

Analyzing Darcy's Pride and Change from a Naturalistic Point of View

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In *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy's pride and change are two quite crucial elements that help to move the plot forward. However, Darcy's pride is more shrouded with a romantic evil that his pride has promoted the interaction between him and Elizabeth and contributed to their mutual understanding. While his change has convinced readers of the infinite power of love and affection. Darcy's pride and change had been explained more from a romantic point of view than a realistic one. *Pride and Prejudice* has been considered as a realistic novel that has exposed the reality of that time by presenting the lives of the middle-class, including their daily interpersonal communication and love entanglement. This paper aims to illustrate Darcy's pride and change from a naturalistic point of view by resorting to the basic theory of naturalism.

Keywords: pride, change, Darcy, naturalism, realistic

The Introduction of Naturalism

Naturalism holds that social conditions, heredity, and environment had an inescapable force in shaping human character. It emphasizes the effect of heredity and environment on human nature and action. While determinism and pessimism are two of its characteristics:

(1) For determinism, a naturalist author will persuade the reader to believe that a character's act and fate have been pre-determined by heredity and environment.

(2) For pessimism, naturalism emphasizes the evitable failure and tends to expose the dark side of life, including prejudice, discrimination, racism, and filth.

Darcy's Pride

Darcy's pride is not only the romantic catalyst of their love but also the product of the social and family environment.

His Pride was Grown from His Parents' Indulgence

Darcy's confession toward Elizabeth shows that he has been extremely spoilt by his kind parents, which give birth to his pride. "*Unfortunately, an only son (for many years an only child), I was spoilt by my parents, who, though good themselves (my father, particularly, all that was benevolent and amiable), allowed, encouraged, almost taught me to be selfish and overbearing; to care for none beyond my own family circle; to*

think meanly of all the rest of the world; to wish at least to think meanly of their sense and worth compared with my own" (Austin, 1797, p. 475).

His pride was first grown from the doting family environment.

His Pride was Substantially Formed by the Money-worship Social Environment

When people first heard the name of Darcy before meeting him, they conjectured that he must be "*much handsomer than Mr. Bingley*", and "*Darcy was looked at with great admiration by them*" (Austin, 1797, p. 12). Knowing Darcy's having good fortune people were inclined to think him a most amiable and admirable person. But ultimately there was no more than a few minutes that people in the ball discarded the illusion. This false speculation of Darcy's character was a perfect demonstration of money worship at that time. A man was more measured by his money than his act.

His Pride was Strengthened by the Tolerance of People Around Him

Mr. Darcy danced only once with Mrs. Hurst and once with Miss Bingley, declined being introduced to any other lady, and spent the rest of the evening in walking about the room, speaking occasionally to one of his own party. (Austin, 1797, p. 12)

It can be learned from this sentence that Darcy's manner in the ball is not civil and polite. He showed no intention to maintain his civility and to conceal his dissatisfaction. Instead, he divulged a little part of his despise. When Mr. Bingley tried to prevail over him on dancing with someone, Darcy replied, "Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with" (Austin, 1797, p. 13). The word "punishment" deeply illustrates Darcy's pride and his imagined superiority. His tone was bitter in his comment on Elizabeth. "*She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humor at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men*" (Austin, 1797, pp. 13-14). Sir William tried to flatter Darcy but receive no answer. "*He pauses in hopes of an answer, but his companion was not disposed to make any...*" (Austin, 1797, p. 32). Even treated in such an embarrassed and uncivil way, Sir William insisted on presenting Elizabeth to him to satisfy Darcy. But this tolerance will only work to enhance his pride.

Mr. Bingley seemed worried more about his friend's unhappiness and dissatisfaction rather than his friend's offending and violating others' feelings.

Even Charlotte Lucas, the best friend of Elizabeth, expressed that Darcy's pride is understandable and reasonable after knowing Darcy's uncivil remark toward Elizabeth.

From Sir William, it can be seen that people tended to voluntarily bear Darcy's pride and impoliteness while Darcy showed an inclination to ignore them.

Mr. Bingley preferred to pay no attention to Darcy's impolite speaking while Darcy showed his despise to the people around him.

Charlotte was willing to rationalize Darcy's pride while Darcy showed no intention to hide his dislike. No one came to expose him to his mistake and extreme pride except Elizabeth.

Just like Wickham said, "*The world is blinded by his fortune and consequence or frightened by his high and imposing manners...*" (Austin, 1797, p. 101), the party tended to selectively pay less attention to Darcy's rude manners. They were muted by his having good fortune.

Darcy's Change

Darcy's manner had changed both in interpersonal aspect and nuptial aspect.

In the interpersonal aspect, he treated Elizabeth's uncle and aunt with extreme civility which was astonishing and incredible. "*Such a change in a man of so much pride excited not only astonishment but gratitude...*" (Austin, 1797, p. 340).

In a nuptial aspect, he did not try to apart Mr. Bingley and Jane anymore instead he indicated and encouraged Mr. Bingley to pursuit his love and make a proposal. His change was the product of his partiality toward Elizabeth and realizing of his false observation. However, it is also a change derived from the influence of his environment or nature.

The Influence of Heredity May be Attributed to Darcy's Change of Manner

The evidence of the fact that Darcy's parents were generous and kind can be inferred from his housemaid who said, "*But I have observed that they who are good-natured when children are good-natured when they grow up*" (Austin, 1797, p. 319). Darcy's parents' good nature, kindness, and generosity can even be verified by Wickham's statement.

Darcy did quite revere his parents. We can feel it from his speaking, "*My excellent father died about five years ago, and his attachment to Mr. Wickman was to the last so steady*" (Austin, 1797, p. 260). Wickham is the son of the late Darcy's steward who was regarded as inferior to Darcy's family. Both Lady Catherine and Miss Bingley shew their despise toward Wickham's humble parentage. But Darcy's father treated him with affection and authentical love and told Darcy to give him a decent job if it was possible. To treat people politely and authentically regardless of his or her social status is a lesson Darcy has learned from his childhood by his parents. That is one of the indispensable reasons for Darcy's change of manner, his change was not only derived from his partiality but contained a hereditary element.

The Influence of the Family Environment May be Ascribed to His Change

Lydia's elopement is an extremely immoral one that will throw all her sisters into the shame of immorality. At first, Darcy, accompanied by Miss Bingley, showed his despise of Elizabeth's sister's unsuited manners in the ball and her humble connections. In his stereotyped thinking, he thought that a girl from a less blessed class cannot be very intelligent and sensible instead they tend to be more stupid and simple-minded and are prone to do inelegant things.

His former despise may have been aggravated by Lydia's immoral elopement. Under this situation, his disappearing partiality toward Elizabeth is reasonable and unblamable, even Elizabeth thought that her charm was subdued by her sister's shameful conduct. On the contrary, he endeavored to rescue her sister's fame as well as hers and her family's. Partiality alone is not enough to explain his acts. Family's influence may be a factor.

His sister, Georgiana, is a girl who has been deceived by Wickham and has planed immoral elopement with him, too. As a brother, Darcy was more disposed to attribute his sister's stupid and indecent elopement to her innocence and limited experience, but his sister's event did shake his stereotype. Everyone may make mistakes no matter he or she is rich or not.

The Harshness of Reality May be Attributed to His Change

"As he said this, she could easily see that he did not doubt a favorable answer" (Austin, 1797, p. 246). This is Elizabeth's inner thought after Darcy's first proposal. At first, Darcy was not acting less conceitedly than Mr. Collins, was extremely proud of his possession, and was not afraid of rejection. We can see a man flattered by his having good fortune and better social status condescended to wait for an answer with assurance.

Rejection received from Elizabeth is a great hurt to Darcy and his pride. Wealth and better social status illuded many people, including Darcy, that they have the power to control their lives. They can get beauty, happiness, respect, fame, and everything they want because of their possession of considerable wealth. But this is just their false imagination and the transient illusion. Though wealth can give one some privileges but it does not mean that they are masters of their own lives. Temperamental illusion will be removed by the harsh reality. According to the determinism of naturalism their lives are controlled by heredity and environment. The social environment did make it possible that much human happiness can be bought with money, but true love cannot be traded. One can set out to come true his or her ambition but this ambition cannot be beyond the limits set by the environment.

The suffering he has experienced and the harsh reality worked together to make him change his mind and persuade him not that proud and arrogant.

Conclusion

Darcy's pride is not only a romantic inducement of his love entanglement with Elizabeth but a result of a special social environment in which wealth or fortune was thought more important than anything else. And there is a lot of tolerance for the rich. The money worship at that time which permeated into many aspects of lives was exposed in this novel. Many characters in this novel had possessed his or her false pride, and the presentations of their pride are various.

Lady Catherine liked to interfere in other people's affairs, Miss Bingley despised Jane's connections and Wickham's humble parentage and Mr. Collins was proud of his acquaintance of the wealth although their lifestyles are beyond his reach. The pervaded arrogance and self-importance among the English middle-class were exposed in this novel.

While Darcy's change was also derived from his environment and heredity, though his partiality was an indispensable factor. He has been unconsciously influenced by his parents' kindness and inherent generosity. His family member's act impaired his stereotype and his awareness of his weakness and limitation made him more modest. His change can be explained from a realistic or even naturalistic point of view.

In a word, this work is not only featured with romanticism but also characterized with realistic elements. The money worship, the self-conceit of the better class people at that time, and the unfair social values had been exposed by analyzing Darcy's pride and change. The author may not comment on these phenomena at that time but she has presented a vivid and real picture of the value systems of 18th century English society. And through the change or moral growth of Darcy, the author seemed to convince the readers that though there are inevitable disappointments and pessimism in our lives which we cannot control and predict, we should learn to adjust ourselves, like Darcy, to the changed situation and harsh reality. Just like Elizabeth in the novel said, *"A scheme of which every part promises delight, can never be successful; and general disappointment is only*

warded off by the defense of some little peculiar vexation" (Austin, 1797, p. 308). Though according to the theory of naturalism people cannot control his or her fate tightly and are doomed to be circumscribed by his or her social environment and heredity, people can face disappointment dialectically like Elizabeth.

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