

Why did Austen Change the Title from *First Impressions* to *Pride and Prejudice*?

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Since its publication in 1813, *Pride and Prejudice* has become one of the most popular stories in English literature. Regular television and film adaptations of the book ensure that the romance between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy remains firmly fixed in the minds of people from generation to generation. To a certain extent, *Pride and Prejudice* is a fairly straight forward love story; almost at the outset we are sure that Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy are 'right' for each other, but they just need to find that out for themselves. However, to see *Pride and Prejudice* as only a love story (or series of romances) would be to diminish its significance as it is clearly much more than that. In particular, it is an examination of character and how some people are able to look within themselves to achieve change (and, in the case Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy, a deeper and 'better' self) while others, through various deficiencies, are incapable of change. Originally, Austen wrote this story under the title of *First Impressions* but later, after extensive reworking, she changed it to *Pride and Prejudice*. Unfortunately, nothing remains of the original text written between 1796 and 1797 so it is impossible to make any comparison between the novel published in 1813 and its predecessor but the 1813 text can be used to suggest possible reasons as to why Austen decided to give it a new title. This paper will explore some of these possible reasons.

In 1796, Jane Austen was just twenty one years old, having been born on December 16th, 1775. Between 1795 and 1797 she wrote both *Elinor and Marianne*, which would later be reworked into *Sense and Sensibility*, and *First Impressions*. Both of these books are concerned with the topic of marriage. Though both books contain an element of humour, they also deal with an issue that Austen's contemporaries would have seen as of significance. At this time, the Gentry class to which both Austen and her heroines belonged was coming under pressure as social and economic change began to take grip in Britain. For those at the lower end of this group whose financial stability was threatened through either mismanagement or legal limitations on the freedom to use their property, an advantageous marriage was the only means of ensuring that daughters would maintain their social status. For both Jane and Cassandra Austen, her elder sister, as daughters of a far from wealthy and aging clergyman, the need to marry well must, at this time, have been keenly felt. It is not surprising then, that this should form a central topic for Austen in her first major novels.

Also at this time, the threat to Britain from revolutionary France would have been firmly in the public's mind. By 1795, the French Revolution was moving into one of its most bloody phases with the terror and the eventual rise of Napoleon from 1796. *Pride and Prejudice*, as it became, acknowledges this through Austen's references to the Militia training to guard against attack from Napoleon from across the channel. In addition to the military threat, the French Revolution also posed an intellectual and social threat to the status quo of both Europe and Britain. The revolution raised the issues of universal suffrage, equality and freedom with respect of both men and women. In 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* which strongly questioned tradition sexual roles and attacked the way in which women were socialized into accepting marriage and motherhood as their reason for being in society. Wollstonecraft argued that

women were denied opportunities to achieve their full intellectual potential and instead were forced into becoming mere decorative objects. On the other side of this intellectual debate were Edmund Burke, who in 1790 published his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in which he argued in favour of a traditional role for the family and women within it, and Hannah More (*Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, 1799) who took a similar view in arguing that women should find virtue in subservience to their fathers and husbands.

Austen's own views at this time are not clearly known, though it is safe to say that she was not in sympathy with those who supported the initial phase of the French Revolution. However, it is also not safe to say that she was wholly in sympathy with the reactionary camp with its denial of any role for women in society other than marriage and motherhood. Her ambivalent position is clearly indicated when Mr Collins chooses James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* (1766) after Mr Bennet has invited him to read aloud to the Bennet family after tea-time:

"... Mr Bennet was glad to take his guest into the drawing-room again, and when tea was over, glad to invite him to read aloud to the ladies. Mr Collins readily assented, and a book was produced; but on beholding it, (for every thing announced it to be from a circulating library,) he stared back, and begging pardon, protested that he never read novels ... other books were produced, and after some deliberation he chose Fordyce's Sermons. Lydia gaped as he opened the volume ..." P. 67

Fordyce's Sermons were a series of moralising essays aimed at 'educating' women into correct modes of conduct and behaviour and, in particular, were very critical of novels and the ill effects they could have upon women. Though his choice is unwelcome, it is unclear whether it is primarily unwelcome because

of the content or the person who read it. Equally, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen never offers an example of a female member of the gentry doing anything other than being a mother and so it is fair to assume that such a situation would be beyond her imagination. Nevertheless, what is important here is that Austen was clearly aware of the social and intellectual debate taking place around her and was able to use it to add colour to the story.

Research into the life of Jane Austen has shown her to have been a reader of contemporary sentimental literature such as Samuel Richardson's *Pamela: Or Virtue Rewarded* (1740) and Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). In this type of literature women who were headstrong and independent usually ended their lives in misery and ruination. One factor that demonstrated a willfulness and a lack of respect for the advice of others was to make judgements and choices based on first impressions. This was because, invariably, the first impression usually proved incorrect with the personable man turning out to be a reprobate and thoroughly disreputable. In *Pride and Prejudice* to a certain extent this is born out in the relationship between Mr Wickham and Lydia Bennet, though their fall is not as desperate as in other sentimental novels. Initially Mr Wickham is described in the following way:

"... the attention of every lady was soon caught by a young man ... of very gentlemanlike appearance [who] ... wanted only regimentals to make him completely charming. His appearance was greatly in his favour; he had all the best part of beauty, a fine countenance, a good figure, and a very pleasing address." (P. 71)

Here we are given all the Bennet daughters', except Mary's, first impression of Mr Wickham. This impression is formed only by Wickham's appearance, but the implication is that a person of such 'gentlemanlike' appearance will ultimately

turn out to be a gentleman in manner and behaviour too. Unfortunately, as the story develops it becomes clear that Mr Wickham is nothing like a gentleman but is in fact a seducer of women. Austen chooses to make it Lydia's fate to be incapable of seeing Mr Wickham for what he really is by failing to understand his true personality. As a result, Lydia's decision in agreeing to an elopement with Mr Wickham almost ruins her and her sisters' reputations. The seriousness of the situation is clearly expressed in a letter to Mr Bennet from Mr Collins where he says, "No arguments shall be wanting on my part, that can alleviate so severe a misfortune; or that may comfort you, under a circumstance that must be of all others most afflicting to a parent's mind. The death of your daughter would have been a blessing in comparison of this. And it is the more to be lamented, because there is reason to suppose ... that this licentiousness of behaviour in your daughter, has proceeded from a faulty degree of indulgence ..." (P. 281). This extract from Mr Collins' letter clearly shows seriousness of Lydia's potential fall in suggesting that her death would be better than living with the disgrace from which she and the Bennets will now suffer. Be that as it may, Lydia Bennet is not the heroine of the story and so her fate, though influencing the development of the story, is not the central concern of the book. Thus, although, there is a recognisable influence from contemporary literature, Austen has altered the traditional approach by allowing her headstrong and independent heroine to not be ruined but rather to achieve her dream. In this sense, *First Impressions*, and the implications that this would have had, is no longer as relevant to the story as it may originally have been.

In the sentimental fiction of this period the choice of the word 'impression' had a particular significance. Tanner (1972) in his introductory essay to *Pride and Prejudice* points out that the original title 'First Impressions' was a phrase taken from sentimental literature where it exhibits "... the strength and truth of the

heart's immediate and intuitive response, usually love at first sight." P. 371 (from Southam, B. *Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts* 1964). Although, here, the meaning is specifically connected to 'love', *Pride and Prejudice*, in its reworked form, is concerned with 'immediate and intuitive responses' to a range of people and places. Consequently, it is not only about 'love at first sight' (and perhaps in terms of Austen's writing, partiality, or attraction, at first sight might be more appropriate) but also dislike at first sight.

Although Mrs Bennet and her daughters first have to rely on 'second-hand intelligence' from Lady Lucas, whose information is based on her husband's meeting with Charles Bingley, when they do finally meet at the ball in the Meryton assembly rooms, they are not disappointed. Bingley is described as being: "... good looking and gentlemanlike; he had a pleasant countenance, and easy, unaffected manners ... he was lively and unreserved ..." (P. 12). Importantly for the development of the story, Jane Bennet "... expressed to her sister [Elizabeth] how very much she admired him", saying "he is just what a young man ought to be ... sensible, good humoured, lively; and I never saw such happy manners! ? so much ease, with such perfect good breeding." (P. 16). Mr Bingley is no less impressed by Jane. What is significant here is that Mr Bingley's and Jane Bennet's first impressions of each other are born out throughout the rest of the story. Neither Mr Bingley nor Jane Bennet are independent and headstrong. Indeed, both are the reverse in that they both readily accept the advice and expectations of others. Although the interference of Mr Darcy prevents their early marriage, happily, both have placid and forgiving personalities bent on seeing the good in others rather than their deficiencies, and so when the opportunity of marriage arises again they take it. In a similar way, the Bennets' first impressions of Mr Collins, firstly through his letter which Mr Bennet reads to his family in Volume 1 Chapter 13, and at their subsequent meeting, though accurate, are distinctly negative. From

the first Mr Collins comes across as self-important and obsequious. In addition, he lacks the wit to see himself for what he really is. Nevertheless, Mr Collins is a minor male character, and so his journey whether marred by the first impressions of others or not (and in many senses, Mr Collins' position is secure despite the deficiency in his personality), is relatively unimportant.

However, Tanner (1972) points out, in referring to David Hume, the philosopher, that impressions are important as they form the basis for understanding, tempered and honed by experience. Thus, to achieve a fully developed personality, a person must be capable of analyzing and reviewing his or her first impressions and that ability comes from the process of using experiences to judge the validity of those first impressions. Consequently, first impressions are not to be shied away from but instead, are essential for development. It is also worth noting that in this philosophy first impressions are as likely to be correct as they are wrong. Therefore, this sets 'first impressions' in a very different light to that used by sentimental fiction which gave a general warning against them. In terms of the story, Mr Collins is incapable of reassessing his first impressions and as such remains an empty and laughable character whilst Elizabeth Bennet is capable of being shockingly awoken to her pride and prejudice. This emphasis on experience is one of the reasons why pride and prejudice is a more apt title than first impressions as the story charts Elizabeth Bennet's and Mr Darcy's journeys to self-enlightenment. In order to achieve this state of self-enlightenment, the story requires forward motion, that is, growth from the starting point leading to greater self-understanding. It could be argued that to understand first impressions requires the story to focus on a person's background to see how their past has formed their present state. Consequently, there is, predominantly, retrospective movement. In contrast, although a person's pride and prejudices are affected by his or her past, looking at how these change in the light of present events re-

quires forward development of a story. Thus, the alteration of the title reflects the logical development of the story.

Also at issue here, is the study of the nature of character and personality. Pride, or conceit, leads to a conscious and specific revealing of certain aspects of one's personality which seek to set oneself above others. In this way, a person calculates the effect on his or her own standing by choosing to be involved in or removed from social situations. The choices that are made, then, show others the attitude that that person has towards them. Thus, Mr Darcy's disinclination to 'enjoy' the ball at the Meryton assembly rooms exhibits his exaggerated opinion of his own self-worth and determination to keep within his present social circle which, by implication, he sees as being above that of the people at the ball. Prejudice, on the other hand, reflects a person's lack of empathy with the other people's circumstances. Prejudice can arise from an over familiarity with these circumstances and reflect a fear or revulsion at the prospect of having, or being seen to have, to experience them oneself. Alternatively, prejudice can arise from the influence of the opinions of others without actually putting those opinions to the test oneself. This leads to an automatic rejection of certain people, or certain kinds of people, simply because of what they outwardly appear to represent. In the case of Mr Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet, the latter circumstance seems the most likely cause of their prejudices. In reality, at the story, the range of Elizabeth Bennet's social experiences is quite limited and certainly has not included meeting with people related to the aristocracy nor those of extreme wealth within her own family's social group. Therefore, it is easier for Elizabeth to see Mr Darcy's haughty appearance as stemming from arrogance rather than shyness. Likewise, Mr Darcy has consciously chosen to avoid mixing socially with people that he considers to be below him because of stereotypical images that he has of them rather than through actual experience of being with them.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, therefore, events force Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy to confront with their pride and prejudice. Towards the end of the story, where Mr Darcy has proposed to Elizabeth for a second time, he comments briefly on his upbringing and how it has affected his view of the world. He says:

“I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle. As a child I was taught what was right, but I was not taught to correct my temper. I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit ... I was spoilt by my parents ... allowed, encouraged, almost taught me to be selfish and overbearing, to care for none beyond my own family circle, to think meanly of all the rest of the world, to wish at least to think meanly of their sense and worth compared with my own” (P. 349 with original emphasis).

Here we see that Mr Darcy’s background as formed his outlook on life. In the passage quoted here, Mr Darcy is referring to his childhood experiences as part of the British aristocracy, though by the time of the events contained in *Pride and Prejudice* he is, in effect, a member of the same class as Elizabeth, albeit at the upper end of that group. Not unreasonably, viewed from the perspective of an aristocrat at least, his position in society is higher but I think what Mr Darcy is implying is that his upbringing was one-sided (that is, prejudiced) in that it stressed social superiority over a recognition of the responsibilities of belonging to the aristocracy. It is only through his meeting and falling in love with Elizabeth, against his prejudices, that he begins to realise his true self and can come to terms with being related Elizabeth Bennet’s mother, Mrs Bennet.

For Elizabeth, the journey to self-realisation comes at first from Mr Darcy’s first proposal and the subsequent letter that he sends in which he forces her to reappraise her opinion of Mr Wickham. This reappraisal is confirmed by Mr Wick-

ham's chasing Miss Mary King and more significantly his elopement with Lydia Bennet. At the same time as this is taking place, Elizabeth meets Mrs Reynolds, the housekeeper at Pemberley, who gives a very different, and because unsolicited, apparently more truthful account of the personalities of both Mr Wickham and Mr Darcy. Elizabeth, therefore, is forced to confront the pride and prejudice contained within her first impression of Mr Darcy as "the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world" (P. 13) through the experience of being with Mr Darcy or events which connect with him.

Charlotte Bronte (cited in Tanner, 1972 P. 368), on reading *Pride and Prejudice*, found it to be limited and bearing little relevance to what the world was really like. Indeed, Tanner (1972) says in his introduction to the book that "It is indeed possible to call its relevance to the society of the time into question, for during a decade in which Napoleon was effectively engaging, if not transforming Europe, Jane Austen composed a novel in which the most important events are the fact that a man changes his manners and a young lady changes her mind" (P. 368 ? 9). However, it may be that Bronte with her 'Romantic' background was so intent on finding that which she held to be essential, she was unable to see how *Pride and Prejudice* can provide a wealth of information about society. Whilst it is not within the scope of this paper to present a thorough examination of the wealth of information relating to the society of the time that Austen was writing in, it is relevant to point out how the title Austen ultimately settled on, rather than *First Impressions*, reflects the social attitudes, and prejudices, of particular social groups of the time.

Pride and Prejudice opens with the bold statement: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in need of a wife" (P. 1). Austen goes on to qualify this 'universal' truth to show that it is

in fact the desire of mothers with daughters of marriageable age. Certainly, Mrs Bennet is most anxious to see as many of her daughters as possible married to wealthy men. However, Austen's statement does raise the question of whether the reverse is therefore also 'a truth universally acknowledged' that even attractive single men who lack a secure financial position must be unsuitable and, therefore, by implication, unattractive to mothers of daughters of marriageable age (which ultimately proves to be the case with Mr Wickham who becomes a liability for the Bennet family). For the single women of marriageable age in *Pride and Prejudice* there is an imperative to find a husband. Caroline Bingley, as much as Charlotte Lucas and Jane and Elizabeth Bennet, is anxious to secure herself a good match as is Lady Catherine de Bourgh anxious to secure a husband for her daughter, Anne.

In a sense, both Charlotte Lucas and Caroline Bingley value financial security over appearance, and to a certain extent, a pleasant personality from marriage. Charlotte Lucas in accepting Mr Collins demonstrates that above all else escaping the social stigma of becoming a confirmed spinster, dependent on the benevolence of other relatives, is something to be avoided at all costs. She recognises that Mr Collins is neither particularly intelligent nor attractive in either manners or personality but that he is relatively financially secure because being a clergyman with the backing of wealthy patron in addition to the certainty of him inheriting a good property (Longbourn, through the system of entail which is so irksome to Mrs Bennet) his prospects for at least social stability are good. Caroline, though wealthier, is actually in a very similar position in that she also needs a husband to maintain her financial stability. Although it is not specifically stated in the story, it is likely that a significant financial settlement would be bestowed on Caroline in the event of her marriage but that until marriage she would be dependent upon her parents. The stigma of spinster would be as equally repulsive to

her as to Charlotte Lucas. Marriage can also give purpose to these two women's lives in allowing them to have children and take up a central and acceptable role within their family and society. Therefore, these characters represent the type of traditional social attitudes associated with social conservatives such as Hannah More.

Elizabeth Bennet, on the other hand, raises an alternative to the other women in her seemingly headstrong and independent determination to reject any financially secure man over spinsterhood. This is because Elizabeth Bennet desires to marry for love. At this time within the social group to which Austen belonged attitudes were beginning to change in that more allowance was being made to settling on 'love-matches'. However, these were generally only accepted if the man carried at least an equivalent social status as his prospective wife. In reality, it is unlikely that Elizabeth Bennet would settle for spinsterhood over a loveless marriage as she has a definite pride in her social position. This is clearly shown in responding to Lady Catherine de Bourgh's objections to the possibility of marriage between herself and Mr Darcy. She says, "in marrying your nephew, I should not consider myself as quitting that sphere. He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter; so far we are equal" (P. 337). Though this is true, Lady Catherine questions her claim to social equality by replying "You are a gentleman's daughter. But who was your mother? Who are your uncles and aunts? Do not imagine me ignorant of their condition" (P. 337). What Lady Catherine is saying here is that her own family has a history of being associated with the aristocracy whereas the Bennets have a far less illustrious history. Though in the end Elizabeth Bennet makes a very advantageous marriage, she represents a different type of social attitude in that she values her independence and rejects the kind of demur subservience recommended by Austen's contemporary social conservatives.

In conclusion, I have suggested certain possible reasons why Jane Austen chose to change the title of her story from *First Impressions* to *Pride and Prejudice*. Initially, I suggested that in reviewing her novel she moved away from the sentimental literature's usage of 'impressions' implying the downfall of a heroine to giving her book a more rounded contemplation of the nature of character and personality. Secondly, I argued that pride and prejudice drives the story forward as the characters are forced to reconsider and reevaluate their own personalities. This is fundamental to the success of the story as it is through the combined process of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy coming to terms with their pride and prejudices that the book is so powerful. Finally, I suggested that the story reflects the pride and prejudices of the social group to which Austen belonged with respect to marriage and the role of women within the family and society. Austen was caught in a period of significant social upheaval and as research has shown was very aware of the cultural and social debates that were taking place. Therefore, changing the title from *First Impressions* to *Pride and Prejudice* shows her interest in this debate. In this way, it is clear that in addition to being a thoroughly enjoyable romance, *Pride and Prejudice* offers a wealth of information and remains a topic of debate in itself.

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論文要旨

なぜオースティンは小説の題名を「*First Impressions*」から「*Pride and Prejudice*」に変更したか？

ウォルターズ・ニコラス

キーワード：

ジェーン・オースティン、高慢と偏見、第一印象、18世紀の紳士階層、女性と結婚

<概要>

本論文では、なぜジェーン・オースティンが彼女の小説名を「*First Impressions*」から「*Pride and Prejudice*」に変更したかについて論じる。

まず、オースティンは自分の小説を編集した時には、すでに当時彼女が読んでいた18世紀の文学の「印象」という言葉の含意から気持ちが高慢と偏見に離れていた。彼女は、もはや「第一印象」を信じてヒロインが必ず没落することになることは受け入れ難く、その代わりに主人公の性格と個性について書きたかったからである。

次に、エリザベス・ベネットとダーシーの各自のプライドと偏見を再考し、再評価することによって話が前進し、そして、そのことによってエリザベス・ベネットとダーシーはそれぞれ自分自身をよりよく理解することになったことを論じる。

最後に、この「高慢と偏見」という小説は、オースティンが属している社会階級の結婚と家族と社会における女性の役割をプライドと偏見が映し出していると思われる。

オースティンが生きている時代に重要な社会変動があり、オースティンについての研究が明らかに示しているとおり、彼女は当時の文化的で社会的な論争について熟知していた。オースティンは、ある程度、その社会変動が彼女の属する社会階級の考え方にどのように挑むのかということに注目していたと考える。