

A quest for an ideal

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The problem of ideal can't be solved scientifically without a clear statement of the relationship between man and society. But the ideal doesn't imply exclusively ideal behaviour in public. To be worthy of the name of 'ideal' one must meet certain requirements. One of these requirements is to be a gentleman. The notion of a gentleman for the first time appeared on the stage of history in the 13th century. Strangely enough, the stereotype of gentlemanlike behaviour turned out to be robust and surviving throughout the centuries and on the stage of literature of the 18th–19th centuries a true gentleman becomes familiar to a reader since the publication of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in 1811.

A literary gentleman is to be identified by name, appearance and character. Mr. Darcy fits the frame perfectly:

- His name Fitzwilliam is a combination of Fitz (short form of various given names which are derived from surnames beginning with Norman French fitz) and William (from the Germanic name Wilhelm, which was composed of the elements wil «will, desire» and helm «helmet, protection»; the name was common among the Normans). Darcy – from an English surname which was derived from Norman French d'Arcy, originally denoting one who came from Arcy in France. It means that the character has a noble family background.

- His appearance is noticed by the party guests as: «fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien» [Jane Austen: 10]

- His character needs a broader context for further identification. A true gentleman acts properly so that to support, to help, to encourage. Thus, in understanding, Darcy was the superior. His temper would perhaps be called resentful. His good opinion once lost, is lost forever.

The interest to Mr. Darcy has never been fading away. Recently, many attempts to revitalise Darcy resulted in works that range from romances about Mr. Darcy to *Darcy's Diary*. The stereotype of Darcy satisfies the tastes of all sorts of reading public – women across generations. Typology of Darcy is rich enough: a melodramatic Darcy from Fitzwilliam Darcy, *Gentleman* (trilogy) by Pamela Aidan, a sensitive and sensible Darcy from *Darcy's Diary* by Amanda Grange and a ladies' man from *Seducing Mr. Darcy* by Gwyn Cready.

The phenomenon of Darcy in sequels, remakes and screen adaptations deserves more attention of the student of English, English culture and English national character.

Литература

Austen J. Pride and Prejudice. London, 1994.