

Obstacles and Facilitators on Lucy and George's Way to their Marriage of Minds in E. M. Forster's Novel "A Room with a View"

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Abstract

The present paper analyzes in detail the obstacles and facilitators on Lucy and George's way to their marriage of minds in E. M. Forster's novel "A Room with a View". Through the analysis, readers may get insights into the true connotations of "love" and "marriage" and the relationship between the two terms. The conclusion reached is that a happy marriage should be based on mutual love.

Keywords

obstacles, facilitators, Lucy and George, marriage of minds, "A Room with a View".

1. Introduction

"A Room with a View" is a romance written by E. M. Forster at the beginning of the 20th century. Readers are often amazed at and encouraged by the final being together of the two main characters Lucy and George in the novel. However, their marriage of minds in the end never comes easily. On the way to their success, there exist many obstacles as well as facilitators. The present paper tries to analyze in detail the obstacles and facilitators on Lucy and George's way to their marriage of minds in a bid to help readers better understand the terms "love" and "marriage".

2. Body

2.1. Obstacles on Lucy and George's Way to their Marriage of Minds

Their obstacles to their marriage of minds first and foremost come from their different social backgrounds. Although George has a deep affection for Lucy, and would like to marry her anytime, Lucy has been hesitant about being together with George before she finally makes up her mind. Lucy and George come from different classes, with the former from the middle class and the latter the laboring class. Lucy is raised in the middle-class environment in which she is educated to cultivate obedient character and good manners to please men. She is also constantly taught to marry to a man of wealth and high social status. During her growing up, Lucy is mainly confined to the fine world of material comforts offered by her parents and has little interaction with the wonderful and complicated outside world. Therefore, when confronting her love, she dares not take a step forward by boldly loving George from a totally different class and with completely different character.

Secondly, Miss Bartlett and Cecil are both concrete obstacles to their marriage of minds. At the beginning of the novel, when Mr Emerson and his son George offer to exchange their rooms with Charlotte and Lucy's, Charlotte considers their behaviors rude and bluntly turns down their kind offer. This is the first time that Charlotte has almost cut off the communication between Lucy and George once and for all. When George kisses Lucy on impulse among the violets, Charlotte for the second time shows up to interrupt their mutual affection. Charlotte becomes quite annoyed and leaves for Rome with Lucy the next day without promising Lucy to say goodbye to George. Were Lucy and George not lucky, they would not come across each other again later.

Cecil, the rival in love for George, is the biggest obstacle for Lucy. Despite the fact that Cecil is a sophisticated Londoner who looks down upon people from the lower class, he is definitely a “superior” candidate to be married to for Lucy. That is why Lucy accepts Cecil’s proposal when she is back from Italy. Cecil puts Lucy in an awkward dilemma. To marry “wealth and power” or to marry out of love is a serious question for Lucy. On the one hand, Lucy does not want to risk her secular happiness that can be provided by Cecil, and she is not willing to defy her mother and the whole family. On the other, George appeals to her so much that in the depth of her heart she would like to follow George.

2.2. Facilitators on Lucy and George’s Way to their Marriage of Minds

Lucy has got fed up with the hypocrisy and red tape of a middle-class society and shows no hostility to people from lower classes. In nature, Lucy is a rebellious lady, which can be shown in her appreciation of Mr Emerson and George’s willingness to exchange rooms. Lucy’s trip to Italy offers her an opportunity to see a little more of the world of vastly different cultures and fresh people who are in praise of freedom and independence. For the first time in her life, Lucy sees the naked statues. And she witnesses a murder on the street and faints. Lucy’s travelling experience in Italy has undoubtedly broadened her horizon and enabled her to think from a totally different perspective. “Italy gives her the most invaluable thing in this world---That is her own soul.” [1]

George’s hot pursuit of Lucy is also an important contributing factor for their final success. George, unlike the pretentious upper or middle-class men such as Cecil, is direct, open, honest and considerate, full of passion and vitality. He may appear rude or deficient in manners, but in essence he is a gentleman who is always showing his very respect for women and treats Lucy on an equal footing. In contrast to Cecil’s asking for a kiss from Lucy, George kisses Lucy suddenly without asking for consent. George’s behavior appears impolite, but he kisses Lucy out of love and instinct, which is what Lucy truly values and cherishes. More importantly, George persists in his efforts to pursue Lucy even when Lucy intentionally avoids meeting him or directly turns him down.

George’s father Mr Emerson plays an important role in changing Lucy’s attitude and enlightening her. As a typical example of successful marriage between different classes himself, Mr Emerson marries a woman of high social status and has lived happily until now. Mr Emerson’s talk with Lucy helps her to choose her own happiness based on love rather than on external considerations. Mr Emerson serves as a soul bridge or match-maker figure for his son George and his daughter-in-law-to-be Lucy. “There are no poisonous thoughts and consciousness predominant in a patriarchal society in Mr Emerson and his son George. They are all along standing against patriarchy.” [2] Therefore, the influence of Mr Emerson and George is the main facilitator for Lucy’s final acceptance of a marriage from different classes.

As has been mentioned above, Cecil is the biggest obstacle for Lucy. Yet at the same time Cecil also paradoxically serves as a facilitator for Lucy’s change of attitude during her wandering between him and George. E. M. Forster points out, English middle-class people “go forth into it with well-developed bodies, fairly developed minds, and undeveloped hearts”. [3] Cecil’s numbness, lack of passion, superiority over Lucy, unsympathetic character form a vivid contrast with George. Cecil sees Lucy as an “object for the shelf”, giving her no independence and freedom, while George appreciates the philosophy that “I love you, but I still want you to be who you are.” Cecil’s pretentiousness can be best shown when he reads aloud a light romance novel which contains a scene which reminds Lucy of George’s first kiss with her in Florence. Actually, Cecil represents the medieval man in a male-dominated society, whereas George represents the modern man who warmly embraces the coming of women’s liberation and their appeal for independence. Cecil’s acts reveal to Lucy his own inner ugliness, so Lucy

finally gives up secular pursuits and turns to spiritual reliance and happiness which to her is even more important as a human being.

3. Conclusion

In E. M. Forster's "A Room with a View", the two main characters end up eloping and starting their happy journey of a married life. But their happy ending does not come easily. On their way to the marriage of minds, there are many obstacles to overcome. Luckily, there are also the facilitators that help their love move on smoothly to "marriage". Lucy and George's obstacles originate from the gulf of vastly different social classes, Miss Bartlett's constant intervention and Cecil's temptation as a wealthy man of high social status. The facilitators have obviously outweighed the obstacles for Lucy. Their being together first and foremost can be attributed to Lucy's character. Also, her travel experience in Italy, George's hot pursuit of her, Mr Emerson's effective communication and guidance, Cecil's self-exposure of his own defects and the contrast between the two male rivals all contribute to Lucy's final choice of favoring George and their final happiness. Through the analysis of the obstacles and facilitators on Lucy and George's way to their marriage of minds, readers may get insights into the true connotations of "love" and "marriage" and the relationship between the two terms. That is, a happy marriage should be based on mutual love.

References

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