



# The Draw of Domesticity in Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice

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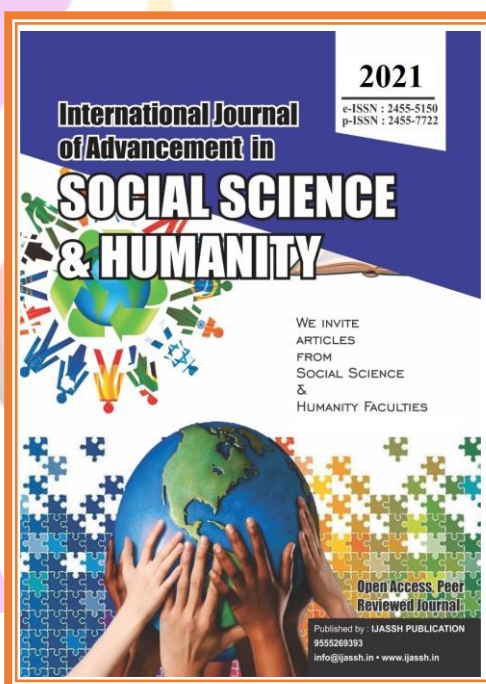
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## ABSTRACT

In Jane Austen's novel "Pride and Prejudice," the concept of "the draw of domesticity" is not explicitly stated as a term, but it can be observed and explored through the themes and characters in the story. The novel, set in early 19th-century England, revolves around the lives of the Bennet family, primarily focusing on the second eldest daughter, Elizabeth Bennet, and her romantic journey with Mr. Darcy. The draw of domesticity refers to the societal expectations and pressures placed on women during that time to find a suitable husband, marry, and create a happy and respectable home. In this context, domesticity encompasses the roles of women as wives, mothers, and homemakers, responsible for managing the household and raising children. This ideal was deeply ingrained in the Regency-era society and was considered a woman's primary goal in life.

**Keywords:** *Domesticity; Pride and Prejudice; Jane Austen; Regency-era*

## INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen is widely celebrated for her exceptional writing skills, which have earned her a prominent place in the world of literature. Jane Austen's writing skill lies in her ability to craft masterful stories that combine astute social commentary, sharp wit, well-drawn characters, and timeless themes. Her legacy as one of the greatest authors in English literature endures, as her novels continue to resonate with readers worldwide, transcending the boundaries of time and culture. Some of the key aspects of her writing style include:

*Social Commentary:* Austen's novels are known for their astute social commentary. She skillfully explores the intricacies of Regency-era society, critiquing its customs,

class distinctions, and gender roles. Her keen observations of human behavior and social interactions provide a rich and insightful portrayal of the society in which she lived.

*Wit and Irony:* Austen's writing is characterized by her sharp wit and clever use of irony. Her humor often lies in the gap between what characters say and what they truly mean, creating a subtle and satirical tone. The irony adds depth to the narrative and allows readers to discern the underlying motivations and flaws of the characters.

*Character Development:* Austen's ability to craft well-rounded and relatable characters is a hallmark of her writing. Each character, no matter how minor, is imbued with distinct traits and motivations, making them

come to life on the page. Her characters' growth and development throughout the story are both realistic and emotionally resonant.

*Dialogue:* Austen's dialogues are notable for their natural flow and authenticity. The conversations among her characters are engaging, reflecting the manners and etiquettes of the time. Through dialogue, she reveals their personalities, conflicts, and relationships, enhancing the storytelling experience.

*Narration and Point of View:* Austen often employs a third-person limited omniscient point of view, which allows readers to see events from the perspective of a particular character while still gaining insights into other characters' thoughts and feelings. This narrative technique enhances readers' understanding of the story's complexities.

*Subtlety and Understatement:* Rather than employing melodrama or overt sentimentality, Austen relies on subtlety and understatement to convey emotions and themes. Her approach adds nuance and sophistication to her storytelling, making it both intellectually stimulating and emotionally satisfying.

*Balance of Plot and Character:* Austen strikes an excellent balance between plot-driven narratives and character-driven storytelling. While her plots are well-

structured and engaging, it is the depth and complexity of her characters that truly captivate readers.

*Focus on Women's Lives:* Austen's focus on the lives and experiences of women in a society dominated by men was groundbreaking for her time. Through her female protagonists, she provided a unique perspective on women's agency, independence, and challenges in a patriarchal society.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Freedman, Jane (2002): Throughout the novel, Austen explores the tension between societal expectations and individual desires, particularly concerning the draw of domesticity for women. She challenges the prevailing norms of her time by portraying women like Elizabeth, who value love and compatibility over material wealth, and by highlighting the consequences of marrying solely for social or financial gain. The draw of domesticity in "Pride and Prejudice" serves as a lens through which Austen examines the complexities of marriage and the choices women faced in Regency-era England.

Anne Toner (2020): In Jane Austen's novel "Pride and Prejudice," the draw of domesticity is a prominent theme that plays a significant role in the lives of the characters, particularly the female

protagonists. Domesticity refers to the focus on the home, family, and the traditional roles assigned to women during the Regency era in England. Throughout the novel, Austen explores the various aspects of domestic life and the societal expectations placed upon women to marry and establish a comfortable home.

### **THE CONCEPT OF DOMESTICITY AND MARRIAGE IN 18-19 CENTURY**

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the time when Jane Austen was writing, society placed a significant emphasis on the concept of domesticity and the expectations surrounding women's roles in marriage and family life. These societal norms were deeply rooted in patriarchal values and traditional gender roles, and they exerted considerable influence on the lives of women during that period.

In the Regency era, which lasted from 1811 to 1820 (part of the broader Georgian period), and the subsequent Victorian period, women's roles were largely confined to the private sphere, centered around the home and family. Their primary purpose was seen as fulfilling the roles of wives and mothers, and their worth was often measured by their ability to maintain a well-ordered and harmonious household. Women were expected to embody certain virtues, including:

*Marriage as a Primary Goal:* For women, marriage was often considered the most significant event in their lives. It was expected that women would marry at a relatively young age and that their main purpose was to find a suitable husband.

*Limited Career Opportunities:* Opportunities for women to pursue careers or engage in professional endeavors were severely limited. Their focus was primarily on homemaking and raising children.

*Virtue and Modesty:* Women were expected to embody virtues such as modesty, chastity, and piety. A woman's reputation and honor were of paramount importance in society.

*Domestic Responsibilities:* Women were responsible for managing the household, including tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and overseeing the domestic staff. They were also expected to be skilled in various household arts, such as sewing and embroidery.

*Motherhood:* Motherhood was considered a woman's highest calling, and raising children was seen as her most important duty. The ability to bear and raise children was closely linked to a woman's value and identity.

*Dependent on Male Figures:* Women were often financially dependent on male relatives or their husbands, as they had limited rights to property and inheritance.

Marriage was viewed as the pinnacle of a woman's life, and securing a good match was essential for her social standing and financial security. Marriages were often arranged to ensure compatibility of social status and wealth between families. Love and romantic feelings were not always the primary consideration in marriage arrangements. The emphasis on domesticity and the importance of marriage for women during this period played a significant role in shaping the societal expectations and opportunities available to them. However, it is essential to note that even in this constrained environment, women like Jane Austen managed to challenge societal norms through their literary works and intellectual contributions.

In her novels, Jane Austen masterfully critiqued and satirized the societal norms and expectations surrounding domesticity and marriage. She provided nuanced portrayals of female characters who grappled with these social conventions, highlighting their individuality and the restrictions placed upon them. Through her writing, Austen subtly challenged the notion that marriage and domesticity should be the sole defining factors of a woman's identity and worth. Jane Austen's novels often critique and satirize these societal norms, and "Pride and Prejudice" is no exception. Through her characters and their interactions, Austen provides a commentary

on the limitations imposed on women by these rigid expectations. Elizabeth Bennet, the novel's protagonist, serves as a notable example of a woman who challenges these norms by asserting her independence, intelligence, and desire for a love match rather than a marriage solely for financial gain.

Austen's works, including "Pride and Prejudice," continue to be cherished today because they offer insights into the social and cultural context of the time while also celebrating the strength and resilience of female characters who defy societal expectations to assert their individuality and pursue genuine happiness. Throughout the novel, Jane Austen critiques the societal pressure placed on women to conform to the draw of domesticity and the narrow opportunities available to them beyond marriage. Through the character of Elizabeth, she presents an alternative perspective, advocating for individual agency and the importance of marrying for love and compatibility, rather than simply for financial security or social advancement. This exploration of the draw of domesticity adds depth and complexity to the themes of love, marriage, and social expectations in "Pride and Prejudice."



## THE STORYLINE OF "PRIDE AND PREJUDICE"

"Pride and Prejudice" is a classic novel written by Jane Austen and first published in 1813. The story is set in the English countryside during the Regency era and revolves around the Bennet family, particularly focusing on the second eldest daughter, Elizabeth Bennet. The novel follows the events and intricacies of romance, social class, and personal growth within the Bennet family and their acquaintances.

The Bennet family consists of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet and their five daughters: Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty, and Lydia. As the story begins, a wealthy young man named Charles Bingley moves into the neighborhood, accompanied by his snobbish sister Caroline Bingley and his close friend, the proud and aloof Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy. The arrival of Bingley sparks much excitement in the small village, especially since he is perceived as an eligible bachelor. Mrs. Bennet, eager to marry off her daughters, immediately sets her sights on Bingley as a potential husband for one of her girls. At a local ball, Bingley is instantly attracted to Jane, the eldest Bennet daughter, and they begin to form a close relationship. However, Darcy, despite Bingley's affection for Jane, disapproves of the match, as he

considers the Bennet family's social status beneath Bingley's own.

Elizabeth, known for her wit and intelligence, meets Darcy at the ball and is put off by his prideful and condescending demeanor. Her initial impression of him leads to her forming a prejudice against Darcy. Meanwhile, Darcy becomes increasingly attracted to Elizabeth's spirited personality and wit, even though he tries to suppress his feelings due to her lower social standing. As the story progresses, Elizabeth's younger sister, Lydia, becomes infatuated with a handsome but unscrupulous soldier named George Wickham. Wickham, who has a past connection with Darcy, reveals to Elizabeth that Darcy had treated him unjustly, deepening her prejudice against him. Wickham's actions with Lydia also threaten to bring disgrace upon the Bennet family.

Amidst these events, Mr. Collins, the cousin of the Bennet sisters, arrives at the family estate with the intention of marrying one of the Bennet daughters to inherit the property. He initially proposes to Elizabeth, who firmly declines, leading him to propose to her close friend Charlotte Lucas, who accepts his offer for the sake of financial security. As the misunderstandings and misjudgments between Elizabeth and Darcy persist, circumstances bring them together again. Darcy eventually confesses his love

for Elizabeth and admits his mistakes and prejudices. Elizabeth, having grown and matured through her experiences, realizes her own faults as well and starts to see Darcy in a new light. In the end, love triumphs over pride and prejudice as Elizabeth and Darcy overcome their obstacles and get engaged. Jane also finds happiness with Mr. Bingley after his return to the neighborhood, and Lydia's reckless actions are resolved with the help of Darcy, who intervenes to save the family's reputation.

"Pride and Prejudice" is a timeless tale of love, self-discovery, and societal norms, highlighting the complexities of human relationships and the importance of understanding and personal growth. The novel remains a beloved classic for its memorable characters, witty dialogue, and insightful commentary on the social mores of its time.

#### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON PRIDE AND PREJUDICE:**

**Toner (2020):** Toner's perspective highlights the importance of mutual love, respect, and dignity in the relationships of characters like Elizabeth and Anne in Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice." These characters seek marriages that are founded upon genuine affection and mutual understanding, valuing emotional compatibility over financial considerations or social status. The example

of Elizabeth's refusal of Mr. Collins' proposal serves as a clear illustration of her commitment to finding love and respect in a marriage. Despite the potential benefits of securing her family's home, Elizabeth is unwilling to compromise her own happiness and principles by marrying someone she does not love or respect. This refusal underscores the significance of emotional fulfillment and personal values in Elizabeth's decision-making process regarding marriage. The contrast between Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy's proposals further emphasizes Elizabeth's commitment to finding a partner who respects and values her as an individual. While Mr. Collins focuses on societal expectations and material gains, Mr. Darcy's proposal reflects a deeper understanding of Elizabeth's worth and character.

**Golemac, Andrea (2014):** Golemac's perspective adds to the understanding of Elizabeth's motivations and the themes of the novel. It reinforces the idea that Elizabeth's ideal partner is someone who genuinely loves and appreciates her for who she is, rather than being swayed by external factors such as wealth or social standing. This aligns with the novel's broader exploration of the complexities of love, pride, and societal expectations. Analysis of Elizabeth's refusal of Mr. Collins' proposal and her eventual acceptance of Mr. Darcy's proposal highlights the central theme of the

novel - the importance of genuine love, respect, and personal values in relationships. Through her character's choices and actions, Jane Austen presents a timeless message about the significance of emotional connections and mutual understanding in creating fulfilling and lasting partnerships.

**Yasmine Goonerate (1970):** Yasmine Goonerate's interpretation of Jane Austen's work in "Jane Austen" (1970) highlights the author's critique of society's tendency to commodify intimate human relationships, particularly marriage. According to Goonerate, Austen's opening sentence in her novel "Pride and Prejudice" sets the stage for a major theme - the commodification of marriage - which resonates throughout the story.

**Goodheart (2008) :**The famous opening sentence of "Pride and Prejudice" reads: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." This sentence satirically reflects the prevailing societal view that marriage is often motivated by financial considerations and social status rather than genuine love or compatibility. It suggests that society treats marriage as a transaction or a means of securing wealth and social standing, rather than as a sacred and intimate union. Goodheart 's analysis further asserts that Elizabeth Bennet, the novel's protagonist, faces a struggle to

preserve her individuality and personality in a society that encourages the exploitation of young women for advantageous marriages. Throughout the story, Elizabeth challenges societal norms by rejecting the advances of men like Mr. Collins, who seek to marry her primarily for financial and social gains. She seeks a deeper and more meaningful connection, based on mutual respect and understanding, rather than accepting a marriage for the sake of convenience or social approval.

**Swords (2015):** By critiquing the commodification of marriage, Austen presents a subtle protest against the corrupt social morality of her time. She emphasizes the importance of preserving one's integrity and individuality in the face of societal pressures to conform to conventional norms. Elizabeth's refusal to compromise her principles for the sake of a socially advantageous marriage exemplifies Austen's stance on the matter. Jane Austen's exploration of societal values and the struggle for personal agency within the confines of social norms is a recurring theme in her works. Through her wit, irony, and keen observations of human behavior, she offers a poignant commentary on the complexities of relationships, marriage, and individuality in the context of Regency-era England. Her enduring relevance lies in her ability to shed light on timeless human



dilemmas and the universal pursuit of love, happiness, and self-determination.

## THE CONCEPT OF "DRAW OF DOMESTICITY"

In "Pride and Prejudice," the concept of "draw of domesticity" refers to the societal expectation and desire for women to find fulfillment and happiness through marriage and the domestic sphere. The term "draw" suggests that this role is seen as a magnetic force or an irresistible attraction that pulls women towards marriage and homemaking. During the Regency era (early 19th century), when the novel is set, women's primary role was seen as being a wife and mother, taking care of the household and raising children. Marriage was often viewed as the ultimate goal for women, as it provided security, social status, and financial stability.

In "Pride and Prejudice," we see the concept of the draw of domesticity explored through various female characters, each having different attitudes towards marriage and the domestic sphere:

**1. Mrs. Bennet:** Mrs. Bennet, the mother of the protagonist Elizabeth Bennet, embodies the conventional view of the draw of domesticity. She is preoccupied with finding suitable husbands for her five daughters and views marriage as a means of securing their futures and elevating the family's social status. As she believes that their financial

security and social status depend on it. She often emphasizes the importance of marriage and domestic life, sometimes to the point of absurdity.

**2. Charlotte Lucas:** Charlotte is Elizabeth Bennet's close friend who, in contrast to Elizabeth's more independent mindset, sees marriage as a pragmatic necessity. She marries Mr. Collins, a somewhat ridiculous and socially awkward man, because she believes it is a secure way to escape the prospect of being a burden to her family and to maintain her position in society, despite not having any real affection for him. Charlotte's decision is motivated by the desire for financial stability and security in a society where options for women to support themselves were limited.

**3. Lydia Bennet:** The youngest Bennet sister, Lydia, exhibits a lack of understanding of the draw of domesticity, represents a frivolous and heedless pursuit of marriage. She runs off with Mr. Wickham, a charming but unscrupulous man, without fully understanding the consequences of her actions, which brings disgrace upon the family, emphasizing the potential dangers of solely focusing on the draw of domesticity without considering the character and motives of potential suitors. Lydia's impulsive actions show the consequences of disregarding societal norms and choosing passion over practicality.

**4. Elizabeth Bennet:** The novel's protagonist, Elizabeth, portrayed as a more independent and spirited woman compared to her sisters, challenges the societal norms surrounding marriage and the draw of domesticity. She is an intelligent, spirited, and independent woman who believes in marrying for love and mutual respect rather than merely for social and economic advantages. Her refusal to marry for convenience or societal expectations is a central theme in the novel. While she acknowledges the societal expectations, she resists marrying solely for economic reasons or social standing. Elizabeth seeks a deeper connection and genuine love in a marriage, and she is not willing to sacrifice her principles merely for the sake of domestic security. Elizabeth Bennet thus shows her attitudes towards the marriage proposal:

*I do assure you that I am not one of those young ladies (if such young ladies there are) who are so daring as to risk their happiness on the chance of being asked a second time. I am perfectly serious in my refusal.-You could not make me happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who could make you so.*

Throughout the novel, Jane Austen critiques the societal pressure placed on women to conform to the draw of domesticity and the narrow opportunities available to them beyond marriage. Through the character of

Elizabeth, she presents an alternative perspective, advocating for individual agency and the importance of marrying for love and compatibility, rather than simply for financial security or social advancement. This exploration of the draw of domesticity adds depth and complexity to the themes of love, marriage, and social expectations in "Pride and Prejudice."

#### **IMPORTANCE OF HOUSES IN MARRIAGE PLOTS:**

The importance of houses in relation to the marriage plots in Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" and "Persuasion" is a prominent theme that reflects the societal norms and values of the time. In "Pride and Prejudice," the concept of houses representing wealth and social status is evident through the female characters' perspectives. The novel explores the idea that women, due to limited opportunities for financial independence, often seek marriage as a means of securing their financial future. The houses they marry into symbolize the wealth and way of life they are entering.

For instance, the grand estate of Pemberley, which belongs to Mr. Darcy, becomes a significant symbol in Elizabeth's consideration of marrying him. Pemberley represents his wealth and social standing, and it becomes a crucial factor in her decision-making process. However, the novel also challenges the notion that wealth

and houses alone are enough to persuade Elizabeth to marry. She rejects Mr. Collins, who offers her the security of inheriting Longbourn, the Bennet family home, because she values love, respect, and personal connection in a marriage. Charlotte Lucas, on the other hand, represents an alternative view of marriage, where financial security and stability take precedence over love and personal fulfillment. Her decision to marry Mr. Collins, despite his lack of appeal, shows how societal pressures and economic considerations influenced marriage choices during that era. In "Persuasion," the significance of houses in the marriage plot is not as overt as in "Pride and Prejudice." This is partly due to the constant movement and temporary residences of the characters. However, the novel still emphasizes the importance of a partner's way of life and values in the context of marriage. Captain Wentworth's successful naval career and the prospects of his future income become essential factors in Anne Elliot's consideration of their reunion.

Jane Austen uses various narrative techniques to characterize different viewpoints towards houses and marriage. Focalization, where the story is presented through the eyes of a particular character, allows readers to understand the characters' thoughts and emotions regarding their

circumstances. Free indirect speech provides insight into the characters' inner thoughts while maintaining the third-person narrative perspective. Additionally, Austen's use of irony and satire satirizes societal conventions and exposes the flaws and absurdities of the marriage expectations and social norms of her time. The importance of houses in the marriage plots of both "Pride and Prejudice" and "Persuasion" highlights the complexities of societal expectations, financial considerations, and personal values in the characters' decision-making processes. Jane Austen's exploration of these themes adds depth and realism to her novels, making them enduring classics that continue to resonate with readers today.

## CONCLUSION

Through the characters and their experiences, Jane Austen critiques the societal pressure and expectations surrounding marriage and domesticity. She emphasizes the importance of personal values, genuine affection, and self-awareness in forming lasting and meaningful relationships. Elizabeth's eventual marriage to Mr. Darcy represents a union based on love, understanding, and personal growth, reinforcing Austen's message about the significance of emotional compatibility in a successful marriage, rather than just adhering to societal norms and expectations.

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