

DESTRUCTION OF SOCIAL CANONS IN JANE AUSTEN'S *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

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There is no doubt that the norms and canons which are accepted in the society of different periods are an essential part of history. The term "canon" is well-known, but only some people can estimate the scale of the influence of the canon on people's lives, imagine the absurdity which society could reach in the pursuit of the so-called behaviours.

**Materials and methods.** The material for our research was the novel "Pride and Prejudice" by Jane Austen, which was analyzed using comparative historical and contextual methods.

**Results and their discussion.** First of all, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by this term: "Canon (from ancient Greek κανών) is an invariable (conservative) and traditional set of laws, norms, and rules in various spheres of human activity and life"[1]. Gradually, this term has become synonymous with the concepts of "standard" and "sample", that is, to be canonical means to be correct and meet established standards.

English society in the 19th century is a period when women are not taken seriously, or rather; they are the most disenfranchised members of society. Women do not have the rights to enter into a contract on their behalf, dispose of property, or represent themselves in court. "For offences of the women sometimes punished more severely than men. A spouse could go to his wife's employer and demand that her salary be paid directly to him. For example, the husband of the actress Julia Glover did the same thing, he left her with her young children in 1840, but came back later when she was already shining on the stage. At first, the Director of the theatre refused to comply with his request, that's why the case was transferred to the court. Regretfully, the judge still decided in favour of the husband, because his rights were protected by the law. In addition to financial dependence, there was an even more painful dependency, it's the lack of rights to children. The child born in marriage belonged to his father (while the mother was responsible for the illegitimate one)" [2].

As it shows, the life of women of the 19th century was not so easy and carefree, as can be judged by the paintings of salon artists. Nevertheless, they didn't give up and continued to fight for their rights — those rights that are available to modern representatives of the female gender.

The Regency is a period in the history of England from 1811 to 1820, during which the Prince Regent ruled the state due to the incapacity of his father George III. It's a real fact that fewer people associate this era with this ruler. Everything is much more interesting: the Regency is identified with the main characters in Jane Austen's novel "Pride and Prejudice".

Jane Austen, an English novelist, is one of the few who tried to blur the boundaries of injustice, to show what girls can be, or rather, what they should be on the example of the main characters of her novels. Speaking of Jane Austen, it is difficult to imagine nineteenth-century England without the characters of her works, without their stories that excite from the very first lines. In her works, she always addressed topics that affected her and her contemporaries. For many, Jane Austen is not just an English writer for ladies, but the author who combined different stylistic layers in her works. Her texts have both the sentimental mood characteristic of the previous era of the eighteenth century, and realism, which appeared in the nineteenth century. She filled her novels with soft irony and parody of social canons. Thanks to this, the writer erased the rigid framework imposed by society. Austen's work was greatly influenced by her family and real-life events. She wrote about things, events that she witnessed every day. Jane believed: "A person, whether a gentleman or a lady, who doesn't enjoy a good novel, must be hopelessly stupid" [3].

At first glance, Jane Austen's novels may seem like simple love stories. However, in addition to love, she tried to show and prove something more to us and herself. Austen wanted to create an accurate picture of English society. This is the society in which Austen grew up and which she was able to observe throughout her life. Moreover, Austen provided her own opinion on specific classes and general social divisions in England. She tried to express how people of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries perceived social divisions and the possibility of shifting the class boundary, which is another characteristic feature of the writer's work. Besides, she tries to predict what consequences this may lead to. Austen introduced people from different classes, with different needs and problems. These groups of people reflect their social status and their capabilities.

It should be noted that one of the most famous novels of Jane Austen is "Pride and Prejudice". The author started working on it as a 21-year-old girl. It would seem, what can such a young person tell the reader? As seen, publishers did not immediately accept the first child of Jane Austen: only after the publication of her work "Reason and Feelings", in 1811, she published her first novel, subjecting it to a thorough revision.

So, in the novel "Pride and Prejudice", the reader is introduced to a typical Bennet family living on the Longbourn estate, located near the town of Meryton, Hertfordshire. The Bennet family isn't small: Mr Bennet, Mrs Bennet, and their five daughters: Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Lydia, and Catherine. They all differ from each other in their way. On the example of such an ordinary family, considering each of its members, we can see completely different representatives of English society in the 19th century.

Mr Bennet is the only man in the family, the father of amazing daughters, the man who keeps the whole family together: "In the character of Mr Bennet, so intricately combined vivacity of mind and a penchant for irony, isolation and flippancy, that his wife still failed to adapt to him for 23 years of marriage"[4].

Mrs Bennet is the mother of the girls, whose only purpose was to marry them off. Of the entertainment she had visiting and news. "She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was dissatisfied with something, she thought that her nerves weren't in order"[4].

The eldest daughter Jane is the first beauty of the estate. Kind, sensitive, a little naive and trusting. Jane's unadulterated simplicity of character, intelligence, and wisdom can win over anyone who has ever talked to her. She sees only good things in people. Some might find it frivolous and empty, as she tended to keep her thoughts and emotions inside and did not open up to everyone. At balls, she was modest, taciturn, and did not show strong emotions, unlike her younger sisters.

The Bennets' middle daughter, Miss Mary, stood out against the background of the family, but not on the best side. "Mary had no talent or taste"[4], she was "the only plain girl in the family who worked hard at self-improvement and was always happy to show herself"[4].

Frivolous, susceptible to the influence of a younger sister, a girl. This is how you can describe Miss Catherine (Kitty) Bennet - the fourth daughter of the Bennets, Lydia's best friend.

The Bennets' youngest daughter, "a tall, good-looking 15-year-old girl was her mother's favourite." [4] Kitty's best friend. Self-willed, flighty, spoiled girl. She only thinks about men. The owner of an impulsive character. The mother does not see any problems in Lydia's frivolous behaviour and only encourages her.

Let's turn to Elizabeth. The main character of the novel is unique. At the very beginning, she seems to us a simple girl who likes reading. But then, gradually, she opens up to us through her relationships with her family, sisters, and friends, with people she dislikes and loves, on the contrary. Her every word, every act, proves to the reader that she is extraordinary. The author is not very verbose in describing Elizabeth, only with the help of some phrases from other characters we have a kind of portrait of the girl: "...in her face, there is not a single correct feature... it seems unusually spiritual thanks to the beautiful expression of dark eyes" [4]. Also, when describing Elizabeth, Jane Austen repeatedly uses the words "laughter" and "laugh", but for all this, the main character does not have a drop of levity. Rather, something opposite, the ability to analyze and draw conclusions, observing the society around her, the ability to maintain a conversation and defend her point of view.

Elizabeth's actions describe her better than the words of other characters. For example, the way she went to her sister when she got sick, she walked through the mud without thinking about her appearance or what people around her would think about her. She just did what she thought was right. Or take, for example, the cases when she refused Collins's offer to marry him, and then Darcy's offer. After all, she is not rich, and after the death of their father, they can be deprived of the house, any other girl in her place would immediately agree. And in the case of Darcy, Elizabeth Bennet did not only refuse but she accused him of insulting her sister and hurting Wickham. According to these actions, we can conclude that it is not enough for Elizabeth's chosen one to be rich and wealthy, it is much more important to be a worthy person. Talking about Elizabeth, a brave, smart, self-respecting girl, we can safely say that she shows the world what a girl should be.

It should be noted that all the storylines of the work are intertwined around the two main characters, Elizabeth Bennet and Darcy. Initially, they formed an erroneous opinion about each other. And throughout the novel, each of us can catch ourselves thinking that the very name "Pride and Prejudice" is an inseparable part of the main characters. Darcy embodies "pride", and Elizabeth – "prejudice" against him, an arrogant, mysterious rich man.

Creating the characters in her novel, the writer tries to show what made them what they are – the environment, upbringing, as in the case of Darcy, or bad influence, heredity. Elizabeth Bennet resembles her mocking father, and Lydia Bennet is a copy of her mother in her youth.

It's hard not to agree that in modern society there are people like Lydia and her mother who are always in the pursuit of wealth and marriage, and those who see or try to see only good in the world like Jane, and someone who is not afraid to make their opinion of things, to break stupid stereotypes or destroy the canons of society, like Elizabeth.

**Conclusion.** Thus, I would like to say that the world of Jane Austen's novel is a world of ordinary men and women with their own goals, views and beliefs. This world is full of both selfish ladies, who judge everyone, and

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brave girls, who do not change their principles and beliefs. The conflicts, which the characters face, are caused by the social environment, its system of values, prejudices, and criteria for judging people. Of course, this world is not perfect. The accepted canons prevail, mistakes caused by improper education, bad influence of society are often made. But, one way or another, this is a wonderful world, full of various victories, moments of sincere happiness and love. The writer demonstrates the world of her characters in a very ironic manner. She does not impose her assessments on the reader, but it is not difficult for us to guess her opinion.

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