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Words

Pride and Analysis: An Analysis of Pride and Prejudice:

Thomas C. Foster argues in his book, How to Read Literature Like a Professor, that there has only ever been and there will continue to only be one story, simply added onto whenever new work is created. “Whenever anyone puts pen to paper or hands to keyboard or fingers to lute string or quill to papyrus. They all take from and in return give to the same story...” (Foster, 186). The theories he presents in this book range from the symbolism of weather and location to the true meaning of flying characters in literature. Several such theories may be applied to any piece of literature, such as Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice. Set in the 1800s, Jane Austen takes you through the story of Ms. Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy. By applying Foster’s theories and looking at the story critically, you can see the deeper side of Elizabeth and Darcy’s love story.

Meals (communion) are thought to be a symbol of friendliness towards one another if conducted in a gregarious manner. “The act of taking food into our bodies is so personal that we really only want to do it with people we’re very comfortable with,” (Foster, 8). One such example of communion would be anything but comfortable: Mr. Collins, heir to the Bennet estate, arrives at Longbourn, the Bennet estate, for a meal. As he hunts for his future wife from among the five Bennet sisters, the feeling in the room is claustrophobic and intense. His speech

is unnaturally formal and even his manner of eating is repugnant. This distressing meal with align with the feeling Elizabeth harbors in the midst of Mr. Collins later marriage proposal. Another example of a meal would be the dining of Elizabeth, her Aunt and Uncle Gardiner, and Mr. Darcy and his sister. Unlike the meal shared with Mr. Collins, there was a lightness present in the moment of the communion that was lacking in the meal with Mr. Collins, at least when Ms. Bingley is not present. The simple fact is that this also aligns with the feeling Elizabeth will later experience with the same eligible man as she dines with. Rather than showing the relationship between Elizabeth and one of her suitors, the meal with Lady Catherine de Bourgh shows the relationship more clearly between Elizabeth and the combination of the higher society and the expectations of Mr. and Mrs. Collins. A remark made by Mrs. Jenkinson, a woman who resides at Rosings, Lady Catherine's home, illustrates the moods of the Lady perfectly: "Mrs. Jenkinson expressed her fears of Miss de Bourgh's (tea) being too hot or too cold, or having too much or too little light," (Austen, 158). Lady Catherine de Bourgh is prone to talking far too much and either being far too reserved or overly excitable and angry, much like her tea.

Seasons change, both in reality and in literature, and Pride and Prejudice is no exception. Beginning in the autumn season, Elizabeth Bennet shows a connection to nature that is shown even further due to the wonderful colors and changes in her surroundings. The issue of season is important in stories in the sense that it can indicate a change in relationships, the person themselves, or dynamic of the society as a whole. "Seasons can work magic on us, and writers can work magic with season," (Foster, 84). In the changing seasons of Pride and Prejudice, you can see several changes over the course of the story. One, when autumn turns to winter, Mr. Bingley leaves Jane Bennet for London. Two, as the spring begins to warm the winter air, you

see Jane and Elizabeth begin to move on from their past relationships and travel to new places. Three, in the summer, Elizabeth begins to open her eyes to the true character of Mr. Darcy, bringing on a new “youthfulness,” if you will, by the newly acquired information. And, finally, four, as summer once again turns to autumn, you can see that Elizabeth has become an entirely new person. The changes in season seem to pertain to changes in Elizabeth herself, though her connection to nature is always present.

Weather may be just as important as season to a story, especially in a time where cars, modern umbrellas and other inventions that could keep you safe from the rain are not present. The rain, a recurring theme in Pride and Prejudice seems to throw young couples together. While there is a literal reason for the rain, a reason to keep the plot moving, there may also be a deeper meaning, showing the true intentions of a character, or even more, foreshadowing future events. “Here’s what I think: weather is never just weather. It’s never just rain,” (Foster, 75). In the case of Jane Bennet, the rain has a literal reason, a reason that keeps the plot moving. In order to aid Jane in wooing Mr. Bingley, her mother sends her on horseback in the midst of a rainstorm to his home for dinner, intending to force her to stay there for the night. “ ‘No, my dear, you had better go on horseback, because it seems likely to rain, and then you must stay all night (Mrs. Bennet),’ “ (Austen, 28). In doing this, Mrs. Bennet received more than she ever could have hoped for, as Jane became ill shortly after due to hypothermia caused by the rain and had to stay at Netherfield, Mr. Bingley’s estate, for more than a week. “The rain continued the whole evening without intermission; Jane certainly could not come back,” (Austen, 29). The weather has a profound influence on the plot when there are fewer ways to protect from it.

Foster's theories on weather and season can also be found to go hand and hand with one of his other theories: geography. Foster states that geography will not only influence the plot, but the behavior of the characters themselves. "Literary geography is typically about humans inhabiting spaces, and at the same time the spaces that inhabit humans," (Foster, 110). Miss Elizabeth Bennet takes many journeys over the course of the book, however, one such trip stands out, especially due to Foster's theory on travelling south: "...when writers send characters south, it's so they can run amuck," (Foster, 112). The trip Elizabeth takes from Hertfordshire to Kent, a trip south, yields unexpected developments: Mr. Darcy's proposal. Although stated in the book "March was to take Elizabeth to Hunsford," (Austen, 143), it is also later said that Hunsford is very near to Kent, and is considered to be a part of the county. Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth are far freer in the south, shown in their actions toward one another during his proposal: one, Elizabeth Bennet releases insults toward Mr. Darcy that would not be acceptable under normal circumstances; two, Mr. Darcy's proposal in itself is a display of just how open they are. Mr. Darcy lists many reasons for his delay in proposing: "His sense of her inferiority-of its being a degradation-of the family obstacles which judgment had always opposed to inclination were dwelt on with a warmth which seemed due to the consequence he was wounding, but was very unlikely to recommend his suit," (Austen, 178). Again, under normal circumstances, neither of them would have even thought to have said such things.

The changes in behavior of a character may often hinge on things such as location, season, and weather, and though there are more things that may change a character, Pride and Prejudice is a brilliant example of those listed above. It eloquently shows how geography (especially in the south) can directly influence how much a character "runs amuck." It also gives

great examples of communion, seeing as the time period tells us that the thing to do when you liked someone was invite them over to dinner, and also shows the changes in behavior depending on how those in communion felt about one another. “Memory. Symbol. Patter. These are the three items that, more than any other, separate the professional reader from the rest of the crowd.” (Foster, xv) Foster’s theories encourage use to delve deeper into the literature around us and find more than just the surface level information on the page. His theories are extremely useful in finding out things you never realized before, no matter how many times you’ve read a story.

Works Cited

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