

Pride and Prejudice and Fifty Shades of Grey

Wealthy Heroes and Smitten Heroines

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Abstract

Wealth or material assets play a vital role in a post-industrial society. Literature and culture have never failed to depict this change in society. Both Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and E. L. James's *Fifty Shades of Grey* successfully explore the role of material assets in making a man desirable. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy—"selfish and overbearing"—resembles Grey, who is also "selfish" and "dominant." In keeping with the genteel tradition of the nineteenth century, Darcy's courtship of Elizabeth is "gentlemanly" till the very end of the novel as he woos her through a subtle show of his wealth. On the other hand, Grey, displays no such restraint while courting Anastasia; in fact, he even threatens her. However, both Elizabeth and Anastasia ignore the follies present in Darcy and Grey respectively. Money plays a pivotal role in the development of the plots of the two novels. Both Darcy and Grey who are unattainable, rich bachelors of their times, make Elizabeth and Anastasia develop a passion for them, with their behaviour, power and assets. This paper aims to evaluate the role of the different forms of capital, as classified by Pierre Bourdieu and argues that other than the rich male protagonists' dynamic characters, the capital they possess enables them to woo these two women. In addition, this paper will also argue that E. L. James shaped the character of Grey in such a way that Grey appears to be the modern Darcy.

Keywords: ISA, objectified capital, money, embodied capital.

Introduction:

Pride and Prejudice is Jane Austen's second novel that first graced the stands in 1813. The story revolves around poor damsels and rich eligible bachelors. Darcy, a wealthy, young gentleman pursues penniless Elizabeth by the virtue of his fortune. *Fifty Shades of Grey*, on the other hand, is a 21st century erotic romance novel by British author E. L. James which became the best-selling book in Britain, surpassing *Harry Potter* and *Deathly Hallows*. With the sale of more than 125 million copies of Fifty Shades trilogy worldwide, the adaptation of the novel fetched \$500 million at the global box office. The story charts a sadomasochistic relationship of a college graduate Anastasia Steele and a young business magnate Christian Grey. *Pride and Prejudice* seems to have been rewritten into *Fifty Shades of Grey* after almost two centuries. A touch of erotica to an otherwise old classic ushers the novel into a new age and makes it more palatable to the masses. The backdrops for the two novels are similar where wealth helps male protagonists impress women.

The female protagonists, Elizabeth and Anastasia, are poor women who do not have financial stability. This crisis can be resolved by marrying a rich man. Similarly, Darcy and Grey use their rich attributes to impress these women. The stories of the novels are similar with some additional sections in the latter one. As Claire Siesmaszkiewicz, the founder of Total-E-Bound Publishing declared, after the phenomenal success of *Fifty Shades of Grey*, the classical prose was kept original rather some "missing scenes [were added] for the readers to enjoy". Moreover, Martin Amis, a British novelist expressed a desire to "learn more about the details of the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy" through *Fifty Shades of Grey*. Therefore it seems *Fifty Shades of Grey* is the classic narrative, but, with a twist.

Protagonists in the selected novels:

Both Elizabeth and Anastasia are impoverished characters in the novel. Elizabeth is one of the five daughters of Mr and Mrs Bennet, who is pressed by circumstances to attain economic stability through marriage. She has to use her wit over emotions throughout the novel. Likewise, Anastasia is a poor college student whose biological father died after her birth and her mother got married for the fourth time. Anastasia lives with her rich friend, Katherine Kavanagh, and works part-time in a hardware store at Clayton. It is evident that the financial conditions of both the female protagonists are quite questionable. The financial crisis of the female protagonists is to be resolved by rich bachelors, Darcy and Grey.

Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) can be used to analyse the situation in a better way, where institutions propagate ideologies and values, which benefit a particular class of people. Most parents at that time wanted to marry their daughters off to wealthy men. The girls, similarly, giving in to the ideology, would grow affinity towards rich bachelors. Elizabeth's mother wants Lizzy to marry Mr Collins, the future heir to Longbourn, who has a good house and sufficient income. However, according to Lizzy, "Collins is a conceited, pompous, narrow-minded, silly man" (115). At the same time, she is enthralled by Wickham, who is described as the one having, "best part of beauty, a fine countenance, a good figure, and very pleasing address" (63). Elizabeth falls in love with Wickham's charisma, but as Mrs Gardiner warns Elizabeth of his poor monetary condition, she restricts her emotions and assures her aunt that she would do her best, which implies she is not a kind of girl who would settle for less, and therefore not with a man who has no financial status in the society. She also grows attachment for Colonel Fitzwilliam, who, nevertheless draws a financial barrier between them. In the end, Darcy's handsome and rich features outshine others.

Similarly, Anastasia has other men in her life as well. One of them is José Rodriguez, an engineering student at WSU who is "pretty hot" for Anastasia with his tall figure,

“shoulders”, “muscles”, “tanned skin”, dark hair” and “burning dark eyes” (24). However, he fails to impress Anastasia the way rich Grey does. Ana also seems to be interested in Ethan, her friend’s brother who is rich and “beautiful” (241). Ethan’s rich attributes never fail to attract Anastasia. Nevertheless, Grey was the richest of them all and thus the best pick for Ana. This can also be analysed by Althusser’s concept of ISA (1971), where the already formed ideals of the society like rich being the most preferred ones, dominates Ana’s mind. Both Elizabeth and Anastasia display their patience and wait for the richest suitor to appear.

In contrast to the poor heroines, the male protagonists are wealthy. Darcy is a fine, tall, handsome person, with an income of £10,000 a year, and owner of a large estate, Pemberley, situated in Derbyshire, England. His manners make him unpopular, as he is perceived as “proudest,” inconsiderate, arrogant and “most disagreeable man in the world”. (12). Similarly, Grey is an introvert and unsocial person like him. He is a proud, twenty-seven-year-old, mega-successful, self-made billionaire and for Ana “he’s the epitome of male beauty” (25). Grey leads a BDSM (Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, Sadism and Masochism) lifestyle. Anastasia, the sixteenth woman on which Grey plays the game of domination and submission, describes him as “control freak” which she mentions twenty times in the text. This idea relates very much to the concept of Gramsci’s Hegemony (1971) where one exerts power over the other, nevertheless after having the consent (Grey does not perform any act without Ana’s consent).

The male protagonists of the novels are not only similar because of their monetary worth, but both of them initially struggle with their feelings for these ladies. However, they fail miserably and Darcy ends up in changing his nature slightly and Grey immensely to woo them. Darcy could not help falling in love with an average looking girl from Longbourn. In a similar way, Grey fights his nature for a girl who bewitched him in an interview. It is evident from both the texts that pursuing women is not a difficult task for the possessors of money. Darcy

and Grey used their wit and certain strategies to win their mademoiselles, which is discussed in the next section.

Pierre Bourdieu's different forms of cultural capital to the rescue:

After his first rejection, Darcy steps wisely to persuade Elizabeth. Unlike Collins, who transfers the proposal to Charlotte, Darcy tries to impress her smartly. First of all, he writes a letter to soften her feelings for him. At this point, Elizabeth's character shows a development, but she has not fallen for him yet. Later on, Darcy's property and money take over her feelings when she pays a visit to Darcy's estate, Pemberley.

Pierre Bourdieu (1986) talks about different forms of cultural capital in his essay, "The Forms of Capital." Possession of such types of capital plays a key role in the men's journey of seeking the hands of their desired damsels. Darcy uses three such cultural capitals, namely, institutionalized, economic and social capital. Grey, similarly used institutionalized, objectified and embodiment of capital to meet his purpose.

Pemberley is the "institutionalized capital" of Darcy, which allures Elizabeth who is "delighted" to see the "large, handsome stone building" and feels that "to be the mistress of Pemberley would be something" (201). After viewing the handsome building, its "large, well proportioned...lofty and handsome rooms," furniture and natural beauty of the place she thinks,

And of this place... I might have been mistress. With these rooms I might now have been familiarly acquainted! Instead of viewing them as a stranger, I might have rejoiced in them as my own, and welcomed to them as visitors my uncle and aunt. (201)

Later on, she admits on Jane's inquiry that she "must date it from my [her] first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley" (301). Therefore, Pemberley was the love at first sight, if not Darcy. This is when Elizabeth regrets rejecting the proposal of the man who owns

Pemberley, and Darcy's chase takes on a smoother road after this episode. Pemberley creates a paralyzing effect on Elizabeth as Walter Scott (1815) claims that "[Elizabeth] does not perceive that she has done a foolish thing until she accidentally visits a very handsome seat and grounds belonging to her admirer" (155).

Moreover, Darcy also uses his economic capital (a form of capital discussed by Pierre Bourdieu), which is directly transferable to money. On that very day of visiting Pemberley, she meets Darcy accidentally, who introduces her to his sister Georgiana and informs her of Bingley's coming, thus strategically manipulating Elizabeth, who is amazed at the marked change in his behaviour. Darcy was determined to show her the "gentlemanlike" behaviour for which she had criticized him. Once the news of Lydia and Wickham's elopement arrives, Darcy uses his "economic capital" to help with the situation. Darcy, seeing it as an opportunity saves Lydia's dignity by bribing Wickham to marry her. It is hinted that Darcy nearly spends his yearly income to help secure Bennet's nobility, which he, of course, does not carry out without any underlying motif. Furthermore, the situation itself demanded something in exchange for that huge favour, according to the norms of that society, again bringing in Althusser's 'Ideological Status Apparatus', where an expected exchange would be of common understanding. Therefore, Darcy makes Elizabeth indebted to him, and she would, of course, be happy to pay for this service.

"Social capital" is another capital which Darcy utilizes to play his last card. Darcy supplies the final piece of the puzzle by bringing a reconciliation of Jane and Bingley at Longbourn, while keeping Elizabeth lingering in thoughts if he still had some feelings left for her. Darcy is wealthier than Bingley; Bingley highly appreciates him and listens to his every opinion. Such type of dependency would not have been there without his wealth; thus money becomes a "social power," in this case, making a network of relationship which proves

beneficial in times of need like these. However, it also implies that Darcy used Bingley for his own purpose.

The postlude of the novel comes after Darcy mentions his “affections and wishes are unchanged” (373), once he realizes that Elizabeth would not refuse him. The novel ends with the wedding of Darcy and Elizabeth. His wealth hypnotizes Elizabeth during her visit to Pemberley, he saves Lydia’s honor and influences Bingley. Undoubtedly, her emotional evolution has direct relevance to Darcy’s institutionalized, economic and social capital.

In the other novel, Anastasia is born submissive, which Grey apprehends in their first meeting when she stumbles in his office. The hero appears to be a handsome and rich young man to the outside world, while his sadist tendencies are hidden from the world. He is “not a hearts and flowers kind of man” (72). So, she does not want to make any romance with him. Christian performs all sort of abusive things, as he is only interested in a dominant-submissive relationship with women. Nevertheless, Ana agrees to his terms of submission, and here too, like Darcy, Grey uses his capital to draw Ana towards himself.

Sometimes Ana seems to be directly persuaded by Grey’s wealth and materials. Wealth plays a significant role as the “institutionalized” state of the cultural capital. Anastasia is “paralyzed by the view” (5) of the “huge twenty-story office building” (4) when she first meets Grey. Even his security men, blonde office workers are “far more smartly dressed” (5) than her. Ana is in love with his office, furniture and paintings; for her, even the wine “glasses are rich” (94). Unlike Darcy, Grey wants to seduce Ana from their first meeting. Despite his arrogant and rude character, he shows Ana his office, offers her a job as an intern in his company and helps her to wear her jacket, with the hands which made billions. Moreover, he cancels his other meeting for Ana and hints that he would like to meet her again, which, Ana though cannot distinguish as a “challenge” or “threat” (15). These images recur in her mind,

and Grey's office building has the same effect on Anastasia as Pemberley has on Elizabeth, and this was just the first meeting.

Besides, "objectified capital" which is defined by Pierre Bourdieu (1986) as the transfer of capital to material objects, keeps Ana attached to Grey and her affections grow with time. One meal of oysters, a jacket, a car, and first-class plane tickets—is enough to make her feel that she needs him. Again, his rich grey flannel pants and a white linen shirt is enough to tantalize her. Grey showers Ana with gifts like books, laptop, blackberry and car and makes sure she does not lose interest in him. The materials objects and gifts which Ana keeps receiving for Grey are one of the reasons she remains with him.

The last form of capital which helps Grey seduce Ana is "embodiment capital" of Grey, which according to Bourdieu (1986) is the conversion of external wealth into an integral part of a person, because of which Grey develops a magnetic personality. Anastasia is attracted to the dynamic personality and elegant manners of Grey and ignores his sadistic behaviour. Grey is embodied with extraordinary skills, as he has excelled as a pilot and can fly his personal helicopter, Charlie Tango. He is a "mega-successful," (9) muscular man who has used his capital in every possible way. Christian's habits, physique and power were developed only because he was rich. A poor man would not have been able to develop them. His personality and intelligence have direct relevance to his wealth. Furthermore, Grey makes sure that she does not leave him. He makes her feel good about herself by calling her beautiful and leads her to the "Red Room of Pain". Ana ignores Grey's constant humiliations and threats. She knows how "demeaning and scary" (274) spanking is, as a punishment for rolling her eyes over Grey. She accepts his tortures willingly even though she has never been hit in her life before. The indentation around her hands feels good to her. Nevertheless, Grey uses his wit and overpowers her, so she cannot get rid of him easily. Furthermore, he introduces her to his parents and meets her parents as well to somewhat secure their relationship. This intelligence

of Grey is also a form of “embodied capital”, which developed over the years through his education, training and the environment, he was provided with to develop his skills. Thus, Anastasia’s attraction towards Grey is a result of his rich attributes. Wealth plays a significant role in helping Christian Grey seduce Anastasia.

Although in her subconsciousness, Anastasia knows that she is merely a “kinky sex slave” (126) and a “toy” (354) for Grey, she accepts his punishments for a long time, forgetting her dignity and self-esteem. It is evident that Grey’s institutionalized, objectified and embodiment capital allure Anastasia to the fullest, and he requires not to be on pins and needles like Darcy.

Conclusion:

Therefore, it seems *Fifty Shades of Grey* has evolved from *Pride and Prejudice*. In both the novels money plays a pivotal role for the heroes in convincing the heroines of the novel. Darcy is an antecedent of Grey, though the latter is smarter and quick to action, and both showcase and use their wealth in different forms (Bourdieu) to fulfill their ambitions. Similarly, Anastasia is the successor to Elizabeth, who is more avaricious and less conscious of her self- respect. In conclusion, the classics maintained the culture of its time while the modified erotica came up with some bold and new scenes, making it more agreeable to the preferences of the modern readers.

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