

## A STUDY ON ANALYSIS OF JANE AUSTIN'S REFLECTION OF MULTITUDE HUES OF FEMINISM IN HER PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

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### Abstract:

Reading Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* from a feminist perspective reveals Austen's desire for progressive marriages built on equality and love. Comparing the characteristics and eventual marriages of Austen's heroines, Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse, to other women and relationships in her novels highlights their uniqueness as women of agency who desire more than the society of Regency England offered women. Through such comparisons, Austen brilliantly displays her critique of the patriarchal society and the limitations that it set on women.

Her critique is further established in the two novels through her emphasis on breaking down the false patriarchal dichotomies that were prevalent in her society. Austen's fight for women's equality aligns her with other feminist thinkers of the time, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, and works to set the stage for what would later become first-wave feminism. Jurnal berjudul Feminism Analysis in Austen's Novel "Pride and Prejudice" bertujuan untuk menemukan isu-isu feminisme di dalam novel dan menganalisa efek-efek dari feminisme yang dialami oleh pemeran utama. Analisa menggunakan metode kualitatif dan Teori Feminis Modern dari Langermann dan Brantley (di dalam buku Ritzer dan Goodmann,2004) diterapkan pada studi ini. Hasil dari studi ini adalah penemuan-penemuan dari isu –isu feminisme karena adanya ketimpangan gender yang bisa dilihat dari sistem hak waris yang terbatas pada pewaris laki-laki dan isu sedikitnya peluang wanita untuk mengaktualisasikan diri. Dari aksi-aksi yang dilakukan pemeran utama dalam menghadapi ketimpangan gender, pemeran utama telah berhasil menyerukan Feminisme Liberal yang mendukung kesetaraan Gender. Kata Kunci : Feminisme, Isu, Efek

**Keywords:** Feminism, *Pride and Prejudice* Novel

### 1. Background of the Study

To view Jane Austen's novels as romance novels and nothing more is to miss out on the depth of Austen's writing and her critique of the society around her. Looking at Austen's novels from a feminist and historical perspective allows the reader to see the genius and historical significance of Austen's satire of the patriarchal society she was a part of as well as her desire for change in women's rights within the society. In addition, Austen's novels encourage readers to examine moral virtue on an individual basis, not on the basis of sex. The Regency-era in England was a time of patriarchal control and clearly defined gender roles. These societal boundaries kept women subordinate to their fathers, husbands, and even brothers. Societal boundaries were partly defined through one's socioeconomic standing within the community.

When looking at Austen's novels, it is therefore important to view them through the broader

lens of the socioeconomic climate and resultant restrictions that climate placed on behavior and conduct. Austen's novels allow one to explore deep inside the innermost workings of the middle-class society in England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Austen's novels make it apparent that she was a follower of Mary Wollstonecraft's progressive writings on the rights of women. This, as well as Austen's critique of societal norms, positions Austen as a writer ahead of her time. The freedom of character, freedom of speech, and overall agency that Austen's heroines display are representative of what would become first-wave feminism.

It is first important to establish the goals and context of first-wave feminism as each wave of feminism sought different aspects of freedom and equality for women. First-wave feminism, beginning around the midpoint of the nineteenth century, sought to challenge a husband's ownership of his wife including his authority over her social interactions and any money she brought to the marriage, fought for women's voting rights, and fought for the education of women so that they could be intellectual peers with men. The key to all these goals was found in the need to educate women to be on equal terms with men. During Austen's lifetime, middle-class boys were sent off to boarding schools and received a formal education covering everything from grammar to mathematics. Many writers use novel to share their ideas on something. An English novelist, Austen shares her ideas about feminism in her novel entitled *Pride and Prejudice* which is first published in 1813. The story highlights the problems of treatment toward women in the era. According to Langermann and Brantley (in Ritzer and Goodman, 2004) women are treated differently in society; they experience gender difference, gender inequality, gender oppression, and structural oppression. Because of the problems, feminist brought her idea about feminism. In addition, Sandbach in an article entitled "*Society Versus the Individual: Feminism at Work in Pride and Prejudice*" (2008) says that Elizabeth, the main character of *Pride and Prejudice* is a perfect example of a feminist character.

## 2. Problems of the Study

Based on the background above, the problems raised related to this topic are:

- What issues of feminism arise in the novel of *Pride and Prejudice*?
- What effects of feminism are experienced by the main character of *Pride and Prejudice*?

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* focuses on the concept of marriage and its function as a microcosm of society at large, portraying several different relationships at varying stages of life. Throughout the novel, the reader is left with the lasting impression that Elizabeth Bennet's marriage is far preferable to the others that are described. This intentional focus on Elizabeth's marriage exemplifies Austen's desire to support marriages based on affection and equality in comparison to the other marriages that appear in the novel. Austen's critique

of the restraints and restrictions that women of her time and place faced are evident when the varying marriages throughout the novel are compared to Elizabeth's. These marriages lack qualities Austen deems fundamental such as mutual respect, love, or the ability for the individuals in the marriage to improve the character of each other. In a society dominated by patriarchal control in marriages, Elizabeth and Fitzwilliam Darcy's enduring love story was meant to shake the foundations of marriage ideology as it was known in Austen's time and place—and perhaps still our own.<sup>2</sup> As I have noted, Austen includes an in-depth description of several marriages throughout the novel. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's marriage represents an unhappy union as the woman is not educated enough to be an equal partner to her husband. Austen's critique of Mrs. Bennet can therefore be seen as a critique of the society that created her. Mr. George Wickham and Lydia Bennet's scandalous union represents a relationship that completely defies societal laws and ends in a forced marriage with little happiness.

### 3. Aims of the Study

The aims of the study are classified into two parts:

- To find out the issues of feminism arise in the novel of *Pride and Prejudice*.
- To analyze the effects of feminism experienced by the main character of *Pride and Prejudice*.

### 4. Research Method

Research method consists of data source, method and technique of collecting data, and method and technique of analyzing data. Data source were taken from statements and conversations found in the novel entitled "Pride and Prejudice" by Austen which published in 1813. The data were collected by close reading and note taking and were analyzed qualitatively by applying Modern Feminist Theory by Langermann and Brantley (in Ritzer and Goodmann, 2004), the book entitled "Teori Sosiologi Modern".

### 5. Feminism Analysis in Austen's Novel "*Pride and Prejudice*"

According to Langermann and Brantley (in Ritzer and Goodman, 2004) men and women are situated in the society not only differently but also unequally. Specifically, women get less of material resources, social status, power and opportunities for self-actualization than men share their social location based on their class, race, occupation, ethnicity, religion, education, nationality, or other any socially significant factors.

Langermann and Brantley state that Liberal Feminism is the response of gender inequality as Liberal Feminism claims gender equality. This claim has the relationship with the Declaration of Independence which states that all men and women are created equal, that

they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable right. Those among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The appeal from Liberal Feminism is the values of individualism, choice, freedom, and equality of opportunity.

a) **Issues of feminism arise in the novel of *Pride and Prejudice*.**

**Statement (1)**

**Mrs. Bennet : Oh! My dear, I cannot bear to hear that mentioned. Pray do not talk of that odious man. I do think it is the hardest thing in the world that your estate should be entailed away from your own children; and I am sure if I had been you, I should have tried long ago to do something or other about it. (Austen, 1984: 83)**

**Analysis:**

According to Langermann and Brantley (in Ritzer and Goodman, 2004) men and women are situated in the society not only differently but also unequally. The unequal treatment in the novel of *Pride and Prejudice* can be seen in the system of entailment. The main character faces the system of entailment, It can be supported by the statement of Mrs. Bennet “I do think it is the hardest thing in the world that your estate should be entailed away from your own children” this rule of society forces the main character to marry her cousin to keep her estate and secure her family in economic problem as her parents do not have a son. In addition, according to Langermann and Brantley (in Ritzer and Goodman, 2004) women get less of material resources. By the system of entailment, it can be seen that woman is dependent on the property owned by her husband. However, Elizabeth refuses the proposal of her cousin, as she does not want to marry him for material interests.

**Statement (2)**

**It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighborhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of someone or other of their daughters. (Austen, 1984:1)**

**Analysis:**

Langermann and Brantley (in Ritzer and Goodman, 2004) state that women get less of power and opportunities for self-actualization; it can be seen in the

system of matchmaking. In the era, family has an important role to find men with large fortune to make their daughter well married. The statement “this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of someone or other of their daughters” reflects the thought of parents to marry their daughters and expect them well married. The

statement **“It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of wife”** claims a rich man needs a wife and a woman will be the object of family to marry a rich man to secure the family’s economy as a woman can get material comforts only through her husband’s property; therefore, woman cannot freely choose her spouse and is always dependent on family choice.

**b) Effects of feminism experienced by the main character of *Pride and Prejudice*.**

### **Statement (3)**

**Elizabeth :Indeed, Mr. Collins, all praise of me will be unnecessary. You must give me leave to judge for myself, and pay me the compliment of believing what I say. I wish you very happy and very rich, and by refusing your hand, do all in my power to prevent your being otherwise. In making me the offer, you must have satisfied the delicacy of your feelings with regard to my family, and may take possession of Longbourn estate whenever it falls, without any self-reproach. This matter may be considered, therefore, as finally settled. (Austen, 1984: 147)**

### **Analysis:**

According to Langermann and Brantley (in Ritzer and Goodman, 2004) Liberal Feminism claims gender equality. The appeal from Liberal Feminism is the values of individualism, choice, freedom, and equality of opportunity. The main character claims individualism by saying “You must give me leave to judge for myself, and pay me the compliment of believing what I say. I wish you very happy and very rich, and by refusing your hand, do all in my power to prevent your being otherwise. In making me the offer, you must have satisfied the delicacy of your feelings with regard to my family, and may take possession of Longbourn estate whenever it falls, without any self-reproach” as it expresses that she has right to choose and make her own decision.

She prefers to give her Longbourn estate and refuses the help from Mr. Collins as she does not want to sacrifice her own happiness to marry a man she does not love because of the system

#### Statement (4)

##### Elizabeth

**: I do assure you sir, that I have no pretension whatever to that kind of elegance which consists in tormenting a respectable man. I would rather be paid the compliment of being believed sincere. I thank you again and again for the honour you have done me in your proposal, but to accept them is absolutely impossible. My feelings in every respect forbid it. Can I speak plainer? Do not consider me now as an elegant female intending to plague you, but a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart. (Austen, 1984:148)**

##### Analysis:

According to Langermann and Brantley (in Ritzer and Goodmann, 2004) Liberal Feminism claims gender equality. The appeal of Liberal Feminism is the values of individualism, choice, freedom, and equality of opportunity. In addition, Mill in International Journal titled *John Stuart Mill and Individual Liberty* (2009) stated that an atmosphere of a freedom was necessary to assure all people opportunity to develop their individuality and women have the same right as men to develop their individuality. The main character said “I would rather be paid the compliment of being believed sincere” to express her freedom in expressing her individuality as she has spoken honestly about her feelings. By saying “My feelings in every respect forbid it” she strengthens her individualism developed as she bravely shows her refusal to a man she does not love and the statement “Do not consider me now as an elegant female intending to plague you, but a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart” definitely expresses her freedom in expressing herself as woman who has moral and right to speak and do what she has to do to develop herself as a human being.

#### 6. Conclusion

The issues of feminism in the novel were because of gender inequality that could be seen in the system of entailment and the lack of opportunity of self-actualization. The system of entailment in *Pride and Prejudice* was the future restriction of ownership of family estate to

particular descendants. It was limited to male heirs. As Mr. Bennet does not have a son, his estate was entailed to Mr. Collins. Woman acquires less of opportunity for doing self actualization as a woman faced the issue of matchmaking to secure family's economy; therefore, woman cannot freely choose her spouse and is always dependent on family choice.

The main character could face the issues of feminism and she experienced the effects of feminism in which she had successfully conveyed liberal feminism which supported the right of women in value of individualism, choice, freedom, and equality in opportunity. The effect of feminism in system of entailment was the claim of individualism in expressing the right to choose and determine her own life though she experienced quarrel with her mother. The effect of feminism in self-actualization was the claim of individualism as she can develop her individuality by speaking frankly about her feelings and she also expresses her freedom in expressing herself as woman who has moral and right to speak and do what she has to do to develop herself as a human being. Austen's novels, once a call for change in the education of women, the social terms of marriage relations, and gender roles, remain popular in today's culture as reminders of the freedom attained and the beauty to be found in stepping outside of society's structures. The fact alone that such stories have continued in popularity well after women achieved the agency they fought for clearly shows the importance of the ideal marriage that Austen and Wollstonecraft championed. The love story at the center of each novel is esteemed into the present as they invite us into a time so much different from our own. While we engage with Austen's work as a way of entering into an earlier era of English history, I argue that what we find within the text connects with us and relates to us despite the time period. Whereas women today might not be silenced in the same ways, the need for women to speak out, to control our own narratives, and to stand apart from the labels bestowed upon us are still relevant issues in today's society.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen created a variety of female characters that when compared to Elizabeth, show the need for the removal of the patriarchal shackles that bind them to tradition over agency and love. Through examining Mrs. Bennet and her lack of agency and forced ignorance, Elizabeth's actions to push patriarchal suppression to its breaking point is understandable as her mother's behavior shows the bleak outcome of minimal education and forced silence for women within the private sphere. Similarly, comparing Elizabeth's union with Mr. Darcy to Jane's marriage to Mr. Bingley and Charlotte's marriage to Mr. Collins allows Elizabeth's progressive marriage to shine out as a beacon of hope for agency and love. Jane marries for love although financial security comes with her marriage, but she does not grow as a character or help Bingley to grow through the match. Charlotte and Mr. Collins find themselves in an even worse place as Mr. Collins does not grow as a person through the match and Charlotte

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