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JANE AUSTEN: Lessons in 'ladyhood' for both ladies *and*  
gentlemen of nineteenth-century England and beyond.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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## Abstract

Austen took up the literary challenge and wrote within the tight parameters set by the prevailing male society. She was able to portray her heroines as ideals of “ladyhood”, she rejected skewed masculine values unfavourable to women prevalent during her time. Her heroines discover feminine self-awareness, they have travelled the path of fundamental growth and maturation. Admired in her own century as having “nothing doctrinaire” in her work and ‘no trace of a woman’s mission’ (Parrish, p.370) in the hindsight of one hundred and fifty years; it is important to recognise both her teaching intent and her concern with female development, indeed, it is impossible not to recognise her “pondered intent” in relation to social and political issues generally that was eclipsed by earlier hegemonies.

## Acknowledgments

My interest in Jane Austen has never faltered and I continue to enjoy her novels today as I did when I read my first Austen novel whilst still at school. I was also fascinated with her personal background; how a commonplace daughter of a country clergyman was able to make such an overwhelming contribution to the literary world. I did not appreciate at that time the extent of the literary quality in her work, but when serious study began at university my admiration became a passion. Austen continues to be part of the English school curriculum in England to date and, no doubt, she will continue to be so in the future. Remaining focussed on a limited area of Austen's works has been a challenge as there is so much of Austen that I find interesting. The past twelve months have often been demanding but without the support of two important people this thesis would not have been possible. I would like to acknowledge the valued assistance of my supervisor, Mary Paul, who has made available her encouragement, guidance and support from the initial stages to the closing pages of this project, thank you. Secondly, I owe my deepest gratitude to my husband Robert, who has given his unwavering assistance and endless supply of patience throughout my academic progress.

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