Admiration to Love, Love to Matrimony: A Russellian Reading of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

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Shelley's belief of unrestrained love is opposed by Russell on the very basis of his creative output. It seems as though wherever love comes easily, poetry cannot; and it is for this reason that his works find their way into the world. The social continuum remains undisturbed when love sees a smooth requital and there does not arise a need for either a catalyst speeding the fulfillment of love or, a channel for expressing one's grief and disappointment. On the other hand, if the social continuum is disturbed too heavily, romantic love might give up altogether. There is then required a "delicate balance between convention and freedom" (*Marriage and Morals*, 46) that may allow romantic love to revel in the restraints imposed upon it, but not wither under the pressure of stringency. What Darcy does in *Pride and Prejudice* is no less than love poetry, overcoming obstacles that seem insurmountable by social as well as personal standards.

Russell remarks that it was since the period of French Revolution that the idea of marrying for love found its way into the minds of the young. In the 19th century, he claims that the novels dealt with "the struggle of the younger generation to establish this new basis for marriage as opposed to the traditional marriage of parental choice" (Ibid., 46) and Austen's novels too remained no stranger to utilising the force of such an idea. It is, therefore, my chief concern in this paper to navigate through various aspects of the love relation between Elizabeth and Darcy, ranging from gaining attention through admiration to love and finally entering the state of matrimony. Taking as starting points the Russellian interpretation of such concepts as conventional education, "ordinary day to day unhappiness", "married love", self absorption and "the good life", I have divided the paper into four sections.

The first section deals with how an escape from unconventional training makes Elizabeth more lively and sincere than the other female characters of the novel, thus

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attracting Darcy's attention. Her imperfect education has also rendered her expectations quite different from what Darcy is used to seeing in women. It urges him to reevaluate his way of life and choice of behaviour, and this particular refashioning is what I have focussed on in the second section. The third section argues how the various roles that Darcy embraces are witnessed by Elizabeth, thus giving her an idea of married life with Darcy. In the last section, I have discussed the nature of love that Russell deems best in marriage, the substance of which is already to be found in the attachment of Elizabeth and Darcy, thus predicting a successful marriage.

Admiration of the Unconventional

Elizabeth's lack of "conventional education" (*Marriage and Morals*, 77) that Russell mentions more than once is fundamental to her love relation with Darcy. In conventionally educated women, such as Jane and Miss Bingley, Russell claims a "physical reserve and an unwillingness to allow easy physical intimacy" (Ibid., 77). Charlotte and Elizabeth discuss the repercussions of such guarded behaviour: the latter believes that Jane's behaviour is justified, since it is appropriate to guard one's emotions in public while the former has keen observations on the matter. A lady may guard her emotions in the company of others, but "(i)f a woman conceals her affection with the same skill from the object of it, she may lose the opportunity of fixing him" (Austen, 23-24).

It is in a similar manner that Jane behaves. Consider the following words in Darcy's letter to Elizabeth: "I remained convinced from the evening's scrutiny, that though she received his attentions with pleasure, she did not invite them by any participation of sentiment" (Austen, 219). Jane's reserved behaviour is misunderstood by Darcy as indifference, a problem he never has to face with Elizabeth. One could argue that Jane's behaviour is not a consequence of her education but her reserved nature; however my reading inclines me towards the former. As evidence, I turn to Elizabeth's opinion of her behaviour: Jane appears to her sister as not displaying enough emotion and possessing a "constant complacency" and no "great sensibility" (Austen, 231). Here, Elizabeth's selection of words implies a deliberate choice on the part of her sister to act as she does.

Darcy's suspicion of Jane and preference for the openness of Elizabeth's emotions is a welcome move to the reader.[1] Elizabeth is the only one who does not engage in active husband-hunting, and in fact is often keen on ruining Darcy's attempts at courtship. The characters she shows an inclination towards are Wickham and Fitzwilliam, but never Darcy. There is no doubt that Elizabeth's education is incomplete, and that this largely contributes to her shocking (at least to other characters) behaviour. Her resistance to an offer of dance does not insult Darcy's pride and unexpectedly, he is found thinking of her with "complacency". Moreover, the fact that she favours walking in the mud to see her sister is symptomatic of a careless attitude towards the required code of conduct (Miss Bingley calls her wild).

Darcy is conflicted when faced with such a situation: conventional conduct would demand that she not undertake such an exertion, considering firstly, she is a lady and it may tire her and secondly, her appearance may become untidy. "(D)ivided between

admiration of the brilliancy which exercise had given to her complexion, and doubt as to the occasion's justifying her coming so far alone" (Austen, 36), Darcy's line of thought pursues only the former path of concern. Moreover, her fine eyes are "brightened by the exercise" (Austen, 39). He is clearly not disturbed by her clear lack of accomplishments either. Elizabeth is deft enough to point out how his idea of a fully accomplished woman is realistically impossible and his question that soon follows is genuine and free of condescension: "Are you so severe upon your own sex, as to doubt the possibility of all this?" (Austen, 43). It is as though he waits eagerly for her opinion, when suddenly faced with gaps in his knowledge.[2]

Elizabeth's regard (or lack of it) for Darcy is known to him, and yet, he confesses his feelings to the former, believing that his fortune and connections are enough to win her hand in marriage. Therefore, it comes as a shock to him when she shows no inclination to marry for great social benefits. Darcy's attraction is also based on, as previously mentioned, a lack of knowledge. A lack of conventional training makes Elizabeth an unpredictable woman who cannot fit into available models of femininity. Her words are direct but her actions often escape his understanding and consequently, invite his attention.

Admiring the Unhappy Darcy

The earliest account of Darcy begins by describing his mien as "noble" (Austen, 10-11); soon, however, his manners are found unpleasing, allowing him to be easily dismissed by the assembly as "proud" and "unworthy" and his countenance "forbidding" and "disagreeable" (Ibid., 10-11). He is also "above being pleased" (Ibid., 10). My reasoning attempts to go far beyond his displeasure with the present company. Even in the presence of his friends, he remains grave and unyielding, often unwilling to disclose his thoughts. It must be obvious where my argument leads: Darcy is posited as the Byronic hero of the author's domestic narrative (Wootton, 35).[3] I will not emphasize much; one has seen plenty of attempts to absolve Darcy of his faults by establishing him as one of the classic Byronic heroes. However, I am more concerned about the process that the hero undergoes to become an object of admiration for the heroine. Does he transform himself overnight out of love or is he readily domesticated by a strong and willful heroine?

There has been a great amount of scholarship about the heroines' pursuit of happiness but hardly any that talks of Darcy's lack of it.[4] Elizabeth is not only the prize of his pursuit but also the source of his happiness as the novel comes to an end. What then causes Darcy's initial unhappiness? At its simplest, Russell's view of a narcissist can be summed up in two statements: firstly, a narcissist admires himself and looks unto others only with the object of being admired, and secondly, even when the narcissist is admired by others, he is never truly happy and this unhappiness leaves him listless and bored. With regards to the megalomaniac, Russell adds only one thing to the existing definition of a narcissist: the desire to be "powerful rather than charming…feared rather than loved" (*The Conquest of Happiness*, 9). Following these definitions, it would

appear that Darcy is a curious mix of narcissist and megalomaniac. Since his narcissism and megalomania have not reached an extreme, they can be cured effectively.

Austen's design in placing Darcy in a complete contrast to Bingley is evident: Darcy "declined being introduced to any other lady, and spent the rest of the evening in walking about the room..." (Austen, 11). Dancing with a lady in the room is compared by him to enduring a punishment since all of them are with "little beauty and no fashion" and "slighted by other men" (Austen, 18). At the Lucas residence too, he stands "in silent indignation…to the exclusion of all conversation, and was too much engrossed by his own thoughts" (Austen, 27). Conveniently situated within the bubble of his complacency, he refuses to take Elizabeth's resistance seriously. At this point, he does not care about her thoughts: he is content to observe her from a distance like a spectacle or a curious object. The first time he shows any concern for her is when she walks all the way to Netherfield. This is soon followed by a desire to know her opinion on subjects such as that of accomplishments (something I have dealt with in the section "Admiration of the Unconventional").

Darcy's increasing admiration for Elizabeth is made plain to the reader, although Elizabeth's shift in opinion is much more subtle and tricky to notice. Considering her low opinion of him in the beginning, where exactly lies the shift in her view? Various answers have been suggested: her latent sexual attraction towards Darcy, the content of Darcy's second letter,[5] the wealth and grandeur of Pemberley, her gratitude for saving Lydia and so on. I believe that the answer is more complicated than an isolated incident. Darcy's repeated attempts to engage in conversation with her contribute to softening the verbal blow that she first received from him and it is from snippets of their conversations that she is later able to understand his character.

Although she expresses her hatred for Darcy's behaviour at every turn, she never publicly insults him, thus admitting that he commands some semblance of respect. Elizabeth's first defense for Darcy comes against her own mother, alerting her to the fact that he must often be misunderstood for his direct manner of speech. Even though it is, in part, a cover up for her mother's embarrassment, the conciliatory shift in Elizabeth's speech is slight but noticeable. At the Netherfield ball, she is "determined to hate" (Austen, 101) him, signifying habit more than feeling and later, she grows "vexed" (Austen, 110) at Darcy overhearing her mother announce the insignificance of his presence. Their progress is halted by one episode or another for, at first Wickham engages her attention with his account of Darcy's duplicity and, then, Fitzwilliam with his charm and unsuspecting disclosure of his cousin's interference. This is also one of the chief reasons why one cannot follow Elizabeth's warming up towards Darcy; something or the other comes up to undo his efforts.

Darcy's lack of eloquence doesn't recommend him either. The narrator points out: "He was not more eloquent on the subject of tenderness than of pride." Moreover, talking of "his sense of her inferiority—of its being a degradation—of the family obstacles which judgment had always opposed to inclination… was very unlikely to recommend his suit" (Austen, 211). Although warm to the idea of making a self

centered man fall in love, she does not take kindly to the truth. What he says, Elizabeth knows to be true, but she too follows the unspoken rule of not allowing an outsider to criticize one's family. Dismissing his proposal as quickly as possible, she breaks his illusion of security. Darcy realizes that he needs to win Elizabeth with much more than lure of good fortune. And thus, he proceeds with rectifying the situation in a very linear manner. Getting to the bottom of Elizabeth's dislike, he addresses the three allegations made against him in a letter.[6]

Wickham's story is direct enough to require no explanation, but critics have always had qualms about his unapologetic tone in influencing Bingley.[7] I do not wish to dwell much on this charge, however, given his small circle of friends coupled with the genuine belief in Bingley's innocence, Darcy extends his paternalistic concern to Bingley, whom he very often treats like a child.[8] Elizabeth too has begun to understand this, for she says to Wickham, "When I said that he improved on acquaintance, I did not mean that either his mind or manners were in a state of improvement, but that from knowing him better, his disposition was better understood" (Austen, 260).[9] Furthermore, she realises that Darcy is also beyond ostentation. A visit to Pemberley has her admiring his taste when she notices how the furniture there is "suitable" and devoted to "elegance" (Austen, 272).

Elizabeth is tempted into thinking how she could have been the mistress of all the elegance that surrounds her at the moment.[10] Overcoming temptation for the estate echoes the larger suppression of her desire for the owner. She had been certain of Darcy's narcissism; however, the warm manner in which Mrs. Reynolds talks of him creates a ripple effect. Along with credibility, taste and loyalty, Darcy has added another point in his favour: he bears a good temper towards those in his employment. The various roles of Darcy that Elizabeth is introduced to are fundamental to her growing admiration. I intend to take this argument further in the next section. For now, it would suffice to say that Elizabeth's discomfort when confronted with Darcy and "the alteration in his manner since they last parted" (Austen, 278) is a sign of things to come.

Just as Darcy's growing admiration (or attraction) is followed by a wish to know Elizabeth's thoughts, she too longs to know "what at that moment was passing in his mind; in what manner he thought of her, and whether… she was still dear to him" (Austen, 280). She realises that like her, Darcy is at unease, and like Darcy, she too is interested in knowing. His warm welcome to the Gardiners seems too good to be a compliment paid to her. Darcy's linear manner of targeting Elizabeth's misgivings is still at work. He has worked on forgoing his insulation and is now edging Elizabeth into his inner circle by first, mentioning that Bingley and his sisters are to make an appearance soon and second, expressing his sister's desire to meet her. His efforts serve their purpose, for she has reached a point where she can claim to know Darcy's character: "Elizabeth here felt herself called on to say…[that] his actions were capable of a very different construction; and that his character was by no means so faulty… as they had been considered in Hertfordshire" (Austen, 285).

Elizabeth's meeting with Georgiana is another attempt by Darcy to win her favour, and it is through observing Georgiana's character that she entertains the idea of a Darcy who is not as proud as he is shy. Darcy's linearity of efforts finds itself victorious in Elizabeth's intense (and planned for) observation. Consider the following passage:

> …in all that he said, she heard an accent so far removed from hauteur or disdain of his companions, as convinced her that the improvement of manners which she had yesterday witnessed .... (T)he difference, the change was so great, and struck so forcibly on her mind… Never, even in the company of his dear friends at Netherfield, or his dignified relations at Rosings, had she seen him so desirous to please, so free from self-consequence, or unbending reserve as now, when no importance could result from the success of his endeavours, and when even the acquaintance of those to whom his attentions were addressed, would draw down the ridicule and censure of the ladies both of Netherfield and Rosings. (Austen, 290-291)

It is after this that Elizabeth acknowledges the absence of hatred towards him, the presence of respect for his character and the regard for his qualities; in addition, she is grateful to him for forgiving her after her hasty refusal and equally hasty misjudgment of his actions.

Elizabeth's consciousness is laid bare for the reader to observe but not the same liberty is given to the reader with regards to Darcy's psychology. The possibility of love and family enters Darcy's life when he learns to expand his vision of interest and accepts the ability to depend on someone for happiness. Unable to cope with someone else being the source of his unhappiness, when it has always been his decision to be aloof and miserable, he resolves to confront the source only to realise that his problem has no easy solution. Darcy has to accept that his discontent is no longer his own doing, and the center of it has shifted. She has become its source and to bring this to an end, he must seek her company. The process is not so direct, and his actions and demeanour in past have not made him a potential match in her eyes. He has to overcome his own unhappy and miserable self before seeking her love.

Elizabeth's Glimpse into Matrimony

In the last section, I wish to discuss how Elizabeth's acceptance of Darcy's proposal is due to a glimpse into married life that he provides to her. Darcy begins by providing her a picture of good fortune and connections, which does not prove to be enough for Elizabeth. It is probable that at this point in the novel, she has not imagined what it would be to become the mistress of Pemberley. Her visit to the estate makes her realise how grand life could have been. However, this is mere material temptation; Darcy tempts her with far more than his wealth. He tempts her with his person more than he does with his purse. I have already discussed Darcy's linear approach to woo Elizabeth and eliminate her misgivings about him. Through this approach, Darcy lets Elizabeth's imagination feed upon a perfect picture of married life. Some aspects of the picture are deliberate, while others not so much.

Darcy's coldness is far more unappealing to Elizabeth over anything else. His "lack of zest" (*The Conquest of Happiness*, 122) makes him unattractive to her, a lack she

never faces in either Wickham or Fitzwilliam. Love acts enough of a motive for him to seek a solution. "The man who feels unloved…may make desperate efforts to win affection, probably by means of exceptional kindness" (*The Conquest of Happiness*, 122). Darcy is aware that acts of material kindness are not likely to win her over and now, his kindness must make an appearance. He begins by making an effort to clarify each act that he has indulged in. Here, he has convinced Elizabeth that she not only deserves confidence, but also explanation. Even after a hasty rejection of his proposal, he puts himself in her path again, only to put his pleasant self on display. Elizabeth's prejudice is long forgotten by him since he never even remotely alludes to it.

At the outset, she has familiarized herself with the workings of Pemberley, thereby witnessing Darcy's role as an efficient and kind patriarch. Later, he also introduces himself to her as the brother of Georgiana, a much more personal role. In his surroundings, he appears relaxed and engages in pleasant conversation. Darcy has given proof of bearing a paternalistic affection towards Bingley, and now looking at him with Georgiana, Elizabeth cannot help but view him as a father. Lydia's rescue strengthens her opinion, and Darcy appears in her eyes as someone who fixes situations when they are beyond repair. Thus, presenting a consolidated picture of himself as an efficient patriarch, generous employer, indulgent brother, wise father figure, a warm member of the society and an amiable family man, Darcy offers Elizabeth a rosy view of how married life would be with him. She speaks her mind when she tells Lady Catherine: "(T)he wife of Mr. Darcy must have such extraordinary sources of happiness necessarily attached to her situation, that she could, upon the whole, have no cause to repine" (Austen, 394).

Married Love

An intense pursuit of romantic love might lead one to a blind marriage wherein expectations are high and nothing seems unattainable. Strong love might lead one up to the stage of marriage but the life thereafter cannot be sustained on love alone. And this is where Austen allegedly chooses to stop. Anything after marriage disrupts her idealistic romantic picture, or taking the argument further (if one prefers the ironical readings of her narratives), exhausts her irony. In my opinion, however, Austen seems to portray a love that Russell deems best in marriage: intimate, affectionate and realistic. The love portrayed between Darcy and Elizabeth goes far beyond a romantic one. Instead of a "glamorous mist" (*Marriage and Morals*, 77), Elizabeth appears to Darcy as "tolerable" and "slighted" and Darcy's pride is easily discovered by Elizabeth. With such an honest disclosure of fault on both sides, it becomes impossible to retain any mystery within marriage. With all the potential difficulties removed, one can hardly argue that the marriage has a problematic future. The allegation, then, of Austen not dealing with love after marriage does not stand very strong since she has cleared the air, so to speak.

The relationship between the two characters does not begin at love or friendship and their expectations are at the lowest point possible. If Austen genuinely believes, as her narrator does, that being fond of dancing is one step closer to falling in love, she makes sure that Elizabeth makes a public vow never to dance with Darcy. It is easy for

the Austen to lead the characters to a point higher than this and it is because they view each other in the worst light that they can progress into a state of realistic acceptance of each other's faults, giving way to a successful match. Indeed for Darcy, the time taken to fall in love is much less than the time Elizabeth takes, but it is Darcy's character that requires more development to be fallen in love with.

Their insistence on knowing about each other's thoughts well has been discussed earlier. Darcy is clearly unable to persuade her into acknowledging him. With a growing interest, he does not remain satisfied with "thinking of her with some complacency" (Austen, 29) or "meditating on the very great pleasure which a pair of fine eyes in the face of pretty woman can bestow" (Ibid., 29). Darcy is almost insistent upon making her talk, as if by merely hearing her talk, he may gain access to her thoughts and perhaps know of his chance at happiness. Elizabeth remains detached from Darcy for a long time, harbouring nothing more than a strong dislike. It is when she is aware of the emotional turmoil within her that she wishes to know his thoughts. For both the characters, their interest in each other begins with a strong desire to know the detailed workings of each other's minds.

In a strategic move, Darcy reveals a secret that could ruin his sister's reputation, the reputation that he has been most insistent upon preserving. He gives Elizabeth the chance to damage his social standing by making himself vulnerable. Even after Elizabeth's refusal, he wishes to acquaint her with his sister. It is clear what Darcy is aiming for: intimacy. He is not the only one with a family secret however; Lydia's elopement becomes another hush-hush affair. He promises Elizabeth to keep it a secret and even goes one step further: he makes sure that the matter is dealt with in a private manner, taking Lydia temporarily under his guardianship. I must quote Russell here: "Love…will lead intelligent people to seek knowledge, in order to find out how to benefit those whom they love" (*The Good Life*, 10). And this is what Darcy does when he leaves in pursuit of the eloped couple.

Their affection for each other extends to their families as well. Elizabeth takes an honest and immediate liking to Georgiana while Darcy leaves behind all his reservations. Both are aware of the embarrassing aspects of each other's families, having been at the end of two humiliating situations: Lady Catherine's visit to Elizabeth and Mrs Bennett's public shaming of Darcy on more than one occasion. In such cases, it is more a technique of evasion than genuine affection for some of each other's relations. The relations that matter, however, such as Georgiana (for Darcy) and Jane (for Elizabeth), are handled with care. Their marriage entails not only taking liberties with each other but also learning new life values. Georgiana's shock is proof of their successful married love: "(T)hough at first she often listened with an astonishment bordering on alarm, at her lively, sportive, manner of talking to her brother [but] (b)y Elizabeth's instructions she began to comprehend that a woman may take liberties with her husband…" (Austen, 430).

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Notes

[1] Bander makes an acute observation: Darcy is attracted to Elizabeth because of the same openness of nature that he appreciates in Bingley.

[2] I believe it to be a genuine query as it is an open ended question. Darcy's usual speech consists of statements, passed as indifferent and disinterested remarks that covet no response. In this particular incident, he not only asks for her opinion but also dismisses a harsh remark made by Miss Bingley against Elizabeth, by cleverly turning it against the latter.

[3] Wootton suggests that introducing the Byronic hero in a domestic narrative allows the reader to know him more intimately and in a more dramatic fashion.

[4] Claudia Johnson's chapter is one good example, although Johnson talks of what all characters, irrespective of their sex, seek to find happiness. The only exceptions are Darcy and Lady Catherine who deprive other characters of it by refusing to please them.

[5] Again I refer to Bander's analysis which cites Elizabeth's reason for accepting Darcy as a result of a long process of introspection.

[6] Although Darcy mentions only two offences in the letter, I read three in Elizabeth's thoughts as expressed by the narrator. The third and the initial offence is that of pride, which Darcy does not address perhaps because he has already taken the pains to behave in a more open and indulgent manner towards Elizabeth.

[7] Susan Fraiman refers to Elizabeth's gratitude for Lydia's rescue as "private softening" (363) and the later acceptance of proposal as "final, public surrender" (Ibid.). This reading looks at the power struggle between Darcy and Elizabeth, and concludes that Elizabeth ultimately submits to the paternal figure of Darcy.

[8] Fraiman believes that Darcy's paternalism extends to all his friends and dependants, however I think it only extends to those who he believes to be in a genuine need of it. I do not find any evidence of Darcy forcing Elizabeth into modifying her behaviour or apologizing for her mistakes.

[9] I refer to Fraiman here once again, she states that, "I am arguing, however, that Darcy woos away not Elizabeth's "prejudice," but her judgment entire" (363). The admission of Elizabeth to Wickham in this particular instance is hardly an ignorant one however; Elizabeth is aware of Darcy's character and does not let it escape her judgment, and she only begins to understand the reasons that give way to his disposition.

[10] It is my understanding that Elizabeth prides herself on wanting to marry for love. Even though her thoughts lead her to view herself as the potential mistress of the estate, she can never fully make peace with the way Darcy sees her family.

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