

**Tribhuvan University**

**Role Reversal: A Feminist Study of Jane Austen's *Emma***

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**Letter of Approval**

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### Abstract

This research work studies Jane Austen's novel *Emma* from the feminist perspective. It examines the title character Emma Woodhouse's search for equality and independence, which she does by reversing and challenging the traditional roles of males. As matchmaking was the area which the males generally used to deal, Emma attempts to subvert this role of males by acting as a matchmaker for Harriet. So, the character of Emma reflects some feminist elements: equality and independence. Equality as the element of feminist is reflected in Emma's opinion about marriage and in her decision to be a matchmaker that gives Harriet the power to choose; while independence as the feminist elements is reflected in Emma's determination in making judgments on her own. She decides to stay single and faces every obstacle boldly. Unlike the other women of the eighteenth century, Emma does not follow what the males tell her to do; instead she dares to question everything that her male counterparts say. This is especially seen in her relationship with Mr. Knightley who is an old and respectable person. She independently makes decisions of her own and takes responsibilities of those decisions as well. The feminist elements of independence have helped not only Emma herself to be mature and responsible person, but the independence will make her a better person eventually. This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapters introduces the whole thesis as it discusses Austin's life and works, an overview of Victorian novel and a critical analysis of the novel *Emma*. The second chapter discusses gender roles, feminism, its types and the contribution of feminism. Similarly, the third chapter analyzes the text *Emma* from the angle of feminism and gender issues. Finally, the fourth chapter sums up the main arguments put forward in the preceding chapters.

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