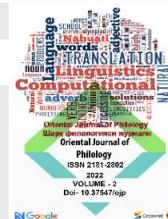


Oriental Journal of Philology**ORIENTAL JOURNAL OF PHILOLOGY**

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<http://www.supportscience.uz/index.php/ojp/about>**FAMILY AS A CENTRAL THEME IN JANE AUSTEN'S NOVELS: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON GENDER, CLASS, AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT****Shalola Rahmatova***Researcher of Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages**E-mail: rahmatovashalola4@gmail.com**Samarkand, Uzbekistan***ABOUT ARTICLE**

Key words: Jane Austen, family, social class, marriage, women, morality, gender roles, Regency era.

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Abstract: With special reference to *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*, and *Mansfield Park*, this article examines the concept of family as a major component in Jane Austen's books. The paper examines how Austen portrays the family as a moral and ideological organization that profoundly affects individual conduct, particularly in women, in addition to being a social unit. The article emphasizes Austen's criticism of the patriarchal and class-based systems of Regency England by looking at how families influence marriage possibilities, uphold social class, and impact personal development. Austen's portrayal of family as a place of both support and restraint ultimately shows that moral character and personal integrity can transcend social expectations.

OILA JEYN OSTINNING ROMANLARIDA MARKAZIY MAVZU SIFATIDA: GENDER, SINIF VA AXLOQIY RIVOJLANISHGA TANQIDIY NUQTAI NAZAR**Shalola Rahmatova***Samarqand davlat chet tillar instituti tadqiqotchisi**rahmatovashalola4@gmail.com**Samarqand, O'zbekiston***MAQOLA HAQIDA**

Kalit so'zlar: Jane Austen, oila, ijtimoiy sinf, turmush, ayollar, axloq, jinsiy rollar, Regensiya davri.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqola asosan *Andisha va G'urur* (*Pride and Prejudice*), *Aql va His* (*Sense and Sensibility*), *Emma* va *Mansfield Park* asarlari misolida Jane Austenning oilaga bo'lgan qarashlarini tahlil qiladi. Maqolada Austen oilani nafaqat

ijtimoiy birlik sifatida, balki axloqiy va ideologik tuzilma sifatida ko'rsatib, ayniqsa ayollar xulq-atvoriga ta'sirini o'rganadi. Shuningdek, maqola Austenning Regensiya davridagi patriarxal va sinfiy tizimlarni tanqid qilishiga e'tibor qaratib, oilalarning turmush qurish imkoniyatlariga, ijtimoiy tabaqalarga ta'siri va shaxsiy rivojlanishga ta'sirini ko'rsatadi. Austen oilani ham yordamchi, ham cheklovchi makon sifatida tasvirlab, axloqiy fazilat va shaxsiy halollik ijtimoiy talablardan yuqori bo'lishi mumkinligini ta'kidlaydi.

СЕМЬЯ КАК ЦЕНТРАЛЬНАЯ ТЕМА В РОМАНАХ ДЖЕЙН ОСТИН: КРИТИЧЕСКИЙ ВЗГЛЯД НА ГЕНДЕР, КЛАСС И ПРАВСТВЕННОЕ РАЗВИТИЕ

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О СТАТЬЕ

Ключевые слова: Джейн Остин, семья, социальный класс, брак, женщины, мораль, гендерные роли, эпоха Реджентства.

Аннотация: В данной статье, с особым вниманием к романам Гордость и предубеждение, Чувство и чувствительность, Эмма и Мэнсфилд-парк, рассматривается понятие семьи как важного элемента творчества Джейн Остин. Работа исследует, как Остин изображает семью не только как социальную единицу, но и как моральную и идеологическую организацию, оказывающую глубокое влияние на поведение индивидов, особенно женщин. В статье подчеркивается критика Остин патриархальных и классовых систем Реджентства, анализируется влияние семьи на брачные возможности, поддержание социального класса и личностное развитие. Изображая семью как место и поддержки, и ограничений, Остин показывает, что моральный характер и личная честность могут превосходить социальные ожидания.

Introduction. Family has a significant and complex role in Jane Austen's creative universe. Austen, who wrote during the Regency period, provides a nuanced and incisive analysis of the family as a social constraint and a necessary structure. Her novels portray family life as the actual stage on which social mobility, moral conflict, and human evolution take place, rather than merely serving as a backdrop for personal drama. Austen examines the intricate relationships between

gender, class, heredity, and personal agency in early 19th-century England via the lens of family dynamics in her most famous novels, including *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*, and *Mansfield Park*.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen presents the Bennet family as an example of how social standing and familial behavior can profoundly impact an individual's prospects. Elizabeth Bennet, though intelligent and morally strong, is frequently judged through the lens of her family's lower social status and her mother's vulgarity. Mr. Darcy's initial rejection of Elizabeth stems not from her own failings, but from his prejudice against her family's lack of refinement and wealth. Through Elizabeth's journey, Austen critiques the superficial nature of social hierarchies and advocates for judging individuals by personal character rather than lineage. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen famously critiques the marriage market and how family background affects personal relationships. Elizabeth Bennet, the protagonist, must navigate society's judgment of her family. The sentence, "The business of her life was to have her daughters married," emphasizes her mother's fixation with marrying off her daughters. Since marriage was the only way for women to achieve social and financial security, this quote captures the restricted options accessible to them. Women like Mrs. Bennet felt little choice but to force their daughters into marriage due to gender norms of the time, frequently disregarding their emotional compatibility. Elizabeth's family's reputation, rather than her own shortcomings, complicates her relationship with Mr. Darcy. Caroline Bingley scornfully says: "With such a father and mother, and such low connections, I am afraid there is no chance of it."

Here, Austen critiques how social class and family behavior determine a woman's worth in the marriage market. Women were judged not just as individuals, but as extensions of their families, reinforcing their dependency on others' behavior.

Darcy himself acknowledges this prejudice in a letter to Elizabeth:

"The situation of your mother's family... betrayed by herself, by your three younger sisters, and occasionally even by your father."

Although he eventually overcomes his bias, the quote shows how family could be a barrier to love and respect, especially for women. Male characters like Darcy could afford to marry below their status if they chose, but women did not have the same freedom.

Similarly, *Sense and Sensibility* examines how vulnerable women are in patriarchal families. Following the death of Mr. Dashwood, his estate passes to his son from a previous marriage, leaving his wife and daughters without financial security. Elinor and Marianne Dashwood are forced to rely on distant relatives and navigate a society where marriage becomes a necessity for survival. The emotional and financial strains they experience underscore the dependency of women on male relatives and the legal limitations imposed by inheritance laws.

Yet, Austen does not present her characters as passive victims; instead, she shows how women exercise emotional intelligence and moral strength within these constraints. *Sense and Sensibility* similarly describes the impact of inheritance laws and patriarchal systems on women. The Dashwood sisters are left nearly penniless after their father's death, since the estate passes to their half-brother. Elinor and Marianne must seek marriage not only for love, but for financial survival. Their situation reveals the legal dependency of women on male relatives, as they are not entitled to property in their own right.

Characters like Lucy Steele further illustrate how women used manipulation to secure a future. Austen writes:

“The whole of Lucy's behavior... was a want of delicacy and a want of integrity.”

Lucy's deception shows that women, restricted by class and gender, were often forced to be strategic—sometimes unethically so—in order to gain stability. Austen critiques not only the behavior, but the system that makes such behavior necessary.

In *Emma*, the influence of family takes a different form. Emma Woodhouse is privileged by her birth into a wealthy and well-established family, which affords her a degree of independence rare for Austen's heroines. Unlike Elizabeth or Elinor, Emma is not pressured to marry for financial stability. However, her social status and her father's overprotectiveness contribute to her arrogance and blind spots, particularly in her misguided attempts at matchmaking. Austen uses Emma's mistakes and eventual self-awareness to highlight how even positive family environments can hinder personal growth when they shield individuals from reality. In *Emma*, Austen presents a rare example of a woman with both wealth and freedom. Emma Woodhouse declares: “Fortune I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want.”

Unlike Austen's other heroines, Emma has the luxury to remain unmarried. However, her privilege also isolates her from the emotional realities of others, leading her to misjudge the intentions of people around her. The character of Miss Bates serves as a sharp contrast. A kind, unmarried woman living in poverty, Miss Bates is often mocked: “A single woman... must be a ridiculous, disagreeable old maid!”

This illustrates how unmarried women without money were marginalized and ridiculed, regardless of their character. Emma's arc shows that family may be both a shield from societal judgment and a source of pride and blindness.

In *Mansfield Park*, Austen directly addresses family hierarchy and exclusion. Fanny Price is brought to live with her wealthy relatives but is reminded constantly of her inferior status. Mrs. Norris emphasizes: “They cannot be equals. Their rank, fortune, rights, and expectations will always be different.”

Despite being raised in the same household, Fanny is excluded from equal treatment. This reflects the rigid class barriers and how they function even within families. Austen uses Fanny's quiet moral strength to critique a system that values wealth and birth over virtue.

Another example of her work underscores Fanny's emotional isolation: "Fanny was again left to her solitude, without any attempt... to reconcile her to it."

Even among family, she is neglected and dismissed, highlighting that emotional support is not guaranteed by blood ties. Through Fanny, Austen argues that true family depends on empathy and mutual respect, not just shared lineage.

Mansfield Park presents perhaps Austen's most direct examination of class and family boundaries. Fanny Price, born into a poor family, is brought to live with her wealthy relatives, the Bertrams. Although she is technically part of the family, she is never treated as an equal. Her outsider status offers Austen a platform to critique the moral decay that can exist within the upper classes. While her wealthy cousins engage in morally questionable behavior, Fanny remains principled and thoughtful. Austen thus raises the question: what makes a true family—shared blood, legal ties, or shared values? In Mansfield Park, Austen directly addresses family hierarchy and exclusion. Fanny Price is brought to live with her wealthy relatives but is reminded constantly of her inferior status. Mrs. Norris emphasizes: "They cannot be equals. Their rank, fortune, rights, and expectations will always be different."

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Across all these novels, Austen exposes the gendered nature of familial expectation. Women are expected to uphold family honor, marry advantageously, and submit to societal roles. At the same time, they are offered little real power to shape their own lives. Through her nuanced and often ironic portrayals, Austen challenges these norms and gives her heroines moral authority in a world that often denies them autonomy.

A recurring theme in all these novels is that while family can offer emotional support and social protection, it can also reinforce limiting norms, especially regarding gender roles. Women are expected to fulfill familial duties—often at the cost of personal happiness—and marriage becomes more of a financial strategy than an emotional union. Austen exposes the inherent tension

between personal desire and family obligation, using irony and social commentary to challenge the norms of her time.

Furthermore, Austen's moral vision of the family extends beyond mere social critique. In her novels, the family becomes a testing ground for ethical behavior, where characters either grow into maturity or fall into folly. Whether it is Elizabeth's courage to defy expectations, Elinor's quiet resilience, or Fanny's unwavering values, Austen emphasizes that true worth is found not in social rank, but in personal integrity. Her heroines often succeed not because of their families, but in spite of them.

In conclusion, Jane Austen's treatment of the family is deeply layered and socially conscious. Far from idealizing domestic life, she exposes the injustices and hypocrisies embedded within familial and social structures. At the same time, she leaves room for redemption, growth, and moral clarity. By placing her heroines at the intersection of personal will and familial duty, Austen creates narratives that remain relevant in discussions of gender, class, and identity to this day.

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