

Abstract

The presented master thesis deals with the work of Jane Austen. The author's novels are analysed from the perspective of the concept of the family, both from a literary and demographic point of view. These research questions constitutes two subject of the examination. The first subject is the family, as it is the cornerstone of Jane Austen's short stories. The objective of this work is to analyse the extent to which family relationships determine the possibilities of the main characters and heroines; how the heroines benefit from family ties or, on the contrary, want to escape from them. The conclusions show that Austen applied this determination in all studied novels. This work further examines the degree of cooperation and rivalry of the individual families in the novels. At this point, a significant diversity of interfamily relationships was found.

Secondly, this work maps selected demographic idiosyncrasies in Jane Austen's family, in the families from her short stories, and in historical demographic studies of England at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. This thesis focuses on the number and composition of individual families, their origin, social status, property relations and to some extent legal relationships, mainly related to the issue of inheritance and the situation of widows in this era. As part of the study of household composition, examples of cohabitation with unrelated persons as well as cases of adoption are provided. Furthermore, three basic demographic indicators are analysed: birth rate, mortality and marriage, taking into account the final celibacy and marriages of relatives. Attention is paid to the possibilities of choosing a profession, including approaches to the obligations of landowners, with emphasis on the issue of primogeniture. The conclusions of the study of these elements from Austen's life and from her work, are then compared with historical demographic research data for the period in England. Analyses and comparisons proofed that in many aspects Austen described reality very accurately, but she omits other aspects or drastically alleviates them. She does that in the interest of the author's intention, which determined the genre and plots, in the interest of "happy endings". Her experience and authorial direction thus influenced how and to which extent she adjusted reality.

Keywords

Jane Austen, novels, family, household, historical demography, demographic phenomena, England, turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, marriage policy, widowhood, social class, profession.