Expressing Feminism in Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen Example

Background Information

Jane Austen was an English novelist born in Hampshire, South of England on 16th December in 1775. She was very close to Cassandra, her sister. When together, the two would share a bedroom but when apart they would write to each other almost every. After Jane's death on 18th July 1817, her sister testified how the two loved each other, "she was gilder of every pleasure, the sun of my life, and the soother of sorrow" (Bendit 245).
Introduction

Jane Austen authored one of the most celebrated novels, Pride and Prejudice in 1813. The book focuses on the social practices of the 18th and 19th century; a time when society was ruled by people who had economic as well as social power. The novel has a few components that focuses on the blending of the bourgeoisie with the aristocracy during Napoleon wars as well as the start of the industrial revolution (Cartmell). Interested in the equality between pragmatism and idealism, especially the romantic and individualistic nature of Elizabeth, the author shows Elizabeth struggle finding a place within the conservative as well as the social institution of marriage. Her struggle brings about the feministic nature.

When Catherine De Bough visited Elizabeth in her home, Elizabeth confronted her about her relationship with Darcy and responded saying ""he's a man like I am a man's daughter, thus we are the same."" (p 306). This is the first time Elizabeth expressed her feminism as opposed to the previous chapters. Feminism is the advocacy of women rights on the ground that men and women should be equal. From the beginning of the novel, Elizabeth was outspoken with lots of opinions to express as well as unafraid of oppression from those surrounding her. She neither equated herself with men before nor did she pave the way for her virtues plus ideas for her futures success. Feminism has evolved with time. An example of evolved feminism in the novel is demonstrated by Charlotte Lucas when she married Collins with the intention to live a good life. Charlotte is seen as a feminist from the first chapters of Pride and Prejudice when she makes a firm decision about her life. She states ""What I need is a palatial house and as per Collins personality, as well as connections in life I am certain that my chance with him is as fair as a majority of people can boast on starting a marriage life."" (p 109). In the first chapters of the novel, Elizabeth is seen a carefree as well as a witty lady and by making a strong statement against Catherine is an indication that she has risen in rank to be feminist. Equating herself to Darcy shows that Elizabeth has not only grown to be a feminist, but she has become comfortable with her life and cannot take criticism from any person.

Lack of horizontal hospitality is also imminent in Elizabeth. Horizontal hospitality is when members of an oppressed group fight each other because they can only project their anger to themselves and not to those in
power. During the late 18th and 19th century, men of higher class oppressed women by treating them as commodities and not valuing them hence leading to the horizontal hospitality amongst themselves. Women express their anger on each other by mocking, taunting, belittling as well as backbiting one another. In the novel presented, Elizabeth goes through different situations showing her horizontal hostility against women. For instance, Ms. Bingley who has a keen interest in Darcy dislikes Elizabeth when she notices Darcy's curiosity of Elizabeth. The hate from Bingley makes Elizabeth project her anger to Catherine, and instead of walking away from the situation, Elizabeth retaliates to Catherine comment. Such a way of standing up for oneself indicates the movement away from the conventional woman of that period to a modern as well as self-concerned person.

The final moment the author demonstrates Elizabeth as a feminist is when the latter is described to have a sporty demeanor by Georgiana. ""Georgina has a higher judgment in Elizabeth, although she listened with an astonishment bordering on alarm at her lively, manner of talking to her brother."" (P 333). Unlike Charlotte who took the conventional role of a woman by marrying Collins and caring for him, Elizabeth keeps her livelihood as well as freedom after she is married. From the Georgiana surprise, it is good to note that women conventionally change after marriage, acting as a homely caregiver who are submissive to their husbands will. Sporty means being fond of sports and calling Elizabeth a sporty woman elevates her masculinity to that of athletes. According to Wollstonecraft et al., ""I heard exclamation opposing masculine women and where are they to be found? If by such appellation men decide to inveigh against, their ardor in the shooting, hunting, as well as gaming, I shall cordially join in the cry; but if it would be opposing the imitation of manly traits... I think, wish with me, that they may every day grow to be more masculine."" (vol. 7) In this excerpt, Wollstonecraft and co-authors presents that calling a woman masculine raises them to the pedestal of being a person with talents, virtues, and knowledge; which are men's traits. Describing Elizabeth as masculine makes her receive the above qualities and once again being equated to Darcy, not only by herself but those surrounding her.

Throughout the novel, Austen shows Elizabeth being a constant headstrong personality. Elizabeth has been in a position to speak to an array of people from bourgeois to the aristocratic with a sense of wittiness; however, such traits do not prove her feminist character. Jane Austen sees women being intelligent and capable like men and
considers women inferiority in the society unjust.

Conclusion

Irrespective of being engaged for a day, Austen went against convention and chose to remain single in his life, earning a living through writing novels. Throughout the pride and prejudice, it is evident that the author wants to showcase Elizabeth's happiness by not marrying for financial gain but marrying for love. Elizabeth remains not only happy in her marriage but also feels respected by her husband as well as given freedom. Through Elizabeth's courage and ease when talking to Catherine regarding her demeaning comments, her respect plus empowerment for her fellow women, alongside being described as sporty by Georgina, Elizabeth ultimately becomes the feminist she hinted to be. The author reflects her courage as well as feminine beliefs via Elizabeth, whom both are feminists.

Works Cited

