

2008

## "What men ought to be": masculinities in Jane Austen's novels

Sarah Ailwood  
sailwood@uow.edu.au

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses>

### University of Wollongong

#### Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following: This work is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process, nor may any other exclusive right be exercised, without the permission of the author. Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material.

Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

Unless otherwise indicated, the views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Wollongong.

### Recommended Citation

Ailwood, Sarah L, "What men ought to be": masculinities in Jane Austen's novels, PhD thesis, School of English Literatures, Languages and Philosophy, University of Wollongong, 2008. <http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/124>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: [research-pubs@uow.edu.au](mailto:research-pubs@uow.edu.au)

## **NOTE**

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

## **UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG**

### **COPYRIGHT WARNING**

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

**“WHAT MEN OUGHT TO BE”:  
MASCULINITIES IN JANE AUSTEN’S NOVELS**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

from

**UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG**

by

**SARAH LOUISE AILWOOD BA (Hons) LLB (Hons)**

SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LITERATURES, LANGUAGES AND PHILOSOPHY

2008

## **CERTIFICATION**

I, Sarah Louise Ailwood, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Department of English Literatures, Languages and Philosophy, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Sarah Ailwood

19 November 2007

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Textual references   | 4   |
| Abstract   | 6   |
| Acknowledgments  | 7   |
| Introduction   | 9   |
| Chapter One – Women Writing Masculinity in the Romantic Period   | 19  |
| Chapter Two – Social and Literary Masculinities in the Romantic Period                                       | 42  |
| Chapter Three – Introducing Desirable Masculinity: <i>Northanger Abbey</i>                                   | 79  |
| Chapter Four – “Too much in the common Novel style”: Educating the<br>Reader in <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> | 107 |
| Chapter Five – <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> : Writing the Desirable Male                                       | 141 |
| Chapter Six – Men and National Security in <i>Mansfield Park</i>   | 177 |
| Chapter Seven – “It was just what it ought to be, and it looked what it was”:<br>Emma’s Mr Knightley         | 213 |
| Chapter Eight – “The accommodations of a man of war”: Reforming the<br>Family in <i>Persuasion</i>           | 232 |
| Conclusion – “Ladies are the best judges”  | 265 |
| Bibliography   | 268 |

## TEXTUAL REFERENCES

References to Jane Austen's writings are to the following editions:

*Northanger Abbey*. Ed. Marilyn Butler and Claire Lamont. London: Penguin, 2003.

*Sense and Sensibility*. Ed. Ros Ballaster and Claire Lamont. London: Penguin, 2003.

*Pride and Prejudice*. Ed. Vivien Jones and Claire Lamont. London: Penguin, 2003.

*Mansfield Park*. Ed. Kathryn Sutherland and Claire Lamont. London: Penguin, 2003.

*Emma*. Ed. Fiona Stafford and Claire Lamont. London: Penguin, 2003.

*Persuasion*. Ed. Gillian Beer and Claire Lamont. London: Penguin, 2003.

"Jack and Alice". *Catharine and Other Writings*. Ed. Margaret Anne Doody and Douglas Murray. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Letters from Jane Austen to her sister Cassandra Austen, her nieces Anna Austen and Fanny Knight and to James Stanier Clarke are quoted from *Jane Austen's Letters*. Ed. Deirdre Le Faye. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

**To Tim**  
*what a man ought to be*

## ABSTRACT

“ ‘What men ought to be’: Masculinities in Jane Austen’s Novels” examines Jane Austen’s literary constructions of men and masculinity as feminine and feminist contributions to the public debate on ideal English masculinity throughout the Romantic period. It explores the problematic position of women writers in critiquing masculinity in the highly politicised context of the Romantic period and develops a theoretical approach to interpreting their constructions of desirable and undesirable masculinities as being representative of their social, cultural and feminist concerns. Throughout her novels, Jane Austen’s representations of the desirable male – of ‘what men ought to be’ – are informed by her fundamental concerns regarding the realisation of female selfhood and the fulfilment of women’s desires, and the political survival and moral wellbeing of the English nation. This thesis argues that Austen’s novels seek to reform socially-approved codes of gentry masculinity by endorsing a model of male identity that is not dependent on the submission or passivity of women in courtship or domestic relationships, promoted by conventional patriarchal ideologies. Austen’s novel’s dramatise the process by which men can choose to forge a masculine identity that allows women a greater socially and publicly participatory role, both enabling the fulfilment of female desire and ensuring the security and wellbeing of the English nation.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to many people for assisting me in the completion of this thesis. My thanks go especially to my supervisor and mentor, Anne Collett, for her unfailing commitment and support, her enthusiasm, her warmth and her confidence in me since we met in my first year at university. I also wish to thank Anne Lear for her sage advice and encouragement, Megan Brown for the moral support that only a fellow postgraduate can give and Louise D’Arcens for the very helpful comments she provided on the final draft. I am grateful to the School of Literatures, Languages and Philosophy for providing an intellectually stimulating and supportive environment, and to the Faculty of Arts for providing funds that enabled me to attend conferences and undertake fieldwork in Britain.

My thanks also go to the Menzies Centre for Australian Studies for granting me an Australian Bicentennial Scholarship that allowed to devote three months to researching Romantic women’s novels in the Corvey collection. Anthony Mandal and David Skilton were particularly welcoming during the time I spent as a Visiting Doctoral Scholar with the Centre for Editorial and Intertextual Research at Cardiff University. This was an invaluable opportunity to consider Austen’s novels in the context of her female contemporaries. I also wish to thank the many librarians who have assisted me, particularly at the University of Wollongong Library (especially the Document Delivery section), the National Library of Australia, the British Library and the Chawton House Library. The expertise and resources they provided were crucial to the research and completion of this thesis.

On a personal note, I wish to thank my husband, Tim Lear, for his unwavering support for me and for this project, for his absolute confidence in my ability, for encouraging me to pursue this dream and for lots of love and laughter when I need it most.

I would not have been in a position to undertake this PhD had it not been for the support of my loving family, especially my parents David and Louise Ailwood and my brother Josh, who encouraged my love of books as a child and have supported me in all ways ever since.

Carmel Pass deserves special thanks for the very useful comments she provided on the draft of my thesis, for her wisdom and encouragement and for suggesting that I write my PhD on Jane Austen in the first place.

Meeting with the Canberra chapter of the Jane Austen Society of Australia has been an absolute pleasure and offered insights that only the fellowship of true Austen lovers can provide.

Lastly, I wish to acknowledge all of the people – friends, family and random strangers – who have taken an interest in my project over the last four years, and whose questions and comments have inspired or challenged my thinking. I am particularly grateful to those who have never asked “what else can be said about Jane Austen?”