

Bring out the significance of the title of the novel Pride and Prejudice. Original

Pride and Prejudice was Jane Austen's first novel. She began to write it in 1797 when she was only twentyone and completed it the very next year. When it was offered to Cadell, the publisher. The publisher refused to buy its copyright and thereupon Jane thoroughly revised it. First Impression was the original title she gave to the novel at the time of its publication. When revising it she altered it to Pride and Prejudice. In 1813 the revised book under the new title was again offered to the publisher who accepted its manuscript and the novel was published in the very same year. Curiosity is very natural on the part of its readers as to which one, — original or final, — is happier and more acceptable as a title. Cornish, for example, concludes: "First Impression was perhaps a better title than the other."

No doubt, initial impressions in a novel count much and play a vital function. Pride and Prejudice is no exception. From the very outset Elizabeth makes assessment of Darcy and Wickham. It is indeed by the first impressions that she is led to sympathize with Wickham and is bluntly prejudiced against Darcy. The opening ideas thus guide the first phase and few chapters of the novel: hence the justification and appropriateness of the selection of the original title. The second but final title comes later. The more serious and deeper study of the book adequately establishes the fact that the title Pride and Prejudice with its alliterative jingling is to be considered more suitable and apt, — although it

deals with two characters only. The novel is unquestionably Austen's masterpiece. It illustrates almost all the gifts for which she has become a name in the domain of English fiction.

The title Pride and Prejudice is much more dynamic and appropriate than the former one. Our first impression is not always correct or just; it may undergo gradual changes with the passage of time. There may be a great deal of difference between first impression and the 'final' impression. Moreover, the title First Impression does not reveal the novel as a whole; whereas the whole spirit of the novel is finely reflected in the title Pride and Prejudice. It happily tallies with the content of the novel and it indicates the conflict between two abstract qualities, just as Sense and Sensibilities does.

The story in the novel is undoubtedly the story of Elizabeth and Darcy. The book concerns with the conflict of two opposite foibles. They have to be removed somehow before the hero is united with the heroine. Darcy parades his pride on the occasion of his first meeting with the heroine Elizabeth and even goes to the length of dismissing her by saying that she is tolerable but not beautiful enough to tempt him in a dance. This naturally produces a strong feeling of prejudice and aversion in the heart of the heroine against him. Darcy represents pride, Elizabeth prejudice. The struggle of their mutual attraction against mutual repulsion, and the close of the novel witnesses the rebuffs they get for their earlier whims. Darcy's pride and Elizabeth's prejudice are thus both destroyed and defeated in the long run. The pride of

Darcy is overcome by his excessive love for Elizabeth and Elizabeth's prejudice is neutralised by the re-evaluation of Darcy's character. Darcy's own words to Elizabeth are significant and revealing in this context:

'What do I not owe you?

You taught me a lesson,
hard indeed at first, but
most advantageous. By
you, I was properly

'humbled'

The present title indicates that the novel deals with human nature and psychology. If we say people are proud, we mean that they see themselves being superior to others convinced that they are important and right in everything they do. Pride, like prejudice is a vice in society because proud people are always seeking what they see as their just rewards, often at others' expense. They are unwilling to help those they consider their inferiors; they are always patronising others. Most of all, their conceit prevents them from developing own personalities. The chief representative of pride here is Darcy. On his introduction in Chapter 3 he is said to be proud. He seems withdrawn, superior and cynical. He puts Elizabeth down coldly with a patronising comment about her looks and appearance. Later, despite his infatuation he feels himself superior to Elizabeth, and kindly condescends to ignore her towards the end of the Netherfield visit, so that 'nothing could elevate her with the hope of marrying above herself. By the end of the novel Darcy still has some pride, but with good reason. The mature Elizabeth has learnt that there is good pride and bad.

'Vanity is a weakness,' says Darcy, 'but with superiority of mind, pride will always be under good regulation.' Prejudice, Jane Austen tells us, in Elizabeth's key comment in Chapter 36 is the fault of being blind to the truth because we are partial and because we have an interest in doing so! The reasons for prejudice may vary. We may be prejudiced towards someone because they please us or against someone because they reject us.

From the start of the novel, Austen talks of universal acknowledgement, where society itself takes a united stand welcoming Bingley because he is eligible, rejecting Darcy because he seems proud and favouring Wickham because he flatters and charms. Against this general background of public prejudice, Austen presents several particular illustrations of people who confuse appearance and reality because of their inner bias.

Deeper human problems await in the novel. To quote Wright: 'To say that Darcy is proud and Elizabeth is prejudiced is to tell but half the story.' Pride and prejudice are human faults; but they are also the necessary defects of desirable merits: self-respect and intelligence. Moreover the novel makes clear the fact that Darcy's pride leads to prejudice and Elizabeth's prejudice stems from a pride in her own perceptions. Thus both pride and prejudice play significant roles in the careers of Darcy and Elizabeth. It is true that the two other plots, that of Wickham and Lydia, and Jane and Bingley have nothing to do with the title, but it cannot be denied that even then the present title is apt, revealing and appropriate.