

## TOPIC: SOCIAL VALUES AND CLASS IN AUSTEN'S VISION OF ENGLISHNESS

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**Abstract.** *This paper explores Jane Austen's literary representation of social values and class as fundamental elements of early 19th-century English identity. Through her novels *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Emma*, Austen offers a subtle yet profound commentary on the moral, social, and gender-based expectations that shaped Englishness in her time. Austen critiques patriarchal inheritance laws, class hierarchy, and the constraints placed on women, while also presenting a vision of virtue rooted in emotional intelligence and ethical conduct. By analyzing the contrast between characters, this study highlights Austen's nuanced engagement with class dynamics, intellectual independence, and moral development. Drawing on scholarly perspectives, the paper argues that Austen's work challenges social conventions while still operating within their bounds, reflecting a complex and evolving vision of English society.*

**Key Words:** *Jane Austen, Englishness, Social Class, Gender Roles, Morality, Inheritance, Marriage, 19th-century Literature, Feminism, Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, Emma.*

## ТЕМА: СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ ЦЕННОСТИ И КЛАСС В ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИИ ОСТИН ОБ АНГЛИЙСКОСТИ

**Аннотация.** *В этой статье исследуется литературное представление Джейн Остин социальных ценностей и класса как основополагающих элементов английской идентичности начала XIX века. В своих романах «Разум и чувствительность», «Гордость и предубеждение» и «Эмма» Остин предлагает тонкий, но глубокий комментарий о моральных, социальных и гендерных ожиданиях, которые формировали английскость в ее время. Остин критикует патриархальные законы наследования, классовую иерархию и ограничения, налагаемые на женщин, а также представляет видение добродетели, основанной на эмоциональном интеллекте и этическом поведении. Анализируя контраст между персонажами, это исследование подчеркивает тонкое взаимодействие Остин с классовой динамикой, интеллектуальной независимостью и моральным развитием.*

*Опираясь на научные точки зрения, в статье утверждается, что работа Остин бросает вызов социальным условностям, оставаясь при этом в их рамках, отражая сложное и развивающееся видение английского общества.*

**Ключевые слова:** *Джейн Остин, английскость, социальный класс, гендерные роли, мораль, наследование, брак, литература XIX века, феминизм, чувство и чувствительность, Гордость и предубеждение, Эмма.*

Jane Austin investigates the complex interaction between social values, class, and early 19th century English identity. Especially for women negotiating a society built by patriarchal inheritance rules and strict social hierarchies, the stories' core reveals a great conflict between societal expectations and personal desires. Austen builds a picture of Englishness not only defined by class and etiquette but also by interior virtue and moral tenacity by means of her complex characterizations, acute social observations, and understated humor. Understanding Austen's perspective requires first thinking about what "Englishness" meant during her time.

English identity throughout the Georgian and Regency periods was tightly linked to decency, restraint, moral responsibility, and social order. The upper and middle classes especially the landed gentry reflected these values, and their manner of life was frequently seen as the norm of national character. Austen's books operate both as mirrors and as criticisms within this framework: they challenge the justice and logic of the systems supporting current English values even as they reflect them.

Though Austen knew her world, she was also of her world in a way that questions our capacity to empathize with her characters and their issues. Austen's novel's prominent ladies run from an astronomically more privileged place than working-class, poor, or enslaved women. In the novel Emma, who is smart and wants to dominate her environment, she never understands that Highbury is not the whole world. Rather, marrying Mr. Knightley allows Emma to merely become a larger fish in her tiny pond. Readers never hear Emma's views on property rights or women's exclusion from politics or other arenas in which they may have otherwise advanced large-scale social change. Emma's driving force is Austen's belief that equality of social condition is the most certain indicator of happiness in all relationships, which diminishes the effect of Emma's discoveries about having empathy and sympathy for others less privileged than herself.

Austen observes that toward the end of the book, the friendship between upper-class Emma and her socially lower friend Harriet declines to "a calmer sort of goodwill", "was not to be regretted". (Chowdhury, M. S. A. p3) Though Miss Bates is crucial to the story, she is more of a warning about why Emma should be nicer than a person in her own right. Austen, thus, fails to show why greater equality is required in systems running beyond the grasp of Emma and her friends. This narrow focus keeps Austen from becoming the voice of social justice that today's readers of the globe require, or, for that matter, that they required in the nineteenth century.

Austen depicts Englishness in *Sense and Sensibility* as a balance between emotional restraint and social obligation, personified in the contrast between the Dashwood sisters: Elinor, who represents "sense" (reason, decorum, and self-control), and Marianne, who represents "sensibility" (emotion, spontaneity, and passion). This contrast draws attention to the moral standards set on people, particularly women, in English society. While Marianne's romanticism and emotional honesty sometimes put her at odds with the standards of her society, Elinor's quiet personality and commitment to social conventions make her the more socially acceptable person.

Austen questions this disparity by demonstrating how emotional outpouring, as depicted by Marianne, is not naturally wrong but rather problematic when untempered by social consciousness.

The final denouement of the book, which shows Marianne mellowed by experience and Elinor rewarded for her patient endurance, implies that genuine English virtue resides in moderation: a balance of sense and sensibility. Austen's emphasis on personal authenticity and emotional truth also helps to subtly support English values—moderation, patience, and decorum, hence doing so. (Libby, M. M. p 15)

Another basic building block of Austen's concept of Englishness is class. Class differences in *Sense and Sensibility* are not only financial but also profoundly moral and cultural. People are evaluated not just on their riches but also on their methods of obtaining and exhibiting it. The Dashwood family's descent from financial stability after Mr. Dashwood's death shows the fragility of women's economic situation in a patriarchal culture. Inheritance laws favoured male heirs, thus the Dashwood girls and their mother are left relying on the generosity of faraway relatives, hence underlining the unfairness of a system that linked property to gender and lineage. Austen distinguishes between "old money" from the landed gentry and an emergent affluence without breeding or graces.

Middletons have wealth and status but lack refinement and depth. In contrast, restrained and less flamboyant figures like Colonel Brandon embody English gentlemanly characteristics.

Willoughby, who appears attractive and elegant, is morally bankrupt and values fortune over ethics. Austen criticizes the superficiality of evaluating people by status or appearance and promotes a picture of Englishness based on ethics, self-control, and duty.

In the universe of *Pride and Prejudice*, social class is of considerable significance. The Bingleys, Darcys, and Windhams are classified as English landed gentry, the second-highest social status that is marginally inferior to titled gentlemen or nobility. Mr. Bennet, Mrs. Bennet, and Netherfield tenant Mr. Bingley are all members of the landed gentry of the country, despite the fact that the Bennets do not exhibit the prosperity or breeding that is typical of this class. Mr. Darcy's fortune is further enhanced by his status as the estate's wealthy proprietor. Darcy's affluence is derived not only from the estate's operations but also from the "trade" that creates new state-profitable sources for the landed aristocracy. (Ispriyani, N. pg 36). Darcy's newfound wealth allows him to vacation in fashionable watering holes and to permit Wickham to continue to consider money as an underlying factor in the selection of a marriage partner, as it is directly linked to social prestige and family. In the society of Jane Austen, marital and economic considerations were inextricably linked. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Sir William Lucas, an affluent individual, has elevated his family's social status through a lucrative marriage and the accumulation of a fortune.

The same is true of Mr. Gardiner, who has attained regent social and financial status. The rank that a woman would seek in a marriage companion and the equivalent names of "street" during Austen's era are intricate. The expectation that the connection of a due was "superior" to the wife's was the result of social superiority, as measured by rank and affluence. The concept of "match" was of paramount importance in the context of marriage. Selecting a companion from the female of her station, who was the driving force behind marriages in Austen's era. The irony of these facts is that they render the examination of marriage more straightforward. (Brodowicz, M. 24)

In conclusion, Jane Austin's novels explores Englishness in depth. Austen neither rejects nor completely supports her time's beliefs. Instead, she envisions a world where morality and emotional intelligence are valued over riches and pedigree. Her depiction of class and societal ideals is realistic and ambitious, respecting her world's constraints but promoting justice and compassion. It depicts a complex Englishness formed by class and social ideals.

Austen criticizes her society's limitations through marriage, gender roles, inheritance, and morality. Her writing still prompts readers to consider what makes a person good, topics that are pertinent today as they were two centuries ago.

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