



Men of Austen: Defining Masculinity in Jane Austen's Novels

E.J. DuPree

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“Men of Austen: Defining Masculinity 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 politicized 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 realization of female self hood and the fulfillment of women’s desires, and the political survival and moral well being of the English nation. This book 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 dramatize 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 fulfillment of female desire and ensuring the security and well being of the English nation.



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