

THE IDEALS OF MASCULINITY IN JANE AUSTEN'S NOVELS

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Sense and Sensibility (1811) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) by Jane Austen were created at a time when male identity was characterised by wealth, rank, and control of emotions. Males were expected to be reasonable and dominant, rather than emotional. The author reveals the breaking of traditional masculine character traits and provides more ethical and emotionally conscious alternatives. This challenge is advanced because Austen is a woman writer working in a male-dominated society.

Austen, in both novels, echoes an attitude that masculine worth is achieved through money and position. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Darcy is initially introduced in terms of his earnings of ten thousand a year, as compared to the earnings of Mr. Bingley, four or five thousand a year (Austen, 2025). Such short-term attention to money indicates that the social status of a man is more significant than his character. All the economic power in Austen's writings is linked to manhood, which is central to the patriarchal society. Likewise, in *Sense and Sensibility*, during his arrogant control of the inheritance, John Dashwood is a reminder of how male power is defended with property law (Austen, 2024). According to Azad *et al.* (2024), marriage and money are two factors that control social power, particularly among men, as revealed by Austen. This criticism has added to the background of Austen's biography as an unmarried woman with no money or power. Her novels are a silent protest against patriarchal power by inquiring who is worthy of respect.

Although Austen studies the masculinity that is in the form of rigidity, she is breaking the same tradition by letting the men grow on the emotional plane. The masculinity of Mr. Darcy is malleable as depicted in his journey. His taking responsibility and allowing himself to be emotional poses a challenge to the expectation of men being non-emotional. According to Siddique, Kazmi, and Farasat (2023), excessive masculinity distresses men, restricting them from expressing their feelings. The development of Darcy demonstrates that

subordination and responsibility build more moral power. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Willoughby also provides a contrast to Colonel Brandon (Austen, 2024). Brandon is considered to have a more unethical masculinity, in that he values loyalty and care over pleasure.

The issue of shallow masculinity in Austen is also shown through the specifics of male relationships as demonstrated in novels. According to Ard (2024), male friendship in the novels written by Austen reveals character. The friendship of Darcy with Bingley is more loyal and morally equal, whereas Willoughby has no significant male connections, which he can call his moral frailty. Mr. Bennet, on the other hand, is a symbol of imperfect patriarchy (Isiklar, 2023). He claims that his alienation brings out the restraints of male conventional strength (Hasan, 2023). It depicts how the withdrawal of emotions undermines leadership in families, as well as masculine power.

From this perspective, it is possible to note that Austen subverts as well as mirrors the male ideals about masculinity of her era. Although the idea of wealth and status defines the male identity in her books, Austen doubts its importance by using the techniques of irony and character transformation. More to the point, she makes masculinity learned and moral by encouraging emotional development, responsibility, and moral uprightness in contrast to being predetermined, overpowering, and by social power alone.

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