pictures, as best she can and knows. The protagonist of the novel *Sister Carrie* chooses a different direction. The only way to realize her own desires is leaving her family and local society behind, as Carrie had left her own family.

This second novel, *Sister Carrie* openly describes living a life without any moral codes. While leaving her hometown, unsophisticated Carrie Meeber does not seem to be sad in leaving her own family. The author refers to Carrie's parents only once, which may indicate Carrie attributing a lack of importance to her family. She closes this chapter of her life irretrievably and is determined to never come back. She is able to achieve her goal of the 'American Dream', but success does not look like that which she had anticipated before the start of her journey; she discovers that fame and wealth cannot bring her happiness.

As for *Sister Carrie*, it is considered to be an important text when examining naturalism. The naturalism here carries the realism of the novel a step further. People cannot be held morally responsible for their actions in cases where the circumstances are beyond their control. The protagonist's actions are simply the outcome of outside influences, as they are stuck between their own instincts and remain unpunished for their actions against morality. Dreiser replaces the Victorian notion of duty with a real-life context. He also points out that a realistic

¹ Lehan, Richard Daniel, *Realism and Naturalism: The Novel in an Age of Transition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 7.

opportunity and an emotional condition can easily subdue moral responsibility. Usually, his heroines have two types of identities. The first one is received during childhood and shapes the given individual. This kind of identity is inapplicable to Carrie and causes her moral blindness, which allows her to easily discard the past. The second identity is achieved during a lifetime. In this case, Carrie achieves many new identities throughout the novel.

Regarding the cultural context, Theodore Dreiser explores and describes a typically American culture, which rose from a recent past. Because America was originally a British colony, its own history only dates back to the early seventeenth century. One of the cornerstones of American culture is the 'American Dream': the ideal that every human being can achieve prosperity regardless of their origin. In relation to the Gilded Age, Dreiser describes the made-up belief that things are "golden" on the surface but underneath they show their reality. As such, he questions whether people can really achieve happiness from the 'American Dream'. In comparison, George Eliot mirrors British society and culture, whose history is much longer. British society has been established for hundreds and hundreds of years. Both authors and protagonists respect different values and traditions based on the history of their own nation, in also reflecting their respective approaches to the past.

1 VICTORIAN ERA

The Victorian period, or Queen Victoria's reign, lasted from 1837 until 1901. The first years of Victoria's rule were remarkable for their social and political issues, and in particular in relation to the changes connected with industrialization. Due to the transformation triggered by the Industrial Revolution, Britain became the world's most important power. Although industry made Britain rich, wealth was not collective nor evenly dispersed.²

Socially, Victorian society was very differentiated. Generally, society was divided into three social classes: working, middle and upper class. These classes differed from each other in many ways, including lifestyle, habits, education, religion, and values. The most prestigious position in society was held by members of the upper class, and thus, largely by aristocrats. During the nineteenth century, the composition of individual classes changed and the best aristocratic position could now be sometimes overshadowed by the achievements of a middle-class citizen. The Victorian period brought about the rise of middle society. Significant differences also existed within each social status. Besides class, differences were also determined by gender.³

Middle-class men were distinguished by the fact, that they worked in order to feed their families, but they seldom demeaned themselves for undertaking this manual labour. The lower middle classes began to grow rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century. Through more accessible education, most of them could move into the upper parts of social hierarchy and occupy the positions of clerks and traders. Women didn't usually have their own incomes, but they were dependent on their husbands. Even knowledge was considered to be a key to power, and therefore was only allowed in the hands of men. Women were only able to handle all household duties. While wives were bringing up their children and leading the household, men accepted the highest position of authority within the family as the breadwinners.⁴

Ideologically, the middle-class home and family represented the essence of morality, stability and comfort. The husband had legal and economic control over his wife, children, and servants. The family depended on his income. The children remained dutiful and subordinate. Boys, who needed extended schooling to reproduce their parents' style of life, were under their father's authority until they had enough training

² Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1996), 5–6.

³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 155–156.

and experience to make their own way in the world. Girls were not expected to „make their own way“- with a very few exceptions, they stayed at home unless or until they married.⁵

With regard to the Victorian era, family was the major institution of society. Queen Victoria herself supported the idea of a large home environment and socially acceptable moral values. Often, unmarried relatives or servants remained part of the family unit as well. This model was adopted by members of the middle class. They spent a lot of time at home, more than any other social classes, and therefore moved from the cities to the suburbs to live in quieter surroundings. Their children were obedient and dedicated to supporting and caring for their parents. Children's education was a valuable means of improving the position of the whole family within society.⁶

1.1 George Eliot as Realist Writer

Mary Anne Evans, or 'George Eliot', was born on 22 November 1819 in a country house in the Warwickshire Midlands of England. This vibrant countryside was vitally important to her imagination and writing. From a rather modest and religious background, she became one of the most esteemed novelists of the time. She grew up as a middle-class citizen, and therefore focused mainly on middle-class contexts in her novels.⁷

As opposed to romantic fiction, realism presents reality as it seems in a certain moment in time. When applied to Mary Anne Evans and other Victorian writers' works, the term 'realism' is understood in a limited sense. The English realism of the nineteenth century was primarily moral. Even Mary Anne Evans did not approach the exploration of human nature with objectivity, as in the case of French realists and naturalists. She had no doubt that virtue itself was a reward and happiness was a reward for devotion and altruism. Her realism reflects normal English society, in which worldly interests prevail and characters are portrayed to show a mixture good and evil.⁸

As a realist, Eliot mainly puts an emphasis on the importance of the individual, who usually belongs to the middle or working-class. Her storylines are grounded entirely within the depiction of a character and are limited to the rendition and development of the individual.

⁵ Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1996), 142.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Jan Jędrzejewski, *George Eliot* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2007), 2.

⁸ Andrew Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 233–238.

Her novels are often called ‘family’ novels, preferring the subject of everyday life, rather than social and cultural topics. This reflects the dominance of family in the Victorian era. She is more interested in the emotions, centred in the character’s home and at the same time, social aspects are inseparably linked to the private ones. In her works, she also evokes the pursuit of a determined and serious soul and tries to apply her understanding of moral philosophy in accordance with Positivism – a significant philosophical movement started in France by the sociologist and knowledge-seeker Auguste Comte. Eliot’s motivating interest in Positivism is mainly on an ethical basis.⁹

In her ethically driven approach, the author displays a strong sense of progression within moral life. According to her moral philosophy, there are irrefutable laws and principles inside and outside of any person. Controlling these habits is morality, whereas the development of humility conversely becomes religious.¹⁰ Eliot is also interested in the theological and philosophical thinking of the Victorian era and focuses on the analysis of the theme of heredity. She was deeply aware of her responsibility to her female readers and young people of both genders.

Concerning the novel *The Mill on the Floss*, there is an inevitability of autobiographical parts in the novel. They are recollections of the writer’s past. She throws herself frankly into Maggie’s position and gives her joys and sorrows. Both women have a sharp intellect, a desire for education and a longing for beauty. From childhood, they have always been excited about learning. After the death of Eliot’s mother, she had to manage the household as well as educating herself. Poor education was a huge problem for her. Both women were born in the small-minded and backward middle class of their respective culture. Maggie dies at the age of nineteen, whereas Eliot lived a fruitful life until her sixties. Except for this difference, there are a number of similarities between them. The father-daughter relationship and the brother-sister bond are directly connected with Eliot’s own life, and the novel shows strong traces of her youth in rural England.¹¹

⁹ Andrew Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 233–238.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Jan Jdrzejewski, *George Eliot* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2007), 101.

2 THE GILDED AGE

The Gilded Age (1870-1900) can be characterized by its technological progress, big business, mass immigration, rapid growth of urban centres but also its inherent rising inequality. The growth of cities helped the development of public transport as more and more people moved to the big cities to find work in the factories. Many towns grew because of their proximity to canals, lakes, rivers, and also railroads. Altogether the number of Americans living in the cities rose from 10 to 54 million from 1870. With the help of railroads, Chicago also grew in size. Between 1870 and 1890, Chicago's population increased from 300,000 to more than a million. Chicago World's Columbia Exposition of 1893 also took place, for which new skyscrapers were created, demonstrating the huge scale of technological progress in America. At the end of the nineteenth century, cities were overcrowded because of this exponential growth and the government wasn't able to solve the problems of poverty, mass waste and a lack of drinking water. This led to a deterioration in the quality of urban environments. Besides, the rapid industrialization and urbanization at the turn of the century had a major impact on both the working and middle classes, and created extremes of poverty and wealth.¹² The working-class faced poverty directly and experienced harsh working conditions. Long hours, low wages and higher accident rates were common. Most workers in the factories worked as many as twelve hours a day up to six days a week. Furthermore, women workers had even sterner working conditions.¹³

During this period, many American women were still expected to be married and have children, however, this expectation differed according to race, social class or region. The Southern, rural and frontier women were more likely to have children earlier than their northeastern counterparts. Nevertheless, the overall national birthrate declined as the century moved forward. In 1800, to have seven children was common, while in 1900, each woman had an average of four to five children. However not all women were married, and for the first time in American history, women gave up marriages, either voluntarily or under certain circumstances.¹⁴

¹² James M. Volo and Dorothy Denneen Volo, *Family Life in 19th-Century America* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), 5–6.

¹³ Charles William Calhoun, *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 58.

¹⁴ Tiffany K. Wayne, *Women's Roles in Nineteenth-century America* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), 1–6.

2.1 Theodore Dreiser as Naturalist Writer

Theodore Dreiser was born on 27 August 1871 in Terre Haute, Indiana. He grew up in a poor family, as one of thirteen children. At the age of 15, he moved to Chicago to work. As an ‘outsider’, young Dreiser searched for success and social status, which his own parents never had. He was a journalist and an observer of American society, which at the time was divided into two separate groups of people: the wealthy and the poor. He focused on offering authentic portrayals of working-class people, and perceived poverty from his own perspective and experience. In his novels, it is possible to see his own life through his characters.¹⁵

One of the contrasts between realism and naturalism is the naturalist “observing” life rather than moralizing it. Dreiser worshiped ‘success’ but wanted to present an environment where people’s survival does not depend on their possessions. His novels reflect the era he lived in. For this reason, his characters are in pursuit of wealth. As regards naturalism, the movement is clearly bound to pessimistic determinism, which sees the individual as helpless and hopeless. It rose in an era producing a huge amount of cheap labor and a high unemployment rate. The novel *Sister Carrie* represents such a pessimistic view. People’s instincts drive them to actions they cannot understand. He demonstrates the outside forces which shape characters’ lives, and believes human morality is based on physiological and sociological desires.¹⁶

In relation to *Sister Carrie*, Carrie’s first lover, Drouet, who works as a travelling salesperson, represents a new prototype for the ideal American man. Carrie is attracted to his fancy clothes, good manners and social prospects, while she is even more seduced by Chicago itself. In the Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, Henry Blake Fuller published his realist Chicago novel *The Cliff-Dwellers* which is set in this skyscraper town where “all its citizens have come for the one common, avowed object of making money. Chicago was not only the frontier city of the past but the commercial megalopolis of the future”. Dreiser considered Fuller as one of the significant contributors to the genre of the American city novel and

¹⁵ Jerome Loving, *The Last Titan: A Life of Theodore Dreiser* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2005), 1–3.

¹⁶ Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro, *Naturalism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 15–18.

Dreiser's novel's was influenced by him in his choice of modern Chicago. Here, the material world replaces traditional moral and social beliefs.¹⁷

He also defies American culture's stereotype of the "working girl" and creates female characters who would strive for their own goals and succeed in obtaining them. Although Carrie is able to accomplish the American Dream, it does not bring her happiness.

2.2 The American Dream

The term "American Dream" emerged throughout the eighteenth century and is one of the key principles of American culture. Its concept, however, dates back to the seventeenth century, when Puritans unintentionally created this idea of the chosen nation. John Winthrop, in his sermon, did not use the exact phrase, but proclaimed America as a land where all can prosper through hard work. This belief represents life in a land, in which success, opportunity and equality are achievable for every human being, and refers to a dream of social order.¹⁸

In relation to Dreiser, Andrew Hook states:

For Dreiser in 1900 the only dream is the dream of survival and success in the land of opportunity, the only reality, the bustling streets of Chicago and New York, the America that is the product of the rapid and ruthless economic expansion which, by the end of the nineteenth century, had indeed transformed the American world.¹⁹

¹⁷ Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury, *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 242.

¹⁸ Lawrence R. Samuel, *The American Dream: A Cultural History* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2012) 8.

¹⁹ Andrew Hook, *American Literature in Context: 1865-1900* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2016), 202.

3 *THE MILL ON THE FLOSS*

The action of the novel is set between 1829 and 1839, and takes place in and around St Ogg's, at Dorlcote Mill. The plot develops gradually and observes Maggie and Tom Tulliver in both their childhood and adulthood. During the happy early years of their lives, occasionally interrupted by ordinary events of family life and school, it comes to a sudden situation, when their father goes bankrupt. He has to be satisfied with the position of the manager of the mill now. The lawyer Wakem, under whose control is now their possession, offers him this post. This situation has a great impact on Tulliver's family, and thus, Mr Tulliver's children, Tom and Maggie.

Regarding the nature of the protagonist of the novel, Maggie Tulliver, she is an extremely smart girl who loves books and music, and yields to the customs and traditions of her local community. She resembles her own father, who is also lively, impulsive and contemptuous of the convention like his 'wench', as he usually calls his daughter.²⁰ Maggie's outstanding cleverness shows the difference between herself and her own family. During her young uneducated years, she does not even use the local dialect. These features help to separate her personality from the rest of her family members. She differs in the emotions, behaviour and a growth mindset.

According to the community, which includes her own parents, relatives and people of St. Ogg's, Maggie's personality has many incompatible features, and therefore she gets easily into the conflict with these people. The population of the St. Ogg's inhabits common mentality.

The mind of St. Ogg's did not look extensively before or after. It inherited a long past without thinking of it and had no eyes for the spirits that walk the streets.²¹

Maggie is aware of herself as well as the local community's customs. These duties, which are based on firm thoughts, bother her nature. She is not able to fit in with the local environment. In terms of her temperament and the limitations of the gender, which are imposed by society and supported by her family as well, she refuses to adapt to the expectations of the community. Even her own brother, Tom, is convinced about this dissimilarity between men and women. When young Maggie wants to give her brother

²⁰ George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995), 15.

²¹ *Ibid*, 104.

money for dead rabbits, Tom does not want her money because she is only a girl, and as a future man, he will have more money than her.²²

Maggie yearns for knowledge and exceeds the intellectual ambitions of all her family members. She is an intelligent girl, who is born at a time when being a smart woman is considered to be ridiculous. Moreover, the darkness of her skin, hair and eyes causes her becoming a victim of discrimination. Maggie herself realizes that her own family often compares her to the Roma, which is considered to be a lower group of society.

Concerning her parents, her own mother despises her forgetfulness and disorder. Her own father is proud of her being so smart but also expects the bad outcome of his daughter's future. Mr Tulliver regrets the fact that his daughter is the most intelligent person of their family, he would prefer Tom's cleverness to hers. When Mr Riley visits the family and discusses Tom's education with Mr Tulliver, their father states a problem, and at the same time, it is evident that he is proud of Maggie's intellect.

A woman's no business wi' being so clever; it'll turn to trouble, I doubt. But, bless you! She'll read the books and understand 'em better nor half the folks as are growed up.²³

The middle-class ideal woman highlights marriage, domestic life and music education. In the novel, women often do not go to school at all. Only in wealthy families, they do have private tutors who teach them music, painting and drawing.²⁴ Once, when Tom wants to go to school, Maggie is not allowed to go with him. She goes to her bedroom, picks up a voodoo doll and scratches the toy with her nails while imagining those who bother her. It indicates that the others limit her in things which are self-evident for her, and she wants to develop her abilities through a love of learning. After a while, she stops crying and waits for Tom because she loves him, and her love conquers the rage. This situation also describes the difference between women and men. As a woman, she has clearly lower position in society. Even though she is more talented than Tom, he despises her. From the beginning of their story, she differs from Tom in her yearning for something new and unknown. It can be clearly shown in her visit of a gypsy camp, but once she is there, she wants to go home to her loved ones.

²² George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995), 30.

²³ *Ibid*, 14.

²⁴ David Amigoni, *Victorian Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 196.

St Ogg's has a hundred-year-old history, as for a lineage of the Tullivers and the Dodsons. Symbolically, these two family lines embody heart and reason. The chapter The Family Council clearly illustrates the differences between these family lines. When uncles and aunts meet the Tullivers to solve their problematic situation, they do not seem to want to help them, nor to have sympathy for their own relatives. As the Tullivers and the Dodsons differ from each other, Tom and Maggie differ from one another in their natures. Not very intelligent but pragmatic Tom can be described as a typical descendant of the Dodson family, which is a coldly rational unit. He inherits most of his qualities after them. Maggie belongs to the Tulliver's clan, and more precisely, is often associated with her father's sister, Mrs Moss.²⁵ The Dodson's lineage is the typical community of St Ogg's, and therefore Tom is the one who ties Maggie to the local society.

One of the pivotal values that keeps Maggie as close to her hometown as possible is love, especially love for her brother. Tom gets angry with her for forgetting to feed his rabbits, who died afterwards, but Maggie cannot understand his evil nature. This also proves that her love is stronger than his, because she would stop blaming him for it. She says to him: "O Tom, please forgive me – I can't bear it – I will be good – always remember things – do love me – please, Tom! I'd forgive you, if *you* forgot anything – I wouldn't mind what you did – I'd forgive you and love you."²⁶ As a child, Maggie always tries to earn her own brother's respect, because Tom is her closest person, and she is always looking for his permission and consent. It seems her love is stronger than everything else. She, too, wants to be loved since her childhood, but he does not express love to her. Self-centred Tom does not realize how much Maggie tries and sees her as a weak person. He is the one who rules sensible Maggie and her joys and sorrows. Despite some difficulties between the siblings, she would never break the strong ties with Tom. When Maggie is talking to Luke that he resembles Tom because he also does not read, she also adds: "I love Tom so dearly, Luke – better than anybody else in the world. When he grows up, I shall keep his house, and we shall always live together. I can tell him everything he doesn't know."²⁷ Even though Tom is completely different from Maggie and she does not have the same interests with him, she respects and loves him.

²⁵ Jan Jedrzejewski, *George Eliot* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2007), 49.

²⁶ George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995), 31.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 26.

There are several important men in Maggie's life. As for family, it is for sure her brotherly love, Tom, and her father. With reference to passionate love, there is her childhood love, Philip Wakem, and her cousin Lucy's suitor, Stephen Guest. During her life, she ends with moral conflicts between these two lovers and her own family. Her love for everyone is different. Tom symbolizes rather deep ties describing the agonizing roots of the past, and this love also brings her closer to the community. In relation to her relationship with Philip, he is a person, with whom she can talk about everything, because he is a similarly intelligent being. Although physical passion is missing, Maggie is convinced about this relationship and also about the fact that the present and future must be ceaselessly linked to the past. When Philip asks her if they have any chance together in the future, Maggie's answer is clear: "I desire no future that will break the ties of the past. But the tie to my brother is one of the strongest. I can do nothing willingly that will divide me always from him."²⁸

For Philip, marrying Maggie would mean continuing their childhood love story, but Maggie prefers her own bonds to home and family, which is the most important element within Maggie's life. If she chose Philip, she would lose her adored Tom. It would be a betrayal of her own family, and thus, an impossible action.

Another man is charming Stephen Guest who is attracted by Maggie's passion. The love between Maggie and Stephen is almost only passionate. Through this relationship, it can be seen that Maggie views herself as someone who is finally accepted by society. It is her very first time thinking about herself in this way, but when he tries to convince her to marry him, she refuses him. Her priorities are evident.

It is not the force that ought to rule us – this that we feel for each other – it would rend me away from all my past life has made dear and holy to me. I can't set out on a fresh life, and forget that – I must go back to it, and cling to it, – else I shall feel as if there were nothing firm beneath my feet.²⁹

Mary Anne Evans emphasizes the strong attachment between identity and home. None of her love affairs is stronger than the brother-sister bond. Maggie presents the domestic surroundings as the symbol of herself and rather chooses homecoming than spending the life with Stephen.³⁰ She returns to her hometown, however, not married to him. The local people

²⁸ George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995, 397).

²⁹ *Ibid*, 428.

³⁰ Rachel Hollander, *Narrative Hospitality in Late Victorian Fiction: Novel Ethics* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2013), 57.

do not understand her actions, and therefore she becomes an outsider again. She knows that she can't erase the traces of her escape but still returns home despite all criticism. Tom and the others consider her as a weak woman. Tom does not understand his sister's way of thinking and even wants her to rather die than returns in such a humiliating way.

3.1 Moral Dilemma

Throughout the novel, Maggie struggles with her nature, which is divided into moral responsibility, her desire for self-realization and social convention. Her impulsiveness comes up especially in situations when she acts without thinking of the consequences. These strong impulses often are not under rational control, and therefore, she has to bear the consequences of her actions.

During her teenage years, as a curious girl, she wants some explanation of her difficult life, and the clarification comes with a book, *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis. Maggie comes to the book and its teachings during her difficult maturity and their bad family situation. The book advises and recommends that an individual should stop worrying about itself and focus on unearthly values. Maggie learns of renunciation and considers it as a key to happiness. In terms of this unearthly teaching, she ceases to be interested in books and music. Even though she is trying to repent, she still practices her natural passion. Socially accepted values of the community build up the background of Maggie's life and renunciation.

Regarding the connection of choice, she often mentally returns back in time and thinks about the former actions, which she is regretting now. She is described as an altruistic and emphatic being and is often interested in the feelings of others. When she decides to leave Stephen, she also takes his feelings into consideration, but still, not marrying him shows how much her bonds matter to her. Concerning the first decision, she goes with Stephen and hurts her relatives, and also damages her own reputation - while her second life choice causes pain to both Maggie and Stephen. She encounters the moral conflict when she makes her life choices and experiences moral dilemmas notably at moments of temptation, which could promise her the life she would actually want.

One of the main themes of the novel is 'the shifting relation between passion and duty'.³¹ For Maggie, the moral law is based on a duty to others, and she makes moral choices on this assumption. That a man should have some responsibilities to others and comply with the

³¹ George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995), 445.

duties of the community. It is the bond that just keeps this community going. She refuses Stephen because of different roots. She would probably marry him if these bonds did not exist, but she decides according to moral choices, not inner feelings.

Oh, it is difficult – life is very difficult! It seems right to me sometimes that we should follow our strongest feeling; but, then, such feelings continually come across the ties that all our former life has made for us – the ties that have made others dependent on us – and would cut them in two.³²

After returning to the hometown, Maggie just needs Tom's love and sympathy in order to bring back the moral belief in herself. Her own tragedy does not begin because of a public shame but because of her own feelings and impulses.

3.2 The Importance of the Past

Mary Anne Evans portrays a heroine who tests both modesty and arrogance towards the duties of the community. From the point of view of others, Maggie Tulliver is presented as an unnatural and unusual girl at the time of the Victorian age. However, she usually shows moral responsibility and goodness towards her own family. She loves her own brother more than he loves her. When she gets into a situation, where he is against her, she easily falls into despair. Maggie charges herself for the difficult relationship with Tom. Though the unexpected flood makes the siblings reconcile with each other, they die together. It is a tragedy of the girl who first wants to fulfil her dreams and denies the ideal of the good girl, but eventually returns to her home environment. Only this decision makes sense to Maggie. "The first thing I ever remember in my life is standing with Tom by the side of the Floss while he held my hand – everything before that is dark to me."³³ This memory is deeply rooted in Maggie and is her very first memory with Tom, which is very important to her. The protagonist puts a great emphasis on the past, and her memories surpass the present ones. Tom is the one who keeps her close to their birthplace, and by whom she wants to be loved. Maggie keeps her childhood in memory, and this is what influences her future self the most. In her case, the past is not something that reappears to intimidate someone. Although she has only a few memories of the past that do not include any difficulties, and her emotions are often insufferable, it is something that inherently belongs to her personality. Memory and the past are of a great importance for shaping the personal self. Especially childhood

³² George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995), 402.

³³ *Ibid*, 276.

leaves permanent traces in the individual, and the novel shows a rather painful life without such traces. As it is mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, the story most importantly depends on the author's personal emotions and memories. As a result, the novel gains a feature of autobiographical reality.

4 *SISTER CARRIE*

Carrie Meeber leaves her home in Columbia City and goes to live with her married sister, Minnie. In Chicago, she wants to start a better life and find a great job. After a short stay in Minnie's house, she escapes with Charles Drouet. After some time, he introduces her to a rich manager George Hurstwood, who falls in love with her, and they start living together in New York. Carrie begins to achieve her own dreams of a rich and glorious life. The novel represents the transformation of a working girl into a celebrity when a new success allows her to forget the past, which would tie her down.

At the beginning of the novel, Carrie is a very shy girl who is full of illusions and naivety. She dreams about fortune and getting higher in the social hierarchy, and represents the typical middle-class girl in America. The character of Carrie seems somehow pitiless and her identity is shaped rather on the present moment than her own history. The present and the future is what matters. The readers of the novel know very little about her previous life. Carrie's hometown, located in a rural area in Wisconsin, is typically an open area with several buildings and people. Usually, these residents of the rural locality focus more on work rather than social status. Concerning Carrie's nature, she does not acquire this attitude, and therefore decides to go to the big city of Chicago.

Evidently, the growth of her personality does not contain taking her own roots into consideration. Carrie does not own any home-rooted principles. She is looking for men who would lead her, while guidance is also missing during her own childhood. Just like Carrie's parents and Minnie, Drouet and Hurstwood are left without mercy as well. Throughout her life journey, Carrie is able to leave the loved ones, and this can be believed as one of the inevitable reasons for Carrie's pursuit to start a new chapter somewhere else with someone else.

Initially, she can be considered as a victim who has to leave her life in the small town, and thus, family, in order to live a satisfying life, not a life in poverty. Later, she is a successful woman who is wealthy, however, no longer thinks of returning. Carrie represents the breakdown of the family. The only representative of her own family, who is in the novel for a quite long time, is her sister Minnie. But the only reason is that Minnie lives in Chicago, and Carrie needs her help at the beginning of her journey. As for her own parents, her own mother is mentioned only once. At the beginning of the story, she accompanies Carrie to the train station. Her father lives only in her memories. He is not present at the train station, nor in the future life of Carrie. Already in the first paragraph of the book, Carrie changes from

childhood to adulthood. She says goodbye to her mother with tears in her eyes: “A gush of tears at her mother’s farewell kiss, a touch in her throat when the cars clacked by the flour mill where her father worked by the day, a pathetic sigh as the familiar green environs of the village passed in review, and the threads which bound her so lightly to girlhood and home were irretrievably broken.”³⁴ This displays that the context of home, family and her childhood is not important to her anymore. Later, however, some memories of her own father come up, when she watches men working on the streets.

Her old father, in his flour-dusted miller’s suit, sometimes returned to her in memory, revived by a face in the window....She felt, though she seldom expressed them, sad thoughts upon this score. Her sympathies were ever with that under-world of toil from which she had so recently sprung, and which she best understood.³⁵

In this excerpt, it is apparent that even Carrie might be sometimes sensitive and tender and misses her father. Dreiser shows her deepest empathy and also points out, that Carrie does not leave the domestic environment because of her own relatives but the poor conditions. It is striking that Carrie is thinking so little about her own parents. She seems to turn completely away from her own history.

Her first job lasts only a few days, and then she loses the position because of the flu. At this point the strength of Carrie is evident. Although her sister and her husband suggest her to return home, Carrie does not want to deal with the situation this way. Drouet helps her and shows her the beautiful side of the city of Chicago. In her eyes, the city begins to turn into the best place to fulfil dreams. This city itself can be characterized as the first lover who seduces her.

In chapter seven, the reader encounters the importance of money and its significance for Carrie. There is the predominance of materialism for her. She can easily find her way into superficial happiness. As soon as she likes something, she immediately imagines the greatness of owning the thing. The moral significance of money for Carrie is merely shallow. She takes it as a means to a better life. In the novel, this is explained by the old definition: “Money, something everybody else has and I must get.”³⁶ And this is Carrie’s attitude, too. She puts her energy mainly into money, not into people. This can be seen when she often

³⁴ Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 5.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 139.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 63.

looks back at her former poverty but never to her former lovers.³⁷ In situations of poverty, she often expresses regret. It hurts her seeing weak and desperate beings. She regrets them with all her heart and never wants to be in their skin again. According to the situation in America, the person's value is determined by the money factor. The more money one has, the more respected one is by the others. Living in the material world also makes Carrie a commodity. At the beginning of the relationship with Drouet, he gives her money for new clothes. During the dinner, he dares to touch her hand, and this may mean buying a little access to her. Another point is her theatrical success, which is focused more on physical appearance and youth than on talent. Dreiser criticizes the negative effects of this capitalist and consumer society. In this way, Carrie is also a victim of materialism and consumer society. Rich and influential people might seem happy, but reality is much different. In fact, they do not have their own identities.³⁸ Questions of identity, Carrie's identity is not much revealed, so the first impression is what she owns, and thus, her possessions.

4.1 Moral Blindness

From a moral point of view, Dreiser illustrates Carrie as a woman who does not violate the moral law. She does not own such a responsibility. The author leaves her character to grow and not condemn her. Frequently, the reader finds Carrie in a test situation. Does she leave her sister for Drouet? Does she elope with Hurstwood? Does she ever return to her family? These are questions related to morality and ethics.

She looked into her glass and saw a prettier Carrie than she had seen before; she looked into her mind, a mirror prepared of her own and the world's opinions, and saw a worse. Between these two images she wavered, hesitating which to believe.³⁹

Carrie, as Drouet's mistress, adapts to his manners. This life suits her, and she even finds herself prettier. She distinguishes between different actions and always makes a beneficial choice for her. On the other hand, she is still influenced by the moral opinion that views her as a fallen woman. She agonizes over her choices. Dreiser uses a mirror symbol to point out

³⁷ Miriam Gogol, *Theodore Dreiser: Beyond Naturalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 119.

³⁸ Molefi K. Asante, *A Theodore Dreiser Encyclopedia*, (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003), 50.

³⁹ Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 90.

the impact of the world's opinion on the individual's inner self. Carrie is often troubled by her conscience and defends herself, but in her opinion sees the inner voice as unwise. According to her perspective, this voice advises for habits and conventions.

In the light of the world's attitude toward woman and her duties, the nature of Carrie's mental state deserves consideration. Actions such as hers are measured by an arbitrary scale. Society possesses a conventional standard whereby it judges all things. All men be good, all women virtuous. Wherefore, villain, hast thou failed?⁴⁰

In Carrie's case, it is a bit more complicated because it also touches a gender issue. As a woman, she should have definite duties. Women have a very limited role in society. With industrialization, women become open for domestic consumption. In both advertising and movies, physical appearance is promoted as the key to the new woman's success.⁴¹

As it is mentioned in the third chapter of this thesis, Dreiser tries to observe a human being as someone who is influenced by the outside forces which form her character. He describes that people are driven by actions they cannot control.

Among the forces which sweep and play throughout the universe, untutored man is but a wisp in the wind. Our civilization is still in a middle stage, scarcely beast, in that it is no longer wholly guided by instinct; scarcely human, in that it is not yet wholly guided by reason...He is becoming too wise to hearken always to instincts and desires; he is still too weak to always prevail against them.⁴²

It cannot be claimed that she is not guided by any moral codes, however, not by many. Although Drouet is excited about Carrie from the very beginning, she thinks it is not right to have an affair with him. She controls herself and finds herself somewhere between pleasure and reservedness. But when it comes to asking herself the question of returning home, her choice of Drouet is obvious. Going away from her sister's home, Carrie does not offer any explanation of her own actions, and therefore Minnie is a bit worried about Carrie and does not understand sister's behaviour. The strict morality, reflected in Minnie's life, does not attract Carrie's nature. Minnie represents the opinion of society. She is a hardworking woman, whose life is based on the life of her own family. In this case, Carrie tries to escape

⁴⁰ Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 89.

⁴¹ Miriam Gogol, *Theodore Dreiser: Beyond Naturalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 118.

⁴² Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 74.

from this way of life and again does not decide for the family. She cuts herself off from her only relative in Chicago.

4.2 The American Dream

Without firm moral principles, Theodor Dreiser presents an American woman who has the ability to manipulate people and to achieve her own ambitions. Carrie rebels against the morals and traditions of society. The protagonist is full of emotions, driven by the fear of getting back to her rural background and misery. People in the city are ones who can use what the city offers and enjoy fun and pleasure. And most importantly, they have money. She is trapped in the illusion that material things will bring her luck.

Each of Carrie's men is influential on her but each of them influences her differently. She thinks they both have realized their American Dream. She heavily enhances her dependence on both men and realizes she needs their money to live in urban society. They impress her with their wealth and position in society, and in the company of these men, she always transforms into a woman of the same status.

Carrie has her own version of the 'American Dream' that she wishes to pursue. Since she is a daughter of a lower-class worker, is not satisfied with her position in society. She leaves her hometown to avoid living in poverty. She begins as a worker in the shoe factory, later as an amateur actress and finally ends up as a theatre star. While she becomes an artist in New York, Hurstwood is without a job and can no longer support his lover's needs, and therefore she decides to leave him in poverty and despair. Then, he becomes homeless and commits suicide. She leaves another part of her life and becomes an independent person. She rises quickly to the wealth, earns a lot of money, lives in one of the best hotels and is on the front page of the newspaper. She has applause and fame and is also beautiful. Even though she achieves everything she ever wanted, she still longs for something more and is unhappy in the end. Consumer society leads her into false happiness. Carrie reaches her 'American Dream' and manages to get herself into the upper class, but it does not bring her the expected satisfaction. At the end of the novel, Dreiser describes how one cannot predict its destiny.

Oh, Carrie, Carrie! Oh, blind striving of the human heart! In your rocking chair, by your window, dreaming, shall you long, alone, in your rocking chair, by your window, shall you dream such happiness as you may never feel.⁴³

⁴³ Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 471.

5 THE COMPARISON OF MAGGIE AND CARRIE

As it has been mentioned in the analysis, the two heroines of the aforementioned novels differ greatly from each other. Like Mary Anne Evans, Theodor Dreiser achieves a certain level of an autobiographical reality in his novel, and the style of their writing depicts the life views of these authors. While Dreiser observes a human being, Evans detects and moralizes it. As it has been outlined in this thesis, both authors are influenced by different cultures and values in the same way as the main heroines are affected by these issues.

Evans shows the community's tradition and people's opinion in the novel and tests Maggie with the duties that are given by Victorian society. Maggie grows up during the rule of Queen Victoria. As mentioned in the first chapter, which describes the situation in Victorian England, Queen Victoria herself is also connected to the cult of a big and decent family. The stable unit is a vital ingredient of a stable community, and thus, society. The moral commitment to this unit is therefore essential.

I share with you this sense of oppressive narrowness [of the Tullivers and Dodsons]; but it is necessary that we should feel it, if we care to understand how it acted on the lives of Tom and Maggie – how it has acted on young natures in many generations, that in the onward tendency of human things have risen above the mental level of the generation before them, to which they have been nevertheless tied by the strongest fibres of their hearts.⁴⁴

This part of the novel demonstrates Evans' conception of progress as the struggle of the individual against formative forces. She describes that every generation should exceed the previous one. At the same time, it is important to worship the roots. These 'fibres' knit a strong family attachment. The author's heroine, Maggie Tulliver, struggles with this given mindset. It is a circle in which elements, such as a family and duties are fixed together.

Maggie is raised in a moral way in St Ogg's, and it leads her throughout her whole life. Even though she knows she can achieve more, she does not have many options. In terms of her devotion to her family, she is a very orderly woman. She returns to perform the duties of her own family and her own roots. Unlike Maggie, Carrie Meeber does not know virtues such as morality and devotion. Dreiser gives Carrie many opportunities without condemning or oppressing her with some moral interference. Carrie probably has a stable family, too, but a strong bond among family members is not observed. The reader knows very little about Carrie's family, but it seems clear that breaking the roots is not caused by difficult

⁴⁴ George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995), 244.

relationships at home. However, she is still forced to leave her own family for better conditions.

Both women have to face the fact that society, which is biased towards gender, does not appreciate when women are too intelligent and opinionated. As Evans states: “The happiest women, like the happiest nations, have no history.”⁴⁵ Victorian society had built a specific gender system. Women are not taken as seriously as men. While men are active, women are associated with passivity. The inaction often comes with housework. As women, Maggie and Carrie have to deal with a difficult life, which is still not ready for such independent and ambitious females. Because of that, these females see how powerful men are. From the opposite position, both of them can actually appreciate the strength and beauty of men. Maggie loves them purely and deeply, whereas Carrie’s love is more of a material desire than adoration, which means that each man is used as a means of achieving her own goals. For both, there are two men who play important roles in their lives. Maggie’s relationship with Philip fails because of Tom’s disagreement. The elopement with Stephen represents an escape from the tension of the community. This relationship can resemble the one that Carrie has with her lovers. Both of Carrie’s men can give her money and opportunities. Maggie’s lovers offer love. These men are able to give them everything these women want. However, Maggie cannot close her own past. She returns to her family just like she has returned from a gypsy camp.

In relation to a brother-sister and sister bond, the women have completely different relationships. Compared to Maggie, Carrie has a sister, thus she does not even know the circumstances connected with the parent’s preferences to a son. Maggie thinks that choosing to sacrifice herself, be faithful and committed keeps her relationship with Tom alive. She needs love and affection. This need for love also shapes her character. She loves her brother who is closest to her. Even though Tom despises her, one can say that he really likes her in the end. Such love is not recognized in Carrie and Minnie’s relation. In this relationship, there are mainly their own interests. Before Carrie leaves her home, her sister does not live with them anymore as she lives with her own family in Chicago. Also, due to this separation, their relationship may not be so pure. When Carrie arrives to Chicago, she soon realizes that she does not like Minnie’s life nor husband. In the fourth chapter of the book, it is apparent

⁴⁵ George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995), 344.

what the content of her sister's life is: "She was too busy scrubbing the kitchen woodwork and calculating the purchasing power of eighty cents for Sunday's dinner."⁴⁶ They treat each other a bit coldly but fairly. Minnie is not contemptuous of Carrie. She just does not understand her behaviour. They do not tell inner secrets to each other. When Carrie leaves Minnie's house, her own sister is worried about her, but this is preceded by an uncomfortable stay for both of them. When Carrie loses her first job, Minnie feels uneasy about Carrie's situation. She would like her sister to leave back home rather than stay, because her husband can be angry about Carrie not paying the rent. Minnie's life is dependent on her husband, Hanson. Carrie does not embody such a strong love within her own family members, and therefore decides to leave her sister. In comparison, Maggie is a woman longing to be loved by Tom. Though he often does not deserve it, she loves him. For this reason, none of these relationships is probably healthy or ideal, but the strong bond with the sibling can make strong ties to the home. In other words, this is only Maggie's case, while Tom keeps her in St Ogg's the most.

At the beginning of the novels, the girls are quite similar. They are innocent, worthy of opportunity and, above all, longing for something new and unrecognised. However, a fundamental difference between Maggie and Carrie can be recognized. It is the fact that Carrie uses an opportunity for an independent life, while Maggie does not. Carrie leaves her own family to become wealthy and focuses only on her own future. As Harold Bloom argues: "Maggie has the opportunity to leave St Ogg's with a man offering romantic love and wealth, but instead chooses to return to social disgrace and to a family who cannot appreciate her devotion on her sacrifice."⁴⁷

Nevertheless, both women deal with the issue of identity. Although Maggie struggles to build her own inner self, she is defeated. There is no model of life that would make her happy. When old bonds are broken, she does not want to create new ones because she feels guilty, and clings to the hope that these bonds can be saved. The identity of Maggie is formed by what her parents and the local community think she should be, but Carrie creates her identity by herself – by what *she* thinks she should be. While experiencing various identity crises, Carrie tries to imitate people of a higher class and discovers that only money could help her. When Drouet gives her ten dollars, Carrie immediately thinks that money

⁴⁶ Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 31.

⁴⁷ Nany Henry, *The Life of George Eliot: A Critical Biography* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 129.

represents power. She is aware of what is good and bad but chooses an option which helps her to deal with her financial problems. Also, the problem of identity is connected to the 'American Dream', and the search for this belief creates an unbalanced personality. It can be claimed that she has achieved this dream, but it does not give her expected happiness.

All these aspects above influence the approaches to the past as well as the protagonists' personality. As the domestic surroundings portray Maggie, she justifies the reader that she is not a bad girl. She sees herself as an egocentric girl who seeks love, while she expresses love to others. She is a responsible girl who meets morality and good, but it is not possible for her to continue the journey when being dishonoured and rejected by her own family. Maggie's heart is filled with love for her family but she is unhappy.

Carrie does not experience such dilemmas like Maggie and grasps life opportunities. She becomes an independent human who desires something greater at every step forward. Even at the beginning of the novel, it may seem that she knows she will never return to her hometown. If she came back, there would be a risk of the return to poverty and the poor conditions, she experienced there. And it is not worth it for Carrie, not even for the family and the ties, she breaks for good. It can be only speculated that Carrie would be happier if she stayed with her family in Wisconsin.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to analyse and compare approaches to the past of the novels *The Mill on the Floss* and *Sister Carrie*. It examined the protagonist's culture, background, family and values. Furthermore, it provided reasons to understand their decisions – why one of them returns to her hometown, while the other one turns her back on her own roots. The first chapters of the thesis deal with the situation in England and America and the life of both authors. The next chapters focus on the analysis of the novels.

The novel *The Mill on the Floss* is set in the Victorian era. In this period great differences within social classes and gender stand out. Though Maggie's family belongs to the middle class, she is a woman, and thus, her own personality is suppressed. Family is an important element of society and people should behave according to certain moral principles. The Gilded Age, in which *Sister Carrie* is set, also values the importance of the family. Women appear in the same situation as in England, they are expected to be married and take care of their own family. Although the family is an essential feature of both cultures, it is not so important for both characters. Maggie has a strong family bond. Even though she has a different character than her own relatives, and they are not very supportive of her, she loves them very much. On the other hand, the reader does not know a lot about Carrie's attitude towards her family members, only Carrie's relationship with her sister, Minnie, can be considered, and this is rather a cold attitude. The approach towards other people shows that she does not create such strong ties as Maggie.

The next part of this thesis focused on morality, whether the protagonists abide by values or responsibility. Maggie goes through important moral dilemmas, but Carrie experiences moral ignorance because she does not possess such principles. Although Maggie is smart and wishes to be independent, her duty to the family is principal for her. In case of Carrie, she is naive at first but then uses every opportunity to be independent regardless of her own family.

To conclude, the thesis analysed both women, their natures, opinions and the most important aspects of their lives. All of these features have a great impact on them, and therefore they make various decisions according to it. Although both young girls long for independence, each chooses a different direction. This work mapped the impacts of these approaches to the past and covered different approaches to life and life ambitions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amigoni, David. *Victorian Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011.
- Asante, K. Molefi. *A Theodore Dreiser Encyclopedia*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003.
- Calhoun, Charles William, *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.
- Daniel, Lehan Richard. *Realism and Naturalism: The Novel in an Age of Transition*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.
- Dreiser, Theodore. *Sister Carrie*. London: Penguin Books, 1995.
- Eliot, George. *The Mill on the Floss*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995.
- Goetz, Stewart, and Charles Taliaferro. *Naturalism*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008.
- Gogol, Miriam. *Theodore Dreiser: Beyond Naturalism*. New York: New York University Press, 1995.
- Henry, Nany. *The Life of George Eliot: A Critical Biography*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012.
- Hollander, Rachel. *Narrative Hospitality in Late Victorian Fiction: Novel Ethics*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2013.
- Hook, Andrew. *American Literature in Context: 1865-1900*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2016.
- Jedrzejewski, Jan. *George Eliot*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2007.
- Loving, Jerome. *The Last Titan: A Life of Theodore Dreiser*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2005.
- Mitchell, Sally. *Daily Life in Victorian England*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1996.
- Ruland, Richard, and Malcolm Bradbury. *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature*. London: Penguin Books, 1992.
- Samuel, R. Lawrence. *The American Dream: A Cultural History*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2012.
- Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Volo, M. James, and Dorothy Denneen Volo, *Family Life in 19th-Century America*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007.

Wayne, K. Tiffany. *Women's Roles in Nineteenth-century America*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007.