**Workshop 11: The Application of Feminism to the Analysis of Jane Austen’s *Pride and prejudice***

For centuries women were discriminated and oppressed and it took a lot of courageous females and their sacrifice to bring about changes. One of such women is believed to be Jane Austen, whose novel *Pride and Prejudice* served as the feminist attitude to the Victorian Era. In order to reveal the inadequacy towards females during her time, Austen has created the character of Elizabeth Bennet, who has become the embodiment of feminist spirit.

One of the central motives of unfair attitude to females was illustrated in *Pride and Prejudice* through the legal rights of women of those days. Austen depicts the right of entailment in the novel that was restricted for women. Specifically, future ownership of real estate was limited only to male children or, if there are only females, the right was shifted to their husbands. In the novel, Mr. Bennet did not have male children and, therefore, his house in future will be owned by Mr. Collins, his cousin, despite the fact that Bennet has daughters. In the novel, Mrs. Bennet is terrified of such prospects and the idea that her children will have no right to live in their own house. The disability to bear right of entailment does not leave a chance for the eldest daughter to retain her position in the society, unless she finds a husband. Women in the Victorian age were forced to marry as soon as possible to simply survive in the society. It is important to remember that there were no jobs for women or any chance to improve their financial position by themselves. Women like Charlotte Lucas in the novel choose to accept and adjust to the patriarchal society, who marries only due to disinterested desire of an establishment. Charlotte explains her marriage as the acceptance of the rules in a male-dominated society, where the possibility to survive depends on woman’s entitlement to a man.

As it was noticed earlier, Elizabeth Bennet is not a revolutionary, but at the same time, she is has her own opinion and bright intellect to understand how unnatural women are treated in her society. She does not oppose to the institute of marriage in general, but Elizabeth finds the marriage under the pressure to be defective. Elizabeth uses her romanticism as the opposition to the requirement of the patriarchal society for a woman to settle down. She explains her position regarding marriage to Catherine, I am only resolved to act in that manner, which will, in my own opinion, constitute my happiness, without reference to you, or to any person so wholly unconnected to me. In this manner, Elizabeth articulates her personal position regarding the place in society. Despite the fact that she will remain a housewife, she chooses to marry for love, rather than to blindly follow the rules of the society. While Elizabeth’s feministic intentions are controversial in the traditional understanding of this concept, her thoughts and intentions point to her desire to disregard the strict rules she was living in. It is possible to mention how Elizabeth emphasizes the equality and the possibility to be equal at least in one instance. In this case, the main heroine advocates for women’s rights and illustrates the importance to have equal rights with men, even if it only embodies in the financial and social status.

Elizabeth is both deeply intellectual and romantic; she is feminine and does not oppose to her nature and intention to love and be loved. At the same time, she struggles against the position of a woman as an attribute to a man rather than a partner. Austen uses a happy ending in *Pride and Prejudice* as the manifestation of love and the ability to choose for a female. Austen herself has never been married and the reasons for this choice are not clear due to the scarce information about her life. At the same time, it makes her to be the follower of the beliefs she encapsulated in the Elizabeth’s character.

Elizabeth Bennet is a representative of those women who do not obey and act like they want to, decide by themselves and express their thoughts freely either positive or negative ones. That is why feminism in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* is expressed by the will of a woman who wants to be independent in her decisions, who wants to go against old rules and prove that every person either it is a man or woman are equal and have the right to think freely and do what they believe is best for them without blindly obeying to someone else’s desires and beliefs.