



THE IMAGE OF FEMINIST CHARACTER IN “PRIDE AND PREJUDICE” BY JANE AUSTEN

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the portrayal of Elizabeth, the feminist heroine in Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice. The paper analyzes how Elizabeth challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations, and how her character represents feminist ideals. It also explores the impact of Elizabeth’s image on readers and its significance in the context of feminist literature. The research aims to provide a deeper understanding of Elizabeth’s character and its relevance in shaping the image of a feminist heroine in literature.

KEY WORDS: *Feminism, Heroine, women’s empowerment, patriarchy, marriage norms, Feminist literature, gender inequality, female representation, women’s rights.*

INTRODUCTION

In Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet is a strong, independent woman who challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations. She stands out as a feminist heroine, representing feminist ideals and inspiring readers with her courage and wit. This research paper explores how Elizabeth’s character defies the norms of her time and the impact of her image on readers. By analyzing her portrayal in the novel, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the significance of Elizabeth as a feminist heroine in literature.

METHODS

This research article employs a qualitative approach to analyze characteristics of the main heroine Elizabeth Bennet in “*Pride and prejudice*”. A close reading of selected passages from the book is conducted to identify and portray the image of Elizabeth employed by the author. These passages are examined to compare and show the difference in outlook between Elizabeth and other female characters. The analysis is based on the researcher’s interpretation and understanding of the text.

ANALYSIS

“*Pride and Prejudice*” is a classic novel that tells the story of Elizabeth Bennet, a strong-willed and independent young woman who defies societal expectations in pursuit of love and happiness. Perfect speeches in the novel helps to create a vivid image of Elizabeth and adds depth to the exploration of themes such as love, marriage, and social class. Metaphors like “wild and headstrong” and “fine eyes” convey Elizabeth’s strong-willed nature and her beauty. These help readers to understand Elizabeth’s character and her defiance of societal norms. Elizabeth’s love of walking and nature symbolizes her free spirit and love of independence. All of these contribute to the exploration of themes in the novel. Through Elizabeth’s character, the novel delves into the complexities of love, marriage, and social class, which adds depth and emotion to the narrative, making her a compelling and relatable heroine for readers.

DISCUSSION

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet challenges traditional gender roles by refusing to conform to society’s expectations of women. For example, she rejects a marriage proposal from Mr. Collins, despite pressure from her family to accept. This shows her independence and determination to make her own choices, rather than succumbing to societal pressures.

“Upon my word, sir,” cried Elizabeth, “your hope is a rather extraordinary one after my declaration. I do assure you that I am not one of those young ladies (if such young ladies there are) who are so daring as to risk their happiness on the chance of being asked a second time. I am perfectly serious in my refusal. You could not make ME happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who could make you so. Nay, were your friend Lady Catherine to know me, I am persuaded she would find me in every respect ill qualified for the situation.”[1,152]



As it can be seen, the author describes the main hero as a person who relies on her own attitudes and doesn't obey to the norms of society which are opposite to her understanding of the life.

Additionally, Elizabeth stands up for herself and other women, speaking out against the injustices she sees around her. For instance, she defends her friend Charlotte Lucas' decision to marry for financial security, even though it goes against the romantic ideals of the time. This demonstrates her support for women's agency and autonomy, regardless of societal norms.

Moreover, Elizabeth gives her opinions very decidedly for so young person. We can see this condition in speech between her and Lady Catherine:

Lady: "All! What, all five out at once? Very odd! And you only the second. The younger ones out before the elder ones are married! Your younger sisters must be very young?" [1,231]

Elizabeth: "Yes, my youngest is not sixteen. Perhaps SHE is full young to be much in company. But really, ma'am, I think it would be very hard upon younger sisters, that they should not have their share of society and amusement, because the elder may not have the means or inclination to marry early. The last-born has as good a right to the pleasures of youth at the first. And to be kept back on SUCH a motive! I think it would not be very likely to promote sisterly affection or delicacy of mind." [1,231]

In "Pride and Prejudice" Lady Catherine is a naughty and condescending character, and Elizabeth's interactions with her showcase Elizabeth's independence and refusal to conform to societal expectations. Elizabeth is not afraid to express her opinions and stand up for herself, even when confronted by someone of higher social standing.

Elizabeth's assertiveness in her dealings with Lady Catherine exemplifies her independent nature and commands respect. She bravely stood her ground and expressed her perspective without considering the influence or opinions of others, including Lady Catherine. Her direct statement, made to a woman of high social standing, demonstrates Elizabeth's determination to prioritize her own happiness over societal expectations.

"I have said no such thing. I am only resolved to act in that manner, which will, on my own opinion, constitute my happiness, without reference to YOU, or to any person so wholly unconnected with me." [1,495]

It is remarkable to see such feminist views in a woman during that era, defying traditional norms. Elizabeth's bold and unconventional behavior, alongside her outspokenness, challenge traditional gender roles and promote women's equality. Her actions deserve appreciation for their contribution towards enhancing women's status and equality in society.

Furthermore, Elizabeth's wit and intelligence set her apart as a feminist heroine. She engages in intellectual conversations with Mr. Darcy, challenging his assumptions and standing her ground in their debates. Her sharp mind and quick wit make her a compelling and admirable character, inspiring readers with her strength and resilience in the face of adversity.

"You mean to frighten me, Mr. Darcy, by coming in all this state to hear me? I will not be alarmed though your sister DOES play so well. There is a stubbornness about me that never can bear to be frightened at the will of others. My courage always rises at every attempt to intimidate me" [1,242]

As we can see from this speech that her defiance and determination to not be intimidated or frightened by Mr. Darcy's actions. She asserts her own strength and courage, claiming that she resolve only strengthens in the face of attempts to intimidate them. This sentence portrays Elizabeth as a strong-willed individual who is not easily swayed or cowed by others, expressing her independence and resistance to manipulation.

However, Elizabeth is able to learn from her mistakes. We see her transformation and this flow, this dynamism in her character, she is also responsible for the life charm she has for us. The process of her self-awakening begins with the receipt of his letters after the proposal of the lesson is rejected. She begins to read it, "with a strong prejudice against anything she says". But gradually she understands the truth about her words and is now upset by her own blindness:

"She grew absolutely ashamed of herself. Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think without feeling she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd." [1,287]

This dramatic moment of self-disclosure gradually leads to a complete understanding of reality. She quickly confesses her mistakes and feels guilty. She sees Wickham as a charming, extraordinary and unprincipled villain. She also realizes that she is the person



who best suits her by the nature and talent of her lesson. Her prejudice was wrong, but there was an element of honesty in it, and we appreciate and love Elizabeth Bennett for this honesty.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research article demonstrate the powerful role of feminist heroine Elizabeth Bennet in "Pride and Prejudice". Elizabeth is a strong and independent feminist heroine who challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations. Her intelligence, wit, and refusal to conform to societal norms make her a timeless and influential character. Through her story, Jane Austen presents a powerful and inspiring image of a woman who stands up for herself and fights for her own happiness, making her a role model for generations to come. Elizabeth's character continues to resonate with readers today, making her an enduring symbol of feminist strength and resilience. Overall, this research contributes to a comprehensive understanding of image of heroine of "Pride and Prejudice" and its enduring appeal.

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