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**VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE ENGLISH GENTLEMAN IN JANE AUSTEN'S
NOVELS *SENSE AND SENSIBILITY*, *MANSFIELD PARK* AND *PERSUASION***

Master's Thesis

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Preface

The present thesis focuses on the study of the English gentleman in Jane Austen's novels *Sense and Sensibility*, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*. The novels chosen for the analysis represent different stages of the author's literary activity, and may therefore offer more varied representations. The aim of the present thesis is to find out whether and how the male characters in Austen's novels correspond to the gentlemanly ideal in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The first chapter of the thesis concentrates on the development of the concept of the English gentleman since the Middle Ages, and it attempts to explain the different interpretations of the term proceeding from social and moral aspects. The second and third chapters deal with the analysis of the types of gentlemen that formed an eminent group at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and that illustrate the controversial meaning of the word "gentleman": Regency dandies and the men of genteel professions. The dandy is very much responsible for the dissolute and extravagant image of the Regency period. Austen, being an acute observer of society, could not have overlooked the elements of dandyism in her contemporaries since some of her male characters seem perfectly to represent the attributes typical of dandyism and the attitudes of society. The professional gentlemen in her novels, the clergymen and naval officers, seem to be the carriers of the values attributed to the ideal gentleman and they are often opposed to the dissolute world of dandies. These contradictory types both provide a revealing insight into the definition of the gentleman at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

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List of Abbreviations

MP	<i>Mansfield Park</i>
P	<i>Persuasion</i>
S&S	<i>Sense and Sensibility</i>

Introduction

Among the early nineteenth century English writers, Jane Austen is without doubt one of the most studied authors. The field of *Austeniana* has been thoroughly researched and the aspects which have been analysed are manifold. However, Austen's male characters have not been as extensively studied as her heroines, and they do not seem to have aroused much interest as manifestations of the gentlemanly ideal of the time. The aim of the present thesis is to find out whether and how the male characters in Austen's novels correspond to the gentlemanly ideal in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century. With the analysis, the thesis attempts to contribute to the understanding of Austen's male characters as representations of the English gentleman of the time. The novels *Sense and Sensibility*, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* I have chosen for the analysis represent different stages of the author's literary activity, and may therefore offer more varied representations.

Austen's works are an interesting source for analysing different manifestations of the idea of the English gentleman. Since the concept offers a wide range of interpretations when it is discussed from the point of view of the gentry and prosperous middle class families, Austen's novels provide a valuable insight into the way the term "gentleman" was understood at the time. Austen writes from the point of view of the lesser gentry, a social stratum posited between the upper nobility and the middle classes, which gives her novels a unique tonality and provides interesting perspectives. McMaster (1998: 115) observes that class difference was a fact of life for her, and acute observations of "the finest distinctions between one social level and another was a necessary part of her business as a writer of realistic fiction". McMaster (ibid.) adds that Austen was "ideally placed to observe the finely nuanced social distinctions around her" since she herself was an unmarried woman being to some extent outside the game. She belonged to the family where different "genteel" professions (her father and her brothers James and Henry were

clergymen, and Frances and Charles pursued their career in the navy) and social layers (e.g. Jane's brother Edward became the heir of a distant cousin and inherited large estates, which established him among the landed gentry; his daughter Fanny married a baronet) were represented, offering her thus a good starting point to cast light on the different aspects of the gentlemanly ideal proceeding from the social position and background.

Austen was a keen observer and her novels provide a helpful guide to the ways of the time. Nevertheless, her novels have not often been regarded as a source for readers to learn about the social and historical context her works were written in. She is conventionally regarded as a writer of romances with happy endings, who limited the scope of her work to the life of the minor gentry and never went beyond the world that was familiar to her (e.g. Harrison in Tucker 1994: 69). This approach is to a large extent generated by Austen's nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh, whose *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (1870) has contributed to the image of Austen as a writer of rather a limited scope. It cannot be denied that Austen's novels spin a familiar web of romantic relationships wherein the heroine goes through a test of judgement in order to get the husband she deserves, and all her characters enjoy the small world of the gentry which is seldom penetrated by the troubles from outside. She has been sometimes accused of neglecting the great historical events that took place in her lifetime and focussing on the domestic setting instead (ibid.). However, Tucker (ibid.: 70) draws attention to the fact that most of the popular literature of Austen's time can be classified as escapist, and it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that the Revolution and Napoleonic wars found expression in fiction. Considering that, Austen is no exception. Yet her novels cannot be classified only as escapist romances but realistic representations of the world she lived in.

Avoiding the subject of politics does not mean that Austen was not interested in the events of her time. What is more, some of her family members and relatives were directly

or indirectly involved in the tumultuous events, bringing therefore the reality closer to her than the newspapers could have ever done. For example, Jane's cousin Eliza, the daughter of Jane's paternal aunt Philadelphia Hancock, was married to the French Comte de Feuillide, who was guillotined together with many other aristocrats in France. His violent death is probably partly responsible for Jane's developing an aversion to republican beliefs. The correspondence with her cousin Eliza shows her abiding interest in these matters, and the letters she sent to the other members of her family assure that she shared her reflections on the political affairs of the country. But as a novelist, she preferred to dwell on subjects that she was intimately familiar with. She planned her novels carefully in order to maintain accuracy to real life and she is known to have consulted maps and calendars to fit the story properly into time and space (Le Faye 2003: 149). Her ultimate aim to present real life as truly as possible also explains why she restricted her settings and topics to the life of the gentry, to certain countryside, and overlooked, for example, the trouble-ridden France. Austen had never been to France and had therefore no personal experience on which to base a continental setting. She was determined not to include places and events she had no immediate experience of. For example, when her niece Anna tried to compose a novel following the example of her admired aunt, Austen advised her in one of her letters not to introduce things which cannot be credibly depicted: "I think you had better not leave England. Let the Portmans go to Ireland, but as you know nothing of the manners there, you had better not go with them. You will be in danger of giving false representations. Stick to Bath & the Foresters. There you will be quite at home" (in Le Faye 1997: 269).

Despite the lack of politics in her novels, we cannot ignore the references which reveal that Austen was a keen observer of her time, recording the particulars of social intercourse of the circles she moved in. She had an extraordinary talent for portraying

different types of people, revealing both psychological and social aspects as important factors influencing their behaviour. Many reviews described her novels as true to life and admired them for their veracity. For example, *Sense and Sensibility* was thought to be “well written; the characters are in genteel life, naturally drawn, and judiciously supported. The incidents are probable and highly pleasing...” (*British Critic*, May 1812 in Tomalin 1999: 220). Sir Walter Scott praised Austen for “copying from nature as she really exists in the common walks of life” (ibid.: 253). In France, the translations of her novels were regarded as fully representative of the people and their way of life in England. The additional title given to *Emma* in French suggests that the novel was to be taken as a guide to their neighbours overseas: *La Nouvelle Emma ou Les Caractères Anglais du Siècle* (ibid.: 276). Some readers, however, could not tolerate the idea of such trueness to life since fiction had to be based on imagined worlds offering an escape from reality and her works were criticised as “too natural to be entertaining” (an anonymous contemporary quoted by Le Faye 2003: 153).

Although it is a widely accepted view that the husbands for the heroines in her novels embody everything that is good and the antiheroes all that is condemnable, one must not indulge in such a black-and-white treatment of her characters. Regardless of their merits and vices, her male characters are all gentlemen. Austen was well aware of the moral and social meaning of the term “gentleman” at the time, and she made no attempts to change the conception in her fiction. The heroes of her books are not faultless fictional ideals or the antiheroes hopeless rascals. Her characters are accomplished men with impeccable manners although they may sometimes lack principles and display loose morals. Since the term “gentleman” is a subject of various and often contradictory interpretations at the time, a historical overview of the development of the concept is given in Chapter 1. Although some researchers (e.g. Mason, Strong) have maintained that Austen

herself belonged in spirit to the eighteenth century and defines gentleman accordingly, the notions of the term in the preceding centuries must not be overlooked. The traces of the legacy of the medieval chivalric ideal as well as the idea of the perfect Renaissance courtier can be easily recognized when we try to define “gentleman” in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century terms.

Most of the male members of the ruling classes in Austen’s time were described as “gentlemen” but the term had different meanings in different mouths and the same person would use it in different senses. As the term suggests, the gentleman was, first of all, a man of gentle or noble birth and the term usually excluded everyone who lacked this precondition. The Latin word “gentilis” means belonging to a good family, and is derived from the word “gens” – a member of the tribe. The Old French “gentil hom” stood for a highborn, noble man and appeared in English as “gentil man” denoting the same thing (Castronovo 1987: 5). Before the revolution in France and the radical economic changes at home, people tended to associate the term “gentleman” with noble birth and ownership of land, though the exceptions to the case had become more and more frequent. There was never any such clear-cut distinction in England as in France and by the end of the eighteenth century the term “gentleman” had become extraordinarily elastic. It meant very different things to different people and the class barriers which had been there to mark the difference between gentlemen and non-gentlemen were becoming less clear-cut. To the believers in the hierarchical model, he was still a landowner, with a coat of arms: the direct descendant of the classical and Renaissance ideal type, renowned for his courage, chivalry, generosity, hospitality and sense of duty (Cannadine 2000: 33), but to everyone it meant a standard of conduct, a standard to which the best born did not always rise and which even the humblest might sometimes display (Mason 1982: 12). This idea of the gentleman was widely accepted and the title widely applied. Such large-scale usage of the term may be

explained by its ambiguity: no one was quite sure who was a gentleman and who was not. Everybody wanted to be one, and especially the men from the middle classes strove hard to be regarded as gentlemen. Professional men increasingly liked to think of themselves as gentlemen, although the old nobility usually did not recognise them as such. Mason (1982: 9) says that the typical middle-class Englishman was a snob and admired those who ruled him; he did not think he could become a lord but he did think his son might become a gentleman. He would very likely have put himself in a slightly higher social bracket than a detached observer might have thought fitting, and for that reason he felt he was on the same *side* as the ruling classes (*ibid.*).

Despite the variety of notions that have coloured the meaning of the word “gentleman”, the concept at the beginning of the nineteenth century and thus in Austen’s novels does not differ much from the idea of gentility in Chaucer’s time. Chaucer as well as Austen has no doubt that good birth by itself did not always mean true courtesy and all that was means by “gentillesse” (Mason 1982: 37). In his time, it was already accepted that a gentleman did not always behave as a gentleman should and the moral and social meanings became separated (*ibid.*: 50). The moral meaning embodies a doctrine where chivalric values and Christian ethics are combined and this doctrine also seems to form the basis for the qualities Austen presents as gentlemanlike: generosity, courtesy to women, magnanimity, responsibility, duty, and above all, consideration for others. Her idea of a perfect gentleman also includes the qualities of the Renaissance courtier, which means that a true gentleman must pass the test not only in good manners but also in a taste for drawing, music and poetry; they must express themselves well and be what she called “conversable”, i.e. sociable and ready to talk (Mason 1982: 77). After all, a gentleman should live with a due sense of his position among his fellows, with some attention to his reputation, to all that is meant by honour, expecting neither more nor less than he deserved;

he must have, in other words, a clear idea of who he is; he must behave with *consistency* and with a central integrity, and he must fulfil his obligations to those who have obligations to him (Mason 1982: 16).

The works discussed in the present thesis illustrate the ambiguity of the term “gentleman” as well as the ideal that is cherished and kept alive despite the changes the society had undergone. *Sense and Sensibility* is Austen’s first canonical work which grew out of an epistolary novel *Elinor and Marianne* written already in 1795. Two years later Austen gave up the idea of telling the story in the form of letters and started to rewrite it. However, the novel was not published until 1811. It received favourable reviews and was sold out by the summer of 1813 (Le Faye 2003: 35). As all her novels, *Sense and Sensibility* also focuses on the development of the heroines and offers less insight into the male characters. Yet John Willoughby and Edward Ferrars come to the fore as good examples of Regency gentlemen. In Willoughby, the Castiglionesque refinement and gallantry is combined with dandylike laxity, which makes him almost a paragon of the somewhat libertine Regency gentleman. Edward Ferrars, on the other hand, has to face the problem which arose from the ambitions of his family to be “genteel” and his own calling to become a clergyman, a not so genteel profession for a gentleman without noble background. The conflict is a good illustration of how the term “gentleman” was perceived by different people.

Mansfield Park was started in 1811 or 1812 after a six-year period of silence and it is considered Austen’s most mature novel. Critics agree that *Mansfield Park* is “the first product of her truly adult abilities” (Le Faye 2003: 228) created at the height of her genius. The title page of the first edition says it is “by the Author of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*”, which served as a guarantee that the novel would sell well (ibid.: 35). The reviews were again encouraging but varied to a large extent as far as the question

of morality was concerned. Some greeted the moral triumph over libertinism; others called the author's approach "priggish" (Tomalin 1999: 228). The representation of the characters Henry Crawford and Edmund Bertram are much responsible for the conflicting opinions, and these two gentlemen in the novel again testify that the interpretation of the word "gentleman" could vary a lot. Henry Crawford is a worldly-wise dandy and a desired company, but his immorality alienates him from the ideal. Edmund Bertram seems almost a paragon of virtue and an ideal gentleman. He is a son of a baronet and, unlike Edward Ferrars, can follow his calling to be ordained without worrying about its not being "genteel" enough.

Persuasion is Austen's last completed work began in 1815 and finished in 1816. The novel was published posthumously in 1818 and the title was allegedly chosen by her brother Henry. Austen's fatal illness, which showed its first signs in the spring of 1816, was probably responsible for the comparative shortness and a more sombre mood of the novel (Le Faye 2003: 278). Although many critics think that the version we read today is not final, and the story would have taken a different turn had Austen lived longer, Le Faye (ibid.) concludes on the basis of the memories of her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh that the author still managed to complete it to her satisfaction. As compared to her previous novels, it offers a somewhat different perspective for reading the novel as an account of the sentiments the gentry shared in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, and in the light of the social changes that started to influence the well-established social hierarchy. But the change in tonality may also proceed from Austen's own broadened experience and knowledge of places and people. Two of her brothers had joined the British Navy and they offered a useful insight into the naval matters. This kind of immediate contact provided Austen with adequate information about the life at sea, which she skilfully applied in *Persuasion*. Terry (1992: xxiv) says that without actually moving beyond the limited scope

of her earlier works, *Persuasion* looks outward in a way her other novels do not. As for the manifestations of the English gentleman, Austen's last completed work introduces a new type of professional men, sailors, who, although mentioned in her other novels, do not dominate them as they do *Persuasion*. All the gentlemanly qualities find embodiment in Captain Wentworth and Admiral Croft, and they can be seen as a replacement for the conceited and arrogant aristocrats like Sir Walter Elliot. However, Sir Walter is probably the most vivid of Austen's dandy-gentlemen, who reveals the peculiarities of the dandy lifestyle better than any other of her characters.

The types of gentlemen presented in Austen's novels clearly reflect her own social background. She depicts the kind of gentlemen that formed a particularly interesting class at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The men in her novels mostly belong to the gentry or upper middle class and Austen never places her main characters further up on the social scale than to the baronet. However, the categorisation used in the thesis does not proceed from the social background of the male characters but from the different and most eminent types of gentlemen representative of that segment of society and of the period in general: the Regency dandies and the men of profession. The dandy, analysed in Chapter 2, is very much responsible for the dissolute and extravagant image of the Regency period since two of the most influential high society men, the Prince of Wales and George Beau Brummell, were known as dandies, too. Austen, being an acute observer of society, could not have overlooked the elements of dandyism in her contemporaries since some of her male characters seem perfectly to represent the attributes typical of dandyism. Austen's dandy-gentlemen have unfortunately received relatively little critical attention, although they display the author's mastery of creating complex characters who reflect the attitudes of society. Chapter 3 studies the professional men, who also form a distinctive type of gentlemen in Austen's works. These men in her novels seem to be the carriers of the values

attributed to the ideal gentleman and they are often opposed to the dissolute world of dandies. In these three works, they are men of principles, considerate and gallant, and yet not exaggerated fictional embodiments of virtue and merit. These contradictory types both seem to offer a revealing insight into the definition of the gentleman at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 1

Who is the English gentleman? The Development of the Concept

1.1 The Middle Ages

The medieval period plays a crucial part in understanding the concept of the English gentleman both in social and moral terms. The hierarchical model of the feudal system is largely responsible for the social associations of the concept while the cult of chivalry contributes to its ethical aspect. At the beginning of the Middle Ages, the word “gentleman” was not used in the same sense as at the time Austen wrote her novels. To be “gentle” in the early Middle Ages meant to be a man whose father was known to the entire neighbourhood and who held land with a liability to bear arms, i.e. to be a “gentile man” was to be a nobleman. The following centuries broadened the meaning of “gentleman”, and in the late Middle Ages as well as in the Renaissance period the term came to be used and applied to a larger group of people than the nobility. In order to understand the word “gentleman” as Austen did, one has to look back to the development of the term in the historical context.

The medieval society was hierarchically organised and broadly divided into the lords and the common people. Below the aristocracy there was a distinct class of men who were in the service of the lords – the knights. They were men of wealth and social influence whose duties were primarily military as the Latin equivalent *miles* clearly shows. The *miles* or a professional soldier came to denote the social standing of an individual, giving him a certain degree of supremacy over those who were of a similar background but who were not soldiers. At first, the *milites* were men of rather moderate means, which excluded them from the ranks of greater men, such as counts and dukes, who were regarded as noblemen. Later, especially in the twelfth-century France, the noblemen also

started to identify themselves as *milites*. The extension of the usage of the word as a title probably came about because the lesser knighthood and the greater nobility were drawing closer together in terms of social cohesion and the word *miles* started to acquire honorific associations. As a designation, *milites* had risen in the social scale and gained a special reputation (Keen 2002: 15; Keen 1984: 27).

The decrease in the number of knights in England due to their elevation to more distinguished ranks left a gap which had to be filled. In the thirteenth century knighthood had become more elitist and implied a higher level of social dignity than before. Below the knights, there was a universally accepted social gradation but there were no terms of distinct categorisation. The esquires, valets or sergeants, *armigers* (armour-bearers) and *scutifers* (shield-bearers) who could have filled the vacant position were all socially heterogeneous: they included the descendants of landed families who had knights in their ancestry; there were people of non-genteel, urban or even peasant origins. But the documents from the beginning of the fourteenth century show that it was the sufficient landed income that mattered, and which became probably the most important criterion of social elevation (Keen 2002: 73-4).

In the middle of the fourteenth century the terms to denote the class of men suitable to serve the knights, the mounted men at arms, became crystallised. The word “esquire” came increasingly to be used to refer to such men in service while the word “valet” began to lose its association as a man acceptable for honourable service, and it came to be applied to the men who were hired for more menial jobs. From then onwards, the esquire was identified as a man whose gentility was recognised and who owned land, but who was not a knight. The esquire was originally a shield bearer, a personal attendant on a knight, who carried his lance and helm. The esquires became to be regarded as the lesser nobility whose office was one of function and not of birth, and there was nothing hereditary about his

position (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). The breadth of the social spectrum that the title “esquire” encompassed varied considerably. At one extreme were those with sufficient landed income and at the other those esquires who had very few means to support their estate beyond the rewards of service. Within this broad spectrum, there was an apparent need to distinguish between the higher and lesser, to find labels that would separate the landed and established esquires from those of a less stable position. This distinction had to be made without compromising the pride of those others in their claims to gentility. The term “esquire” therefore acquired a connotation of upward social mobility while the others were simply called “gentlemen” (Keen 2002: 103).

Being in the service of the knights, the esquires shared the values of the chivalric culture and attitudes, which eventually became the basis of the gentlemanly code of conduct. By the mid-twelfth century, shifting social and cultural forces, for example new military techniques, a new vocabulary of status, new literary themes, paved the way to a new code of manners and ethics called “chivalry”. Bloch (1995: 305) points out that it was very natural that a class of noble warriors so clearly defined by its mode of life and its social supremacy should eventually devise a code of conduct peculiar to itself. Later, when the class system underwent a relatively great change in the late Middle Ages, the term “chivalry” became more ambiguous, too. Keen (1984: 145) explains that the word “chivalric” continued to be used in a narrow sense to describe those who had formally and ceremonially taken up knighthood, but it also came to be used to describe the obligations, estate and style of life of those entitled to knighthood. Thus the term “chivalry” had both a military and a civil connotation. Broadly used, the term “chivalry” usually denotes the ideal of gentlemanly behaviour which originated in the medieval code of honour of the warrior class. Although the chivalric culture was born in France, it took its shape in a European context, and influenced the standards of the behaviour of the upper classes all

over Europe. Thus the term “chivalry” is first of all to be understood as a code of values. At first, the term could not be separated from its military context but from the middle of the twelfth century onward it acquired ethical and religious overtones which combined the ethos of the warrior class with the new pride in ancestry, the status and traditions of service (ibid.: 42).

The transformation of the values of the warrior band into the code of chivalry is remarkable in that it brings together unexpected elements, and transforms the rude warrior into an idealistic figure (Barber 2000: 67). The values and ideals chivalry stands for cannot be understood without taking into account the influence of different spheres of life. Since the word “chivalry” has a direct connection with the military world, one must not overlook the role of the warrior in shaping the idea of the perfect gentleman. First and foremost, the word “chivalry” denotes the qualities expected from the warrior. According to Girouard (1981: 16), the chivalric code of conduct accepted fighting as a necessary and glorious activity, but softened its potential barbarity by putting it into the hands of men committed to high standards of behaviour. The ideal knight in the Middle Ages was brave, loyal, true to his word, courteous, generous and merciful; he defended the Church and the wrongfully oppressed, but respected and honoured his enemies in war, as long as they obeyed the same code as he did. Medieval literature abounds in examples of perfect knights and chivalrous conduct. Their idealised behaviour as ascribed to a model knight Folcon in the Provençal epic *Girart* below has to be treated with precaution as real life was bound to provide the necessary corrective to the high ideal:

Folcon was in the battle lines/.../seated on an excellently trained horse, swift and fiery and tested. And he was most graciously armed/.../And when the king saw him he/.../said to the French: “Lords, look at the best knight that you have ever seen/.../He is brave and courtly and skilful, and noble and of a good lineage and eloquent, handsomely experienced in hunting and falconry; he knows how to play chess and backgammon, gaming and dicing. And his wealth was never denied to any/.../And he has never been slow to perform honourable deeds. He dearly loves God and the Trinity/.../he has honoured the poor and lowly; and he judges each according to his worth (in Keen 1984: 42).

Barber (2000: 68, 71-2) sums up the chivalric virtues in the phrase *elegantia morum*, a sophistication of both morals and manners. The virtues which a knight should possess were affability, friendliness, a benign countenance, moderation and measured conduct, gentleness, temperate moods and reticence about his accomplishments. These virtues were the essential prelude to courtly love which became an inseparable part of chivalry. The knight who aspired to chivalric glory did not dream of power and riches but of his lady's love. It was thought that the knight's beloved could give him strength and skill to defeat his enemies. The lady became the inspiration behind knightly deeds and love was seen as a kind of moral and spiritual education through emotions and feelings. Bloch (1995: 309) points out that courtly love did not have to result in the legal state of marriage, since the beloved was very often a married woman. The lady adored could be the wife of the lord whose vassal the knight was, and loyalty to one's lord excluded the consummation of the courtly relationship. The ideal love had to be pure and selfless, sexual passions and desire were sublimated; courtly love became a kind of stereotyped behaviour which acquired a ritual character. In reality, however, the sexual intercourse was not entirely denied and rejected. Minor physical contacts were not condemned, but the so-called ultimate solace was, at least publicly, unacceptable. (Bloch *ibid.*, Girouard 1981: 16).

The amorous ethic of service to a lady was essentially comparable to the ethic of faithful service to a lord (Keen: 1984: 30). In courtly love female approbation offered a new, secular and psychologically very powerful sanction to the secular convention of the code of courtly virtue and martial honour. The amatory ethic emphasised the noble aims of a lover and the efforts one had to make to achieve his goals: the aim of courtly love was not to seek the satisfaction of lust, but to show the refinement of one's feelings by enduring travails to win the lady's heart. The knights often competed with each other in performing

deeds of valour in the lady's honour and under her inspiration giving therefore the cult a new dimension (Girouard 1981: 16).

Keen (1984: 249) maintains that the most important legacy of chivalry was its conception of honour, especially in relation to the nobility. Chivalry's most profound influence lay in setting the seal of approbation on norms of conduct, recognised as noble when reproduced in individual conduct and style, and as such it had a key impact in the fashioning of the idea of gentleman (ibid.). In the following centuries the legacy of chivalry taught the gentleman to place honour at the centre of his mental and social world; it taught him courtliness in regard to women, and it emphasised how essential it was to be courageous and loyal to his word. In addition to honour, pride was considered one of the most essential ingredients of all class consciousness, which helped to establish the aristocratic class as a social unit (Bloch 1995: 292, Keen ibid.). In the middle of the fifteenth century the established nobility and gentlemen could be collectively referred to as "the chivalry" to separate them from the common people. But the usage of the term "chivalry" had lost its martial association (Keen 2002: 141).

In the second half of the fifteenth century the word "gentleman" began to be applied as a formal term to describe the humblest level of the landowning aristocracy just below the esquire. At first, the usage of "gentleman" was hesitant and often somewhat confused: men described in private aristocratic records as a gentleman may turn up in the records of the king's courts as "yeoman" or "franklin". However, the word was coming to be applied widely and formally as a title of degree less elevated than esquire but a clear cut above the yeoman who had no claims to gentility. By the time of Henry VII, men were categorised into four groups: lords, knights, esquires and gentlemen. The gentlemen were not separated from the classes above, rather they were drawn closer to them sharing the common precondition of gentility. However, there is an important difference between the

words “esquire” and “gentleman”. The former had through its Latin equivalents *miles* and *scutifer* clear military connotations while “gentleman” lacks any occupational associations. It was an addition of degree and implied that its holder was not dependent on manual labour (Keen 2002: 17, 103).

What were the criteria a man had to meet to be regarded as genteel, or gentleman? Keen (2002: 105) has enumerated five most important qualifications. The first and foremost was the gentle blood of ancestry; the second was livelihood from lands freely held; the third was the holding of office; the fourth, the kinship or association with “worshipful gentlemen” and persons of noble blood; the fifth was honourable service, typically in war, administration or in a noble household. However, the theoretical works from the twelfth century onwards had stated that true nobility derives not from ancestry but from virtuous living. Manners, style and bearing were the most important indicators of gentility, but one also had to keep company with the aristocracy and maintain a particular, often expensive, lifestyle characteristic of the upper classes. Without access to some sort of income it was not possible to display the manners of the gentleman and it was assumed that there was a significant correlation between the degrees of the aristocratic hierarchy and levels of income from land. Office holding was an important qualification of gentility, but it was, at least at county level, quite often the consequence rather than the cause of gentility. Office holding normally indicated that the holder had proved himself acceptable among the gentle people, and it was recognition of a quality in the servant which made him worthy of a lord’s service. Holding an honourable office was seen as a kind of power *per se*, which meant that the particular skills and knowledge that had helped their possessor to gain the office came to be associated with gentility, just as military skills had been before (ibid.: 108-109, 120).

The tenure of office was increasingly becoming an important factor in social elevation. The reason for this phenomenon is the growth of lay literacy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which extended the range of opportunities for offering service. This in its turn resulted in the demand for special training and education. The growing interest in education was characteristic of medieval England; more and more gentlemen were sending their sons to schools and teachers were hired by the lords to provide a good education to their offspring (Keen 2002: 122-123). Education continued to be the marker of gentlemanly status also in the Renaissance period. The 16th century witnessed the prospering of Humanist ideas, which considerably contributed to the ideal of an educated gentleman. Humanist philosophy, in defining gentility, relied more on the idea of a man's contribution to the new reforms rather than on his wealth. As Heal and Holmes (1994: 9) say, Humanists and reformers tried to revivify the old idea that "the true nobility is made by virtue rather than a long pedigree". The aim of the gentleman's education was not to breed them for a private and retired life, but for society and action in the commonwealth (ibid.: 282). The aristocracy accepted the idea of a learned gentleman and started eagerly to follow educational pursuits, making it a part of the courtly ideal.

1.2 The Sixteenth Century

The idea of the gentleman in the Tudor period was similar to that in the late Middle Ages: noblemen and the professionals practising in certain fields were unanimously regarded as gentlemen. In 1577, William Harrison, a clergyman and one of the leading thinkers of his time, begins his account of society in his *Description of England* by saying:

'We in England divide our people commonly into four sorts, as gentlemen, citizens or burgesses, yeomen, and artificers, or labourers. Of gentlemen the first and chief (next the king) be the prince, dukes, marquesses, earls, viscounts, and barons: and these are called gentlemen of the greater sort, or (as our common usage of speech is) lords and noblemen: and next unto them be knights, esquires, and last of all they that are simply called gentlemen; so that in effect our gentlemen are divided into their conditions (<http://leehrsn.50megs.com/tl/105.html> and <http://leehrsn.50megs.com/tl/106.html>).

The category of gentlemen was not as homogeneous as can be concluded from Harrison's statement. Harrison explains that "gentlemen be those whom their race and blood (or at the least their virtues) do make noble and known" (<http://leehrsn.50megs.com/tl/128.html>), but the category includes also those who "study the laws of the realm, who so abide in the university (giving his mind to his book), or profess /.../ the liberal sciences...", i.e. those who "can live without manual labour, and thereto [are] able and will bear the port, charge, and countenance of a gentleman" (ibid.).

Throughout the Tudor period, there are subtle differences between the growing group of professionals who are regarded as gentlemen according to Harrison. The distinction within the class in the first place proceeded from the ownership of land. The teachers and parish clergy, for example, could not be characterised as having a strong position because few of them were able to confirm their standing through access to land (Heal & Holmes 1994: 8). The barristers, on the other hand, often came from wealthy families, made a significant fortune and strengthened their status claims by land purchase (ibid.). Harrison remarked that without the solid basis of property a gentleman "will beare a bigger saile than his boat is able to sustaine" (<http://leehrsn.50megs.com/tl/129.html>). Financial means were the main precondition of a high social status; wealth and expenditure had to be compatible with the acquired status and lifestyle. Lavish extravagance was almost as important as one's pedigree and titles since it confirmed the position one was known for. Heal and Holmes (ibid.: 100) state that the maintenance of the family tradition of hospitality, generosity and the ancestral paternalist concern for tenants formed a very

important part of the gentleman's identity. It was universally recognized that the lineage-based claims to status were hollow without a landed income and the capability to maintain an appropriate way of living (ibid.: 98). This aspect made the otherwise quite easy rise in the social scale rather difficult. It was not hard for a moneyed man to gain a better standing, but it was hard to maintain it.

Before 1500 the term "nobility" had very loosely been used for all the gentlemen of some pedigree, including the knights who could not boast of their pedigree of four generations of noble ancestors. It was around 1500 when the king started to summon barons and the men above this rank to his parliament, thus drawing a clear line between the title bearers and the upper gentlemen, who came to be defined as the gentry and not as the nobility. As the wealth and complexity of English society increased, so did the ranks of its gentry. The Elizabethan age was a great age for recruitment to the gentry from the ranks of craftsmen and merchants, but while birth was not essential, the emphasis, in considering what made a gentleman, was very much on accomplishments, manners and the standard of living (Mason 1982: 61). Those who were en-gentled that way must have had some difficulty in adjusting their behaviour to their new degree; "no doubt they were well aware that they were not regarded in the same light as the son of the manor" (ibid.: 27). This situation, however, reveals another significant aspect of the gentlemanly status: the social standing was "conferred only through recognition by friends and neighbours", i.e. the gentleman had to be regarded by his fellow men as such (Youings 1986: 116).

The courtesy and manners, which the new gentlemen painstakingly tried to acquire and those already accomplished tried to develop further, became the basis of social distinction. Elizabethan court took the Italian court as an example; everything Italian including the language, literature, music and painting was held in high esteem, and the English nobility were eager to adopt the fashions coming from Italy. Or as Mason (1982:

56) has put it, the Italian to the English was as the Greek had been to the Roman. During the Renaissance, courtesy became the key to distinguish men of higher status. There emerged a new code of behaviour which, in addition to the knightly ideals of the Middle Ages, introduced new standards corresponding to the needs of court society, and for this new code of behaviour, the English turned their eyes to Italy.

The Book of the Courtier by Baldassare Castiglione became almost the bible of the would-be courtier. Count Castiglione had been himself a frequent guest at the ducal palace of Urbino, and his famous book is based on a series of conversations about the attributes of a true courtier which took place there in 1507. The term “courtier”, however, does not mean the same as “gentleman” but in Italy at that time the two ideals were not so far apart as the words suggests today (Mason 1982: 50). The English word “gentleman” in the Renaissance context corresponds to the Italian “courtier” since they both enjoyed a high social status and were accepted at the court because of their pedigree or some other distinction. Thus the ideal Renaissance English gentleman was to a large extent modelled on Castiglione’s courtier.

But what is it like to be a perfect courtier, or gentleman for that matter? Although in the 16th century English society the pedigree did not seem to play the biggest role in defining a man as a gentleman (the emergence of the gentry), in terms of Castiglione’s peers noble blood gives a man a long start and advantages over those who lack it. The impetus lies in the familial prestige and social reputation which help a nobleman to advance:

I wish, then, that this Courtier of ours should be nobly born and of gentle race; because it is far less unseemly for one of ignoble birth to fail in worthy deeds, than for one of noble birth, who, if he strays from the path of his predecessors, stains his family name, and not only fails to achieve but loses what has been achieved already; for noble birth is like a bright lamp that manifests and makes visible good and evil deeds, and kindles and stimulates to virtue both by fear of shame and by hope of praise. And since this splendour of nobility does not illuminate the deeds of the humbly born, they lack that stimulus and fear of shame, nor do they feel any obligation to advance beyond what their predecessors

have done; while to the nobly born it seems a reproach not to reach at least the goal set them by their ancestors (Castiglione 2000: 23).

Although this point of view is not unanimously agreed upon at the court of Urbino, since men of humble birth can sometimes exceed their lords in virtuous deeds and qualities, the reality of this statement cannot be fully denied. On the other hand, the humble origin of a man does not spoil all the good qualities, such as talent, beauty of feature, comeliness of person, and that grace which makes him always charming to everyone at first sight (ibid.: 25). The most important attributes were grace and air which let the others know a person's true nature. One has to "practise in everything a certain nonchalance that shall conceal design and show that what is done and said is done without effort and almost without thought" (ibid.: 35). From this "grace is in large measure derived, because everyone knows the difficulty of those things that are rare and well done, and therefore facility in them excites the highest admiration" (ibid.). According to Mason (1982: 53), perfection lies in achieving such a degree of mastery that everything seems easy and natural. This applies to all spheres from physical exercise to the mastery of language in both speaking and writing. The education of a gentleman had to be excellent. Conversations covering literature and other branches of humanities were an everyday entertainment at the court. It was believed that a man who was fluent in languages and well-read made a desirable companion to the ladies. The behaviour in ladies' company did not consist only in elementary courtesy and politeness, the gentleman had to be refined and his speech had to show his learnedness. "The studies", as Castiglione (2000: 58) says, "will make him fluent, and /.../ confident and assured in speaking with everyone." Castiglione's ideas added a touch of refinement to the medieval picture of a brave, generous and an honest knight, and his code did not only influence the Elizabethans but also the subsequent generations well into the twentieth century. Courtly manners, education and accomplishments are also cherished by Austen

and her characters, which shows that the ideal had endured up to the beginning of the nineteenth century.

1.3 The Seventeenth Century

Besides the rank, the distinctive characteristics of a gentleman in Stuart England retained the ideas of the preceding generations. However, the medieval chivalric image and the ideal of the Renaissance courtier were substantially modified as the society went through fundamental changes. Adamson (1994: 164) draws attention to the fact that the chivalric tradition in the Jacobean and early Caroline context was in no sense monolithic. It encompassed a spectrum of features from “the earnest idealisation of the godly knight to the mock-heroic parodies of armour-clad Don Quixotes”. There was no single stereotype of ideal chivalric virtues and values. Adamson (ibid.) adds that while Caroline courtly chivalry worked within the inherited language of the past, it simultaneously imposed new standards for the reassessment of the forms of the tradition. Chivalry at the time was rather a rhetoric of the ideals and values and not a precise moral code as it had been in the Middle Ages; it was not what a man was obliged to do but what was thought appropriate for him to do (ibid.).

The opening decades of the seventeenth century witnessed a change in attitudes and values. The ideal of the medieval knight of Protestant humanist chivalry was transformed into a mixture of “virtuoso, cavalier and ancient Roman senator” (Strong 2000: 222). The courtier was now seen as a model of virtue with ideals different from those pursued before 1600. In the Tudor era, the rank was established through conspicuous display and a nobleman or gentleman had to be seen at a glance to be rich. The new century abandoned this criterion replacing it with a new and a more subtle one. Status was now seen to be inbred, natural and effortless, and no longer to be displayed through overt opulence. The

new markers of gentlemanly status were sophisticated language, which testified to superiority, gravity of demeanour and self-conscious elegance both in person and lifestyle (ibid.: 232; 263).

The role of a gentleman's education in the seventeenth century cannot be overestimated. Accomplishment and sophistication were highly esteemed and the Stuart gentleman continued to pursue the Renaissance ideal of the educated courtier. A Latin aristocratic culture which stemmed from the Socratic teaching that virtue depends on knowledge not only of the world but of oneself was rediscovered and developed further, which finally led to a shift in focus and aims of educational pursuits. For instance, trips to the Continent, especially to Italy, became a required component of the civilised life and education. It was the Earl of Arundel who introduced and came to represent the new aspect of gentleman's education. Aristocrats had been to the continent before but their journeys had not been a necessary part of their education. But for Arundel, getting to know firsthand the heritage of Classical Rome and contemporary Italian culture formed a component of the civilised life, in Italian summed up in the word *virtù* meaning civility, elegant manners and interest in learning. Arundel's ideal was that the educated English gentleman should be a *virtuoso* who recognises and understands the arts as a noble expression of spirit. His example was increasingly followed by the aristocracy and gentry and it had a profound effect on their attitudes to the arts. The love of arts launched a universal collecting mania among the upper classes. However, people were not collecting just the portraits of their ancestors and famous contemporaries as they had done in the previous century, but they collected works of art on an aesthetic basis, which was a remarkable shift in attitude. The ability to understand and judge art was seen as a precondition for collecting and also a marker of impeccable education. (Strong 2000: 244-5).

With Arundel we can see an expansion of the previous century's definition of the word "gentleman". To his existing sphere of activities the gentleman now had to add the role of *dilettante* or *virtuoso* in the arts and sciences. He had to be a person who was interested in inventions and experiences and who was able to identify classical imagery and judge a work of art. The gentleman's ultimate aim was no longer to excel at court displaying nonchalantly his accomplishments, but to have an abiding interest and a thorough knowledge of both sciences and arts. In his work *The Complete Gentleman* (1622), Henry Peacham presented a completely new educational programme for the upper classes and stated that nobility and education are inseparable:

Since learning is an essential part of Nobility, as unto we are beholden, for whatsoever dependeth on the culture of the mind: it followeth, that who is nobly born, and a Scholar withal, deserveth Double Honour being both ... (in Strong 2000: 251).

In the seventeenth century it was gradually accepted that men purchased titles if they were not born with one. The selling of peerages opened up a new possibility to move upwards on the social scale. Namely, James I created purchasable peerages to solve his money problems, which resulted in a sharp increase in the number of the title bearers. According to Ashley (1978: 17) and Heal & Holmes (1994: 24), the number of lay peerages doubled in the first quarter of the century, and there were altogether 203 titles of baronet granted from 1611 to 1623. Baronetcy, introduced in 1611, became the connecting link between the armigerous barons and the gentry, and the title, as those of the peers, was hereditary, but it did not allow its bearers to sit in the House of Lords. Selling baronetcies was a profitable business since there were many people among the gentry and merchants who had enough means to adorn themselves with a title. For, after all, the title was a question of prestige and a valuable asset to make one's way into the circles of the nobility. Ashley (*ibid.*) admits that baronetcies were relatively cheap, and the "inflation of honours" lowered the average value of the highest ranks. But as Woolrych (2002: 11) says, despite James's blatant sale of honours, the deference in which the peerage was held was only

slightly dented, and the political influence of the older and greater houses remained large, whether through the House of Lords, or the Privy Council, or senior offices in the royal household. The tendency to sell titles continued under Charles II who, like his grandfather, was desperate to fill his purse. It is quite feasible that one of the forefathers of Sir Walter Elliot, the self-conceited baronet in *Persuasion*, may well have obtained the title in that way (Sales 1996: 172).

As in the sixteenth century, the class of gentry was the most rapidly changing and developing class in Stuart England. There was a constant influx of men into the rank of gentry, mainly from the group of professionals, merchants and successful yeomen who were well-off enough to buy some land and to increase their income therewith. In 1640s and 1650s the market offered excellent opportunities of enrichment for the members of the gentry since the lands formerly belonging to the supporters of the Crown were sold or given to the men fighting for the republican cause. Ashley (1978: 19), however, explains that though many of Cromwell's officers were able to buy land at low prices during the Civil War, few of them managed to hold on to their estates long after Cromwell was dead.

The yeomen, though being the main source of newcomers into the rank of the gentry, were clearly differentiated from "gentlemen" in the legal documents of the time. On the whole, they were pretty prosperous. If, as some contemporaries maintained, the yeoman belonged to a disappearing class, it might well have been because he was becoming a gentleman rather than because he was becoming a pauper (Ashley 1978: 21-2). Although the gentry relied on yeomen's and merchants' wealth through marriage when they were on the verge of bankruptcy, they were strongly aware of the distinction between the landed and the landless (Woolrych 2002: 13). The yeomen, on the other hand, were jealous of the gentry because of their standing, and as soon as possible, the yeomen as well as merchants, civil servants and professionals would invest their savings in land.

The men of high degree were expected to carry out duties according to their standing and not to behave in a way unsuitable to their rank. The members of the gentry were expected to keep up their social position and did not always receive, as some had done in the Elizabethan age, help from the Crown in doing so (Ashley 1978: 20). As Stone & Stone (1995: 112) explain, membership of the elite carried with it the implication of “port”, as it was referred to in the 16th and 17th centuries. It meant the obligation to spend generously, even lavishly on occasion, as part of one’s duty to society, in return for the privileges of wealth and membership of the ruling class (ibid.). Because of that kind of social pressure and *noblesse oblige*, some peers and some gentry ruined themselves by fulfilling such obligations. So there could be usually found some peers or gentry on the decline, as well as many rising peers and gentry. As Trevelyan (1996: 2) explains the situation in the 17th century England, a poor gentleman was glad to save his estate by marrying his sons to the dowries which a wealthy yeoman could provide for his daughters. Ashley (ibid.: 17) also comments that it was usual for merchants and yeomen to marry into the old-established country gentry, restoring the gentry’s declining landed fortunes by doing so.

1.4 The Eighteenth Century

The eighteenth century brought about great changes. For the first time there was non-landed wealth on a huge scale, which was a result of the Commercial Revolution. Fortunes were made and lost at the stock market, and the money gained through commerce became essential to the working of government. Although landed income was still a sure marker of gentility, wealth acquired from commercial activities was decreasingly frowned upon. Society was still hierarchical with numerous gradations between those with title and the merely rich. However, neither the aristocracy nor the gentry constituted closed orders of

society, and contemporaries took pride in what was called in 1757 a “gradual and easy transition from rank to rank” (Briggs 1983: 171). City daughters married into the aristocracy and aristocratic younger sons entered the professions, the army, the church and the law (Strong 2000: 360).

The term “gentry” cannot be easily defined in the eighteenth century context. They were landowners born in old established families, who were authorized to bear a coat of arms. They represented that segment of society usually described as the country gentlemen who had no title to transmit and whose relations had to make their own way in the world. These men also, in competition with the younger sons of the aristocratic houses, hunted for preferment in the church, or secured commissions in the army or navy, and were thus becoming one of the great sources of recruitment for the growing professional class. However, not all were successful in the careers they had chosen, and the sons of poor gentlemen in stagnant agricultural areas had sometimes to be apprenticed to masters whose trades were considered to be of a very humble nature. The sons of such men might in time lose even the last remnant of their social heritage, the right to be described as “gentleman” on their tombstone. Others, making a fortune in trade or at the bar, might buy an estate of their own or marry one, and so again enter the charmed circle of the landed gentry (Durant & Durant 1975: 353; Marshall 1993: 30).

It is rather difficult to draw a line between the gentry and the so called middling sort of people because the comparatively easy ascent helped to blur the distinction between the upper classes and the rest of society (Williams 1984: 510). As Marshall says (1993: 30), the law knew nothing of the gentle birth but society recognised the term. According to the laws,

the children of peers were also commoners, hardly distinguishable from the gentry; and owing to the English practice of entailing the bulk of the family property to the eldest son, the younger sons of both nobility and gentry had to make their own way in the world. Whether they acquired benefices in the church, commissions in the army, or were

apprenticed to a profession or even a business – they mixed with and sometimes married into the middle classes (Williams *ibid.*).

Marshall (*ibid.*) also points out that many merchants could have had more wealth than a gentleman, and on the fringe there was even some overlapping of activities. One merchant, for example, might be a born gentleman, other a yeoman who by skill had won an equal fortune. But here the dividing line was one of manners and behaviour. The rich yeomen, for example, because of their way of life and attitude of mind, could not aspire to the ranks of the gentry. While talking about the middle classes in the eighteenth century England, Earle (1994: 146) uses the term “genteel”, a quality of “fundamental importance to middling people but one which was not directly linked to wealth or income, in that one could be quite poor and still genteel or quite wealthy and not genteel at all”. To be genteel, it was essential to choose a right profession, i.e. the occupation that was widely respected and could provide its practitioner with an income sufficient to support a genteel lifestyle. Collyer, a mid-eighteenth century English essayist, distinguishes between genteel and humble professions in his book *Parent and Guardians Directory*. But before taking up a prestigious occupation, the boys were expected to be already genteel, which meant having obtained a good education and mastering the proper behaviour. Collyer particularly emphasised the importance of education for a gentleman, which young men should have “at least as far as relates to a polite behaviour” (*ibid.*).

Cannadine (2000: 30) remarks that especially since the Civil War English society had been viewed as “polarised, divided into gentlemen and non-gentlemen, superior and inferior, polite and common, learned and ignorant, rich and poor”. These binary oppositions presented by Cannadine are very good examples of the categories according to which a man could be identified as gentleman. The criteria ranged from economic condition (rich vs. poor) to manners and accomplishment (polite vs. common; learned vs.

ignorant). Despite these oppositions, the debate over the status of the gentleman remained rather ambiguous throughout the 18th century. According to Cannadine (ibid.: 33), the hierarchical model of society suggested that the gentleman was a landowner, with a coat of arms: “the direct descendant of the classical Renaissance ideal type, renowned for his courage, chivalry, generosity, hospitality and sense of duty”. But professional men also inclined to associate themselves with gentlemen, and this tendency was on the increase since the Tudor times. On the other hand, the men of humbler professions, such as merchants, could not be so sure of their gentlemanly status. Although their means allowed them to live accordingly, they often lacked the required refinement in the eyes of the rest of the society, which barred them from the higher circles. As Cannadine (ibid.) says, they sometimes wanted to claim that they were genteel or “town gentry”, but this was not always accepted. Daniel Defoe, a renowned critic of his age, supported the clear-cut distinction since the “born gentlemen” and the “bred gentlemen” were “two sorts or classes of men”, and the difference between them was obvious (ibid.). Porter (1999: 50) points out that the recognition of a gentleman “was not legally fixed, but flexible, a matter of negotiation, for by long tradition English gentility was but ancient riches”. When Defoe recited

Wealth however got in England makes
Lords of mechanics, gentlemen of rakes

he broadly described what was happening at the time: people were becoming bolder when styling themselves “gentlemen merchants”, “gentlemen clothiers”, “gentlemen of the road”, etc. (ibid.).

Consequently, those at the top of the social ladder were by definition gentlemen – provided those beneath were morally, culturally, or financially inferior, but if the upper class was “depicted as selfish, effete and Frenchified, then the gentlemen were more likely to be on the other side” as the paragons of all virtue clearly opposed to everything

contemptible (Cannadine 2000: 33). The usage of the word “gentleman” remained dependent on the context, circumstance, point of view and polemical (or political) purpose (ibid. 34). Yet it was the upper class that set the tone for the rest of society. The middle and also lower classes adopted their values and tried to imitate the manners which distinguished the gentleman from common people.

The eighteenth century saw the emergence of a new kind of society known as the polite society. It was a novel and revolutionary concept developed in reaction to the dramatic events of the previous century. It was felt that the wars and conflicts the nation had severely suffered from should be avoided in the future at all costs, and religious bigotry should be replaced by mutual tolerance. The new balance in society was to be achieved through understanding oneself and the world. As for the aesthetic side of politeness, there was a demand for a new physical grace and elegance of personal presentation in terms of movement and dress as well as ease of social manner and polish in conversation (Strong 2000: 363-4). It was, according to Girouard (1990: 76), conversation without constraint between people of different rank, origin, religious or political background that became the principal ideal of the polite society. Thus the polite society encompassed a recognizable group of people, which was similar but not quite the same as the upper classes of the earlier centuries. The polished or polite man was the one who distinguished himself from arrogant lords, illiterate squires and fanatical puritans. Richard “Beau” Nash, the Master of Ceremonies in Bath, is considered to be to a large extent responsible for establishing that new code of conduct which relaxed the conventional rules of integration. According to Nash, the polite man was essentially social and polished in the sense that “he had no angularities which limited his contacts with other people” (ibid.).

“Politeness” was, first of all, to be practised in company. For that purpose, new venues had to be created. Numerous coffee houses, clubs, theatres and salons gradually

acquired to role of being the centres for polite conversations where people sharing the same code of conduct and principles could convene. The topics discussed in such circles played a great role in fashioning the polite identity. Literature and the arts were considered of paramount importance in refining and regulating passions and the knowledge and skills in these spheres easily fitted gentlemen in the polite society. Taste in the arts became a sign of refinement and cultivation, which was only achieved through intellectual perceptions. But such a way of life assured both time and finances, which meant that one already had to have an established position in society in order to afford intellectual pastimes (Strong 2000: 364-5).

However, the arts were not seen as offering only aesthetic pleasures but also guiding a person to a more virtuous life. Art was thought to have a persuasive power which could set people on the path to virtue (Strong 2000: 365). The eighteenth century increasingly relied on the discoveries of natural philosophy and the rationality of the natural laws seemed to confirm the existence of a benevolent Creator, who directed the universe to the best of ends. The polite man had to be guided in his actions by his innate benevolence just like God; the Creator had implanted in man the ability to perceive natural and moral beauty in order to make him seek happiness for himself and his fellow creatures (Sambrook 1990: 56). Art as a creation was like the work of God and mastering the arts meant proximity to virtue, to the divine benevolence. The popular “polite” magazines the *Spectator* and the *Tatler* were also designed to bring about a union of art and morality. The aim of Addison and Steele was “to Cultivate and Polish Human Life, by promoting Virtue and Knowledge, and by recommending whatsoever may be either Useful or Ornamental to Society” (in Strong 2000: 365).

Although continental travel came to be seen as a part of gentleman’s education already in the Stuart period, the importance of the Grand Tour, as it was now called, grew

considerably in the eighteenth century. Travelling had become one aspect of the consumer revolution which involved not only the aristocrats but also the men of the new professional classes. A young man was expected to return endowed with all the attributes that would enable him to move with assurance in international courtly aristocratic society, being fluent in foreign languages, graceful in his deportment and polished in his manners. It was the influence of those men that brought about a lasting change in cultivation and manners in England (Strong 2000: 395, 400).

But the code of behaviour for gentlemen in the eighteenth century was also the heritage of the Middle Ages. Girouard (1981: 16) points out that in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries one can watch the chivalric code gradually developing until it becomes one element of the accepted code of conduct for gentlemen. Although the concept of chivalry, as it is understood in the medieval and Elizabethan context, was radically modified in the 17th century, gentlemanly behaviour in Hanoverian England can be characterised in similar terms. Girouard (*ibid.*: 17) concedes that “the language in which a gentleman addressed a woman, or wrote poetry or love letters to his mistress, or challenged another gentleman to a duel, or toasted his king, was likely to be conditioned by the chivalric tradition”, whether the gentleman was aware of it, or not. Although the 18th century gentleman was no longer a warrior as in the Middle Ages, the men of professional armies and navies (among whom one could find many gentlemen of blood) followed an agreed code of conduct which had derived from the code of chivalry (*ibid.*). However, the term “chivalry” itself fell into disuse in the 18th century because much had happened to make the world of chivalry seem ridiculous and absurd. The aspects of chivalry had now little relevance to ordinary gentlemen living in security and comfort and leaving the business of war to the professionals. The most important meaning it could

have for a gentleman in the 18th century was the pride of medieval ancestors as far as they contributed to the status of his family (Girouard 1981: 19).

The concept of chivalry as it was known in the Middle Ages conflicted with the conviction of the upper and the middle classes, and everything that involved “enthusiasm” had to be avoided. The rational 18th century had no place for frantic heroism:

Loyalty to a king or leader, however disastrous the result, faithful love, however little requited, readiness to fight for one’s honour, however slight the slur on it, or truth to one’s word, however rashly given, were qualities which the literature of chivalry singled out for praise, but which eighteenth century opinion tended to consider stupid rather than noble (Girouard 1981: 19).

In 1734 Colonel James Forrester speaks of reason, calmness and good nature as the basic gentlemanly qualities in his book *The Polite Philosopher: Or the Art Which Makes a Man Happy and Agreeable to Others*. He maintains that these qualities should characterise every gentleman instead of violent emotions and disquiet: “Without Reason there is no being a fine gentleman” (in Castronovo 1987: 39). The Earl of Chesterfield expanded the notions and elaborated on additional aspects of these major characteristics. For him, calmness stood for refinement and the suppression of one’s emotions: a gentleman could “smile, but never laugh” (ibid.). The greatest evil produced by emotions is disquiet as opposed to the smoothness of social intercourse.

Nevertheless, chivalry was on the way back and Girouard (1981: 19) assures that the signs of its return were numerous. For instance, the images of chivalry used in paintings glorifying the past (e.g. *Edward III Crossing the Somme* by Benjamin West). Girouard (ibid.) explains that quite paradoxically, it was the eighteenth century accolade to reason and intellect that brought about the rebirth of chivalry regardless of the public denouncement of it in some circles. For example, the Age of Enlightenment brought about new attitudes to history which were based on a critical study of original documents with an intention to tease out what had really happened in the past. Thus the Middle Ages slowly began to interest the public, and so did chivalry. The atrocities of the revolution overseas

greatly affected the attitudes to the Middle Ages in Britain and it gradually became to be regarded as

an age based on the social structure of feudalism, when kingship was revered and the Church at its most powerful, [and it] became increasingly attractive to peers, gentlemen and clergymen whose counterparts were having their heads cut off across the channel. It was tempting to romanticise it as an age of simple faith and loyalties and the source of much that now appeared both sacred and threatened. Castles ceased to be considered as at best picturesque relics, at worst products of ignorance and violence; they began to be seen as symbols of authority and tradition (Girouard 1981: 23).

Edmund Burke in his *Reflections on the Revolution of France* idealises the ways of the past and laments the terrible fall of Marie Antoinette:

/.../ little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. – But the age of chivalry is gone. – That of sophisters, oeconomists, and acalculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever. Never, never more, shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience /.../ It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour /.../ which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched /.../ (Burke 1969: 169-170).

Although Burke bewailed the fall of chivalry in France, he was equally concerned about the condition in England. England, though untouched by the wave of terror, was also affected by the new attitudes that jettisoned the things held dear in the past. Burke deeply regretted the changes that had altered the face of society beyond recognition, and he was suspicious of the success of the new order. The turmoil on the Continent had clearly shown how violent emotions, enthusiasm and frenzy led to devastating consequences.

1.5 The Regency period

By the end of the 18th century the idea of the gentleman began to open up in contradictory ways. It expanded in different directions: money, fashion, and manners had been added to the initial tests of birth and land. The political leaders also started to set the tone of society where moral decline and extravagance became key features. Rogers (1994: 177) finds John Wilkes and Charles James Fox the most flamboyant examples of the era. Both men had the

reputation of a rake and they indulged in a dissolute lifestyle, which did not decrease their popularity. For example, a correspondent of the *Middlesex Journal* declared “I know that Wilkes is a rascal but dam me I like him the better for it” (ibid.).

The moral respectability of George III began to increase the popularity of monarchy with the middle classes. The effect was significant since the libertine politicians and the Prince of Wales, the future George IV, did not give people the feeling of stability the ageing king now seemed to embody. George III was a very conservative man himself who deeply revered ancient institutions such as the Church and monarchy. He distrusted reform and resisted the idea of democracy that was increasingly taking hold of the political thought of the day. The King, though not an able politician, also represented an honest contrast to the immoral and corrupt statesmen. Though ailing, he was seen as the symbol of domestic tranquillity, patriotism and tradition the country desperately needed as the dramatic events on the Continent unfolded (Strong 2000: 428). The middle class was also more receptive to the ideas of Methodism and Evangelicalism that had started to spread in the second half of the eighteenth century. Religion, according to Castronovo (1987: 45), became a behavioural guideline that asserted influence throughout the century and achieved a central position within the idea of the gentleman.

Priestley (2002: 41) points out that the old aristocratic virtues and characteristics were fast disappearing in the Regency period, and yet the dashing Regency society was not innovative enough to pioneer a totally new system of values. The old aristocratic values never died out; they were subjected to a new interpretation. The *noblesse oblige* had been guillotined, but only in the moral sense (ibid.). It reemerged in terms of conspicuous consumption and the rank obliged the Regency aristocrat to demonstrate his wealth. The Regency aristocracy felt it to be their privilege and obligation to display everything money

could buy, and to do that in a more lavish way than their forebears had done in the 18th century, who had been driven into bankruptcy by an ostentatious building mania.

Professor Spring (in Cannadine 1995: 37) has drawn attention to the way how lavish spending caused “widespread financial embarrassment” and the “heavy indebtedness” which he believed were “often to be found among the older landed families” during the first half of the century, resulting from heavy and accumulated family charges, from electoral extravagance, from the expense of house-building, and from the high living of the Regency period. Luxurious display was obligatory to a Regency gentleman, and differences in wealth also meant differences in lifestyle (ibid). By the end of the 18th century, *noblesse oblige* stood for a lavish extravagance rather than for noble manners. If an indifference to money was ever an aristocratic virtue, most of the Regency lords and ladies had forgotten that it was (Priestley 2002: 41). Murray (1999: 1) points out that the Regency society managed to behave at times with amazing vulgarity, and gluttony and gambling were regarded as fashionable pastimes. Gambling and debts became a daily part of Regency life, and it was almost impossible to avoid it if one moved in high society.

Beauty, splendour, and profuse magnificence became the keywords of the Regency court, and anyone willing to be accepted had to play along. Those men who emerged as the trend-setters and arbiters of taste were the favourites of the Prince Regent, who is to a large extent considered to be responsible for giving Regency “its raffish air and rather gamey flavour” (Priestley 2002: 41). The libertinism and extravagance of high society and the Prince’s talent for spending money and incurring scandals seem to have determined the image of the whole period. Gambling and displaying one’s extravagant taste went hand in hand with sexual promiscuity. It was common in high society to express indifference to the concept of fidelity: extramarital relationships were accepted and mistresses were publicly courted. Moreover, a successful mistress had a much better financial deal than a wife

(ibid.). Such attitudes to sexual morality may also explain the behaviour of Austen's libertine characters John Willoughby and Henry Crawford, who do not lose their standing in society after having seduced the girls whom they have no intention of marrying. The six sons of George III were partly responsible for setting the standards of sexual immorality, although they were not really as wildly disreputable as they were made out to be (Priestly ibid.: 15). They were ludicrously eccentric and were an inexhaustible source for the cartoonists of the time. Though pitied for fathering such a brood, the old king was not entirely blameless: his sons, especially the Prince of Wales, were violently reacting against their father's prim, dull and stingy court. Instead of devoting themselves to their German princesses who had been chosen as their wives, they openly kept mistresses and produced illegitimate children. And instead of trying to live within their not unreasonable allowances, they overspent freely, often on some folly or other, and so were constantly in debt (ibid.).

The term "gentleman" also changed according to how the boundaries between the ranks were redefined. Though society as a whole had become more egalitarian and the criteria of acceptance less rigid, snobbery was still endemic (Murray 1999: 22). People who had to work were often looked down upon, and if they had no other distinction, be it brains, elegance or charm, they were not regarded as desired companions. Harriette Wilson, the leading courtesan of the day, defined the gentleman as a man "who has no visible means of support", and the fifth Duke of Devonshire joined her stating that the man who works is not a gentleman (ibid.).

Castronovo (1987: 95) says that although clothing was not a sure mark of gentility in the 19th century, it was definitely one factor that tended to set gentlemen apart from non-gentlemen. The gentleman was the man in a well-cut suit made from broadcloth, and not the man wearing a tasteless brocade coat of the previous century. This aspect also proves

that the term “gentleman” was not restricted to aristocrats in showy outfits, but had a broader sense which was reflected in men’s clothing. To be regarded as a gentleman, a man had to dress accordingly. The new style was best represented by George Beau Brummell, who was a second generation self-made man. He became a self-styled arbiter of taste, whose opinion counted more than any other’s. Brummell was the one who decided what fashionable men should wear, who decreed that cravats should be starched, and who remodelled coats and denounced frills and brocades.

Beaux, or dandies, as such fashion-conscious men came to be called, are not to be confused with their 18th century counterparts called macaronis, who specialised in outrageous dressing and enormous wigs (Murray 1999: 160). Castronovo (1987: 94) finds Charles James Fox a typical representative of the trend that preceded dandyism:

he [Fox] was dressed in the style of a macaroni, complete with red high-heeled shoes. This was a faddish devotion to clothes for the sake of display and novelty. In Fox’s case, it easily gave way to slovenliness; it was not part of a whole “Clothes philosophy” like Brummell’s. For Fox, clothes belonged to the gentleman as an accessory; they did not seem to be intimately connected with his identity. For Brummell ... sartorial collapse and mental collapse coincided.

The legacy of Brummell is well expressed by a popular Victorian writer Bulwer-Lytton: “Dress so that it may never be said of you, “What a well-dressed man!” - but “What a gentlemanlylike man!” (in Castronovo 1987: 96). For Brummell, to be no longer a dandy was to cease to be a gentleman; to cease to be a gentleman was to cease to be a man (ibid. 94).

However, it is not only Brummell who stands for the definition of the dandy-gentleman, but also the Prince Regent himself. The Prince was very much responsible for extending the meaning of “gentleman” both in terms of the man’s social background and the standards of conduct. While in the 18th century the rules of etiquette were clearly defined, the beginning of the new century saw unprecedented changes which were introduced by the Prince himself. For example, he changed the accepted order of

precedence whenever it suited him, and he once went against all the rules of protocol by giving precedence to his brother's mistress over a duchess (Murray 1999: 21). Before he became the Regent, he had made himself notorious for countless scandals. From the outset, he had gained a reputation of a lecher, gambler and a spendthrift rake. But Murray (ibid. 2) assures that he was also a man of enormous charm, taste, intelligence, and impeccable manners who deservedly earned the title "The First Gentleman of Europe". Austen, despite this unofficial title, found the Prince wanting in many respects. However, she was flattered when asked to dedicate *Emma* to him, and in one of her letters to John Murray, her publisher, she stated that "it is my particular wish that one Set should be completed & sent to H. R. H. two or three days before the Work is generally public" (in Le Faye 1997: 304). The Prince was a great admirer of Austen's works and was allegedly keeping a set of her books in each of his residences (Hibbert 2002: 473). The admiration, however, was not mutual, and Austen does not hold back her criticism in her private correspondence or in *Persuasion* where she satirises the dandies' lifestyle through Sir Walter.

According to Mason (1982: 71), Austen belongs in spirit to the eighteenth century. Her ideal of the gentleman in her novels clearly corresponds to the idea of the polite man representing civility, courtesy, tolerance, good taste and education. But it is essential to keep in mind that the ideal of the eighteenth century gentleman was to a large extent the legacy of the preceding centuries. A true gentleman was still a man of his word and principle like the ideal medieval knight; he had to display courtesy in ladies' company as Castiglione had dictated, and he had to possess knowledge on different subjects and have a good taste in art as Arundel had shown. It was the combination of elegance and principle that made up the gentlemanly ideal. But the ideal was easily overlooked and quite often neglected in reality, as it happened in the Regency period. Flexible attitudes towards immoral behaviour and eccentricities provided a sharp contrast to the cherished ideal.

Curiously enough, the deviations from the ideal were sometimes not considered deviations at all but a part of the new conception of the gentleman. Austen is well aware of the paradox and her fictional gentlemen provide an excellent example of it.

Chapter 2

Regency dandies

The Regency era gave birth to a new type of gentleman known as dandy. The dandy is very much responsible for the image of the period, and he is perhaps the most curious type of Austen's gentlemen. Although the word "dandy" tends to have a negative connotation, being a dandy did not mean lacking the qualities that are attributed to the ideal type of gentleman. For instance, John Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility* and Henry Crawford in *Mansfield Park* emerge as perfect gentleman-courtiers and polite men, who make a valuable asset to every company. Their manners and accomplishments correspond to the ideal, and they only lose their credibility as perfect gentlemen when their villainous intentions are revealed. They act like true dandies, whose primary aim is to look for pleasure without consideration for others. The dandylike impudence, devotion to fashion and extravagant lifestyle are best shown through Sir Walter's character in *Persuasion*. Though there are no direct references that Austen has modelled the latter character on Beau Brummell, the allusions to Sir Walter's vanity and extravagance hardly leave any doubt that he was designed to mock the dandy lifestyle.

Apart from being dandies, Willoughby as well as Crawford can also be called Regency rakes, the dissolute men of the fashionable society. Murray (1999: 45) admits that Regency rakes have always captured the writers' imagination as villains who seduce the maiden and then gallop off "into the night with a devilish laugh". This is a romanticised vision which is sometimes also applied to Austen's novels. But Austen, however, was too realistic to indulge in similar stories; she paints a completely different picture of those notorious men, emphasising the conflict between their actions and society's reaction to it. Hawkrige (2002: 127) remarks that the true heroes of Austen's novels, i.e. the men who will finally marry the heroines, tend to win the readers' admiration at the end of the story

while the false heroes are initially seen as paragons of gallantry: “there is nearly always an early period in each book when the first-time reader feels sure that the hero is going to be someone else”. It is also curious that the dandylike heroes tend to be more interesting and lively than the true ones (ibid.), a fact which has led to never-ending debates over the novelist’s own sympathies.

But what is exactly behind dandyism in the Regency period? Jules Barbey d’Aurevilly (2002: 78), a Frenchman fascinated by dandyism, has said that the trouble with the phenomenon is that it is as difficult to describe as to define. There are many definitions of dandyism that emphasise the importance of elegant appearance and leisurely lifestyle but these alone are not enough to convey the essence of the phenomenon. However, there is a universal tendency to associate dandyism primarily with fashion and clothes. For example, in Carlyle’s definition the dandies are a group of men who have “consecrated” their every faculty to wearing clothes:

A dandy is a Clothes-wearing Man, a Man whose trade, office and existence consists in the wearing of Clothes. Every faculty of his soul, spirit, purse, and person is heroically consecrated to this one object, the wearing of Clothes wisely and well: so that as others dress to live, he lives to dress (<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext97/srtrs10.txt>).

The dandy requires attention, and his clothes are the means to gain it. Veblen (in Castronovo 1987: 93) remarks that “a cheap coat makes a cheap man”, and in a pecuniary culture, clothes assert status. Certain kinds of dress prove that a man can consume wastefully and engage himself in what Veblen calls “futile expenditure”. Veblen also emphasises that financial independence must go together with *faineante* lifestyle to create a perfect image: “If in addition to showing that the wearer can afford to consume freely and uneconomically, it also can be shown in the same stroke that he or she is not under the necessity of earning a livelihood, the evidence of worth is enhanced in a considerable degree” (ibid.).

D'Aurevilly (2002: 78-79) does not agree that the essence of dandyism lies entirely in clothes:

People who see things from a narrow perspective have got it into their heads that it was above all a question of dress, of external elegance – that Dandies were merely dictators of fashion, bold and felicitous masters of the art of making one's toilet. It is most certainly that, but it is other things besides /.../ Dandyism is a whole way of being /.../ A dandy is not just a walking, talking suit of clothes! On the contrary, what constitutes Dandyism is a particular way of wearing them.

Murray also (1999: 35) confirms that dandyism is rather a state of mind made up of many shades, a state of mind produced in old and civilised societies where “gaiety has become infrequent or where conventions rule at the price of their subject's boredom /.../ it is the direct result of the endless warfare between respectability and boredom”. It was the Regency dandies who set the tone of society; “they were the new elite, the arbiters of fashion, the leaders of the *ton*” (ibid.: 24). Dandyism in Regency London was, as Murray (ibid.: 35) explains, “a revolt against a different kind of tradition, an expression of distaste for the extravagance and ostentation of the previous generation.” However, dandies were also known for their extravagance and ostentation, but it was not the same as it had been in the 18th century. The essence of the new ostentation was simplicity and good taste, and not the pompousness that characterised the pre-Revolutionary era. Dandies denounced showy materials, frills and make-up, which had been a craze among the peacocks of the 18th century. The extravagance obtained a completely new meaning with the arrival of dandyism shifting the focus from glittering fabrics to the cut of the garment. For the first time in history it was the fit of a man's coat, rather than its materials or decoration that became the test of elegance (ibid.: 26).

Brummell, the greatest dandy of all, also believed in absolute simplicity (Walden 2002: 32). Brummell was the man who publicly “decreed that the outrageous dressing of the eighteenth century was vulgar: before Brummell arrived on the scene, velvets and silks, jewels and make-up were *de rigueur* amongst the peacocks of society, and the brighter and

richer-looking they were, the better” (Murray 1999: 26). Brummell’s clothes were designed to emphasize excellence in cut and his principal aim was towards sober but exquisite perfection (Priestley 2002: 48). When he was told about a man who was so well-dressed that everybody turned round to stare at him, Brummell sharply replied: “Then he was not well-dressed” (ibid.). He believed in absolute simplicity; a man was not fashionable if he was too fashionable. Brummell insisted that elegance was dependent upon the cut and style of a coat, not its ability to startle.

Castronovo (1987: 93) suggests that a portrayal of the gentleman as a consumer, and the dandies were consumers indeed, should begin with the life of George Brummell. He was a revolutionary figure in the Regency period, who combined simplicity with extravagance. But his cool style and reserve were always accompanied with absurdities and myths he himself encouraged. A legend has it that his coat was made by one tailor, waistcoats by another and pantaloons by a third, each a specialist in his own field; it took three people to make his gloves and his boots could be properly cleaned only in champagne (Priestley 2002: 48). D’Aurevilly (2002: 80-81) explains that Brummell’s dandyism did not lie in the perfection of his gloves, “but in the fact that they were specially made by four craftsmen, who were artists in the matter: three for the hands and one for the thumbs”.

To be regarded as a dandy took both money and effort. As Castiglione’s courtier had to leave the impression that everything was done nonchalantly, so did the Regency dandies. A man could not be a dandy gentleman if he strove too hard. The most trivial social actions had to be performed with ease even if it took ages to achieve the skill. For example, Brummell was admired for being able to open his snuff box nonchalantly with only one hand, although it probably needed hours of practice. Nevertheless, such a trick gave him every right to frown upon those who were not able to do it (Sales 1996: 77). Sir

Walter in *Persuasion* feigns the same nonchalance that is characteristic of dandies: he rehearses his part of a generous and nonchalant nobleman in front of the mirror for hours before he says good bye to his estate workers.

The favourite pastimes of Regency dandies swallowed large sums of money which often led to bankruptcy. In order to be accepted by his peers, the dandy could not have visible means of support. Money was gained and lost through gambling, and it often happened that the expenses exceeded the income. Incurring debts was nothing extraordinary and there were few of those who managed to do without them. Nevertheless, gambling debts ruined many lives, and it was the whole family who suffered. For example, Tom Bertram, the eldest son of Sir Thomas in *Mansfield Park*, also faces serious financial difficulties. Fortunately, his debts are paid but the consequences for Edmund, the younger son, are unfavourable:

His [Sir Thomas'] eldest son was careless and extravagant, and had already given him much uneasiness /.../ Edmund meant to live in the Parsonage after Mr. Norris's death, but Tom's extravagance had, previous to that event, been so great as to render a different disposal of the next presentation necessary, and the younger brother must help to pay for the pleasures of the elder.

"I blush for you, Tom," said he [Sir Thomas] in his most dignified manner; "/.../You have robbed Edmund for ten, twenty, thirty years, perhaps for life, of more than half the income which ought to be his" (MP 19, 21-22).

Unlike the polite people of the eighteenth century, the dandies' mode of address was everything but polite. Insolence became one of the markers of dandylike behaviour, and although considered outrageous by many people, it was generally accepted as part and parcel of dandyism. Brummell was notorious for his rudeness. When his opinion of a coat was asked, he said he was not able to see one; when offered champagne of a dubious quality, he asked for more cider (Sales 1996: 77). But it was not always the offensive remarks that conveyed their attitude but also mock civility; their bows could well be

interpreted as signs of sarcasm. The impudence and good manners went hand in hand, and a touch of impertinence did not diminish the dandies' credibility as gentlemen.

2.1 John Willoughby

The most eminent confrontation between the male characters in *Sense and Sensibility* is the one between John Willoughby and Edward Ferrars. The hesitant, inarticulate, pious Edward Ferrars opposed to the eager, talkative rogue, John Willoughby, as Wright (1967: 91) portrays the two main male characters, offer the readers a far more interesting insight into the norms of gentlemanly behaviour than it could be expected from a mere hero and villain opposition. John Willoughby is an intriguing personality who can be considered a paragon of the Regency rake and dandy. Willoughby's behaviour, however, is more predictable to the reader than that of Henry Crawford in *Mansfield Park*; his self-interested motives become clear from the moment he leaves for London and refuses to contact the Dashwoods thereafter. Nevertheless, Willoughby is a particularly interesting person when it comes to the contradiction between the ideal and reality: rejecting Marianne in a decidedly ungentlemanly manner deserves universal denunciation, but does not tarnish his reputation as a gentleman in the circles he moves in.

Although not much is said about Willoughby's social background, it may be assumed that he belongs to the rank of the gentry. He is the owner of Combe Magna, a little estate in Somersetshire and he is the heir to his aunt Mrs. Smith of Allenhurst Court. In London, Willoughby has lodgings in Bond Street and he moves in respectable circles; he has no profession, which suggests that the income from his estate is enough for him to lead the life of a gentleman. Since Willoughby first appears in the novel, he is shown in a very positive light, and he can easily be taken as the hero for one of the heroines. He seems

to have no vice; he is an educated and accomplished man whose address and manners are impeccable. Willoughby perfectly exercises the ways of the gentleman-courtier, which together with his cultivated mind and good taste make him a desired companion. His handsome appearance and charming manners correspond to the picture of the ideal gentleman in the Dashwood ladies' minds, who find it hard to suppress their surprise and admiration when they first see him:

Elinor and her mother rose up in amazement at their [Marianne and Willoughby] entrance, and while the eyes of both were fixed on him with an evident wonder and a secret admiration which equally sprung from his appearance, he apologized for his intrusion by relating its cause, in a manner so frank and so graceful, that his person, which was uncommonly handsome, received additional charms from his voice and expression. Had he been even old, ugly, and vulgar, the gratitude and kindness of Mrs. Dashwood would have been secured by any act of attention to her child; but the influence of youth, beauty, and elegance, gave an interest to the action which came home to her feelings (S&S 40).

Willoughby is well-read and has a good taste in both music and art ("his musical talents were considerable; and he read with all the sensibility and spirit which Edward had unfortunately wanted" (S&S 46)); he can keep up with the conversation, whatever the subject, and entertain the ladies in a most courteous and gentlemanly way ("his society became gradually her [Marianne's] most exquisite enjoyment" (ibid.)). No wonder that Marianne, a young and passionate girl living by the romantic poetry she loves to read, takes to Willoughby as soon as she sees him, and becomes infatuated when she finds out about his tastes in art:

...when she saw that to the perfect good-breeding of the gentleman, he united frankness and vivacity, and, above all when she heard him declare that of music and dancing he was passionately fond, she gave him such a look of approbation as secured the largest share of his discourse to herself for the rest of his stay/.../ He acquiesced in all her decisions, caught all her enthusiasm, and long before his visit concluded, they conversed with the familiarity of a long-established acquaintance (S&S 44-45).

The circumstances of their first encounter intensify Marianne's visions of him as a romantic hero, which do not let her see his faults. Willoughby's graceful conduct and kind attention encourage Marianne to think of his more serious intentions with her, which

eventually lead to her heartbreak. However, it is not only dashing Marianne who sees Willoughby as the ideal. Elinor and Mrs. Dashwood are also blinded by his charms and believe that he will soon propose to Marianne. Prudent Elinor is the first to cast a critical eye on Willoughby's behaviour, which seems to her just too good to be true (Hawkrige 2002: 128). She criticises severely Willoughby's outspokenness when conversation revolves around the people he is not particularly fond of, or circumstances that do not directly concern him:

In Mrs. Dashwood estimation, he [Willoughby] was as faultless as in Marianne's; and Elinor saw nothing to censure in him but a propensity, in which he strongly resembled and peculiarly delighted her sister, of saying too much what he thought on every occasion, without attention to persons or circumstances. In hastily forming and giving his opinion of other people, in sacrificing general politeness to the enjoyment of undivided attention where his heart was engaged, and in slighting too easily the forms of worldly propriety, he displayed a want of caution which Elinor could not approve (S&S 47).

Her suspicions about his character grow when Willoughby takes the liberty to make derogatory remarks about Colonel Brandon whose kindness and civility are highly esteemed by the Dashwoods ("Brandon is just the kind of man /.../ whom everybody speaks well of, and nobody cares about; whom all are delighted to see, and nobody remembers to talk to" (S&S 48)). According to the accepted code of behaviour, a gentleman's personal dislike of someone should not find expression in the ladies' society, and Elinor's surprise at that kind of behaviour is therefore justified. Being unaware of the old feud between Willoughby and Colonel Brandon, her astonishment grows when Brandon is forced to leave their cheerful company because of some urgent business in London, and Willoughby tactlessly whispers to Marianne: "There are some people who cannot bear a party of pleasure. Brandon is one of them. He was afraid of catching cold, I dare say, and invented this trick for getting out of it. I would lay fifty guineas the letter was his own writing" (S&S 62). Though Elinor disapproves of his presumption, Willoughby's insolence and disparaging remarks were not uncommon among the dandies.

A couple of days later Willoughby himself is wanted in London. His departure for the capital seems to confirm Elinor's doubts, and yet she is reluctant to believe that her sister's gallant and ardent admirer is capable of something mean. While Elinor needs no proof of their mutual affection, she desires that of their possible engagement to which their openly displayed affection might have led. There was an inflexible convention at the time according to which correspondence between marriageable persons not engaged to be married was forbidden (Le Faye 2003: 114). Elinor knows that Marianne has allowed Willoughby to cut off a lock of her hair, but it is not until she sees Marianne writing to Willoughby that she is assured of their secret engagement (ibid.). Mrs. Dashwood, however, has no doubts about these two being secretly engaged since Willoughby's actions speak louder than his words:

I have not wanted syllables where actions have spoken so plainly. Has not his behaviour to Marianne and to all of us, for at least the last fortnight, declared that he loved and considered her as his future wife, and that he felt for us the attachment of the nearest relation? Have we not perfectly understood each other? Has not my consent been daily asked by his looks, his manner, his attentive and affectionate respect? My Elinor, is it possible to doubt their engagement? (S&S 77).

The way Mrs. Dashwood understands the situation shows exactly where Willoughby has erred. Although he has not promised anything, his conduct has been explicit enough to make a lot of people reach obvious conclusions. Gentlemen were obliged to keep their word, and they were not forgiven if they broke their promises. Willoughby, however, cannot be accused of empty promises; he has not given his word to Marianne. Yet his behaviour is considered ungentlemanly since he has abandoned the lady whom he has publicly courted and made the rest of the society believe in their imminent marriage. Mrs. Palmer, for example, is utterly convinced that Marianne is going to marry Mr. Willoughby and is not surprised when Elinor makes inquiries about him at Cleveland:

"I know why you inquire about him, very well, your sister is to marry him. I am monstrous glad of it, for then I shall have her for a neighbour, you know."
 "Upon my word," replied Elinor, "you know much more of the matter than I do, if you have any reason to expect such a match."

“Don’t pretend to deny it, because you know it is what everybody talks of. I assure you I heard of it in my way through town.” (S&S 111)

During their stay in London, Marianne receives no news from Willoughby despite the messages she sends him. Willoughby ignores the Dashwood ladies because he is engaged to be married to the rich and elegant Miss Grey. After the embarrassing encounter with Marianne at a ball, Willoughby sends her a letter of apology. Though arrogant in tone, the letter is acceptable according to the standards of high society, and it is designed to exempt him from any misdeed. Although the letter is far from being sincere, the excuses are made in a most gallant way:

...and though I am quite at a loss to discover in what point I could be so unfortunate as to offend you, I entreat your forgiveness of what I can assure you to have been perfectly unintentional/.../My esteem for your whole family is very sincere; but if I have been so unfortunate as to give rise to a belief of more than I felt, or meant to express, I shall reproach myself for not having been more guarded in my professions of that esteem. That I should ever have meant more, you will allow to be impossible, when you understand that my affections have been long engaged elsewhere ... (S&S 176).

However, the excuses do not remove the distress his behaviour has caused. In the eyes of the Dashwood ladies and Sir John’s family hardly anything can be done to restore their former esteem for Mr. Willoughby. What strikes Marianne and Elinor most is Willoughby’s denial of any serious affection, which is quite contrary to his behaviour unanimously interpreted as highly affectionate towards Marianne:

Nor could she have supposed Willoughby capable of departing so far from the appearance of every honourable and delicate feeling – so far from the common decorum of a gentleman, as to send a letter so impudently cruel: a letter which, instead of bringing with his desire of a release any professions of regret, acknowledged no breach of faith, denied all peculiar affection whatever – a letter of which every line was an insult, and which proclaimed its writer to be deep in hardened villainy (S&S 177).

Yet Marianne, whom Willoughby has wronged, has to admit that “he is not so unworthy as you believe him. He has broken no faith with me” (S&S 179). To Elinor’s enquiry whether Willoughby told her he loved her, Marianne answers: “Yes – no – never – absolutely. It was every day implied, but never professedly declared /.../ I felt myself to be

as solemnly engaged to him as if the strictest legal covenant had bound us to each other” (S&S 180-81). Willoughby, therefore, seems to be innocent, “being merely the occasion for Marianne’s indulgence of feeling, which she transferred to him and imagined reciprocal” (Conrad 1992: xxvi).

As it is later revealed in a conversation between Elinor and Willoughby, the latter’s motives were entirely caused by pecuniary distress, which was not uncommon among the Regency gentlemen. His financial troubles did not let him listen to his heart and to propose to Marianne, a girl whom he dearly loved, but who had a modest dowry. To his credit, he eventually does not deny his misconduct and reveals to Elinor the misery his vanity has caused: “If you can pity me, Miss Dashwood, pity my situation as it was /.../ With my head and heart full of your sister, I was forced to play the happy lover to another woman /.../ In honest words, her money was necessary to me, and in a situation like mine anything was to be done to prevent a rupture” (S&S 320-21). Elinor cannot avoid feeling sympathy for Willoughby, whose intentions were good but who has yielded to the pressure of high society where money seems to count more than principles and honesty:

...Willoughby, in spite of all his faults, excited a degree of commiseration for the sufferings produced by them, which made her think of him as now separated forever from her family with a tenderness, a regret, rather in proportion, as she soon acknowledged within herself – to his wishes than to his merits. She felt that his influence over her mind was heightened by circumstances which ought not in reason to have weight; by that person of uncommon attraction, that open, affectionate and lively manner which it was no merit to possess; and by that still ardent love for Marianne, which it was not even innocent to indulge (S&S 326).

This “person of uncommon attraction” does not leave even prudent Elinor indifferent. Willoughby admits his misdeed, his repentance is thought to be sincere and he could therefore be forgiven. However, his disgraceful conduct towards Marianne is not his only misdeed: his seduction of Eliza, Colonel Brandon’s niece, is soon disclosed. The news explain the old feud between Willoughby and Colonel Brandon, which the latter has concealed in a gentlemanly way while Willoughby has used every opportunity to express

his dislike for his rival. Butler (1999: 191) also maintains that “the fact that Willoughby was tempted – by the two young women on the one hand, and by an education in worldliness on the other – does not in fact absolve the adult man, or not, at least, if one employs the objective ethical code.” She (ibid.: 194) adds that “Willoughby’s crime proves after all not to have been rank villainy, but expensive self-indulgence so habitual that he must sacrifice everything, including domestic happiness, to it”. Elinor is assured that, despite his remorse, Willoughby cannot be forgiven after all. Though she has to admit that he would have made a more suitable husband for her passionate sister than the reticent and plain but kind-hearted Colonel Brandon, she cannot deny his serious violation of the ethical code and lack of consideration for others (S&S 332). For a moment, Elinor wishes in her heart Willoughby’s wife dead so that the true lovers could be united again, but she at once realises the impropriety of such a thought (S&S 328). Elinor has to admit that in spite of Willoughby’s honest and open disposition, talents and affectionate temper, he cannot be redeemed. He had yielded to the pleasures of the world and given up the chance to be the person he could well have been:

The world had made him extravagant and vain; extravagance and vanity had made him cold-hearted and selfish. Vanity, while seeking its own guilty triumph at the expense of another, had involved him in a real attachment, which extravagance, or at least its offspring necessity, had required to be sacrificed. Each faulty propensity, in lending him to evil, had led him likewise to punishment (S&S 324).

As Hawkrige (2002: 129) has said, “Willoughby’s fault really revolve around his selfishness; he is the handsome womanizer who loves Marianne against his will but who loves money a great deal more.” When he realises that his aunt has excluded him from her will because of his affair with Eliza, Willoughby is determined to leave Marianne. Life with the penniless Marianne would be too boring and simple for a dandy like Willoughby: there would be no parties, no luxuries whatsoever. Though high society has probably nothing to say against Willoughby (womanizing was not considered a great misdeed in the Georgian and Regency society as long as a man managed to retain his reputation as a

gentleman and avoid public scandal), Austen, by making him guilty of seducing Eliza, disapproves of the neglect of universal ethics. She shows that gallant and courteous manners and impeccable taste in the arts cannot compensate for the lack of honour and consideration for others, which were a part of Austen's gentlemanly ideal.

2.2 Henry Crawford

Henry Crawford in *Mansfield Park* is another remarkable dandy-gentleman who has fascinated many readers and critics, and who has found more admiration than his highly moral and prudent counterpart Edmund Bertram ever since the novel's publication (Tomalin 1999: 228-9). When *Mansfield Park* was first published there was a general tendency to criticize the corrupted standards of the Regency period and the morality of Austen's books was widely approved (ibid.: 227). But there were also other readers who reacted differently, and who, instead of praising the high moral tone, called the virtuous characters of the novel "insipid". For instance, Austen's sister Cassandra allegedly persuaded her to let Fanny marry Henry Crawford, the so-called villain of the novel, and not Edmund, the "real" hero (ibid.: 228). Austen herself comments on her brother Henry's opinion about the novel in one of her letters: ".../ he admires H. Crawford – I mean properly – as a clever, pleasant Man" (quote ibid.). In 1917, more than a century after the novel was first published, Reginald Farrer reproved Austen for "weighing the balance" against the Crawfords, "who obviously have her artist's affection as well as her moralist's disapproval" (ibid.). Many other similar opinions show that the "moral tendency" was not universally admired, and there existed a more liberal attitude towards Austen's characters who were widely considered as immoral (ibid.). Such an approach is astonishingly contemporary and does not at all support the black and white approach to her novels. The

novel “resolutely disturbs,” as Gard (1992: 123) indicates, “the usual gratifying decorum by which good manners, good appearance, good taste in the arts, intelligence, and liveliness and charm accompany, while not being identical with, good people.”

The false hero Henry Crawford has a lot more to offer by way of sex-appeal and presence than the one true light of Fanny’s life, Edmund Bertram (Hawkridge 2002: 129). He is “a good deal more interesting than his opposite number” and he has a certain glitter which Edmund lacks (Wright 1967: 135). “In conception and execution/.../Henry Crawford is meant to be a villain – though, as/.../Austen quite appropriately shows us, even a villain may have some good qualities” (ibid.). Sales (1996) finds Henry very dandylike, being known for his refined haughtiness, taste, and style. However, nothing is said about Henry’s addiction to fashion and extravagance, though his man-about-town lifestyle might well suggest that. Sales (ibid.: 108) also concedes that it is very difficult to visualise Henry as a dandy because the hints about his clothes are not conclusive enough to picture him as one, and clothes, of course, were the most essential marker of dandyism. He adds that the evidence for his dandyism is only provided by his mode of address and accompanying gestures, some of which are made with the Brummell-like arrogance. For example, as Sales (ibid.) points out, Henry has the habit of making elegant bows which are explicitly mocking. After reading aloud Shakespeare with such feeling as to attract even Fanny, Henry thanks Edmund for his sincere compliments “with a bow of mock gravity” (MP 342), making fun of the solemnity Fanny and Edmund attach to that particular situation and author. This kind of refined insolence is very dandylike. Sales (ibid.) admits that “his behaviour is technically correct and yet there is a strong hint that it hovers on the dividing line between social poise and theatrical pose”. Henry’s remarks are often insolent, and his overtly haughty attitude to “the sturdy independence of country customs” (MP 59),

as Mary puts it, is constantly referring to his and his sister's feeling of superiority, which is revealed in their behaviour.

Henry is truly skilled at social conversation, and one of the keys to his success, as Sales (1996: 107) points out, is his ability to turn conversations quickly and suit them to his own advantage. Sales (*ibid.*) considers it particularly dangerous because such an ability lets him dominate the others, and have his own way under the guise of consideration. Henry puts the ability to use when he intends to gain Fanny's admiration and love. Henry Crawford and Tom Bertram are both gentlemen of pleasure but there is a crucial difference between them with regard to entertainment and sporting interests. Both gambling and playing cards made up an inseparable part of dandy's lifestyle and there are frequent references to Tom's addiction to these activities, but not Henry's. Austen does not associate Henry with gambling and drinking, which was very common to Regency dandies. His "domain" is rather the drawing-room than the card table (Sales 1996: 106). The fact that he agrees to play with Mrs. Norris in the family circle reveals that he is not like Beau Brummell or Scrope Davies, both dandies and professional gamblers, who would have definitely refused to play with amateurs (*ibid.*: 107). But Henry considers card games in a domestic environment as a means to excel in social intercourse and to demonstrate his charms as a perfect courtier.

Henry belongs to the gentry and is the owner of an estate in Norfolk with £4,000 a year, which allows him to enjoy an idle gentlemanly lifestyle without the necessity of entering a profession. The fact that he decides to stay in Mansfield Park because "there was nothing to call him elsewhere" (MP 46) suggests he has time to spare unlike, for example, the gentlemen of profession. He is a man-about-town, who dislikes routine, and is eager to engage himself in all kinds of social events. Therefore his decision to return to Mansfield is a little surprising to those who do not know his motives. As Sir Thomas says:

I am rather surprised that Mr. Crawford should come back again so soon, after being here so long before, full seven weeks; for I had understood he was so very fond of change and moving about, that I thought something would certainly occur when he was once gone, to take him elsewhere. He is used to much gayer places than Mansfield (MP 119).

While everybody is attracted by Willoughby's appearance, Mr. Crawford's rather modest looks do not make people turn their heads. But the gallant ease with which he addresses people, especially the ladies, and his courteous manners make up for the drawbacks proceeding from his physical appearance:

Henry, though not handsome, had air and countenance; the manners of both were lively and pleasant /.../ He was not handsome; no, when they [Maria and Julia] first saw him he was absolutely plain, black and plain; but still he was the gentleman, with a pleasing address. The second meeting proved him not so very plain; he was plain, to be sure, but then he had so much countenance, and his teeth were so good, and he was so well made, that one soon forgot he was plain; and after a third interview, after dining in company with him at the Parsonage, he was no longer allowed to be called so by anybody. He was, in fact, the most agreeable young man the sisters had ever known, and they were equally delighted with him (MP 41, 43).

Sales (1996: 108) agrees that "he may not have a particularly classical body but, like other dandies, does his best to make it appear so through careful cultivation". Thus Henry emerges as a true and gallant courtier destined to conquer the hearts of both Miss Bertrams, who are captivated by his person and his easy and pleasant manners. While everybody else is admiring their new acquaintance, Fanny still continues "to think Mr. Crawford very plain" and "in spite of her two cousins having repeatedly proved the contrary, she never mentioned him" (MP 48). However, Fanny is not the only one who is not fascinated by his charms. Mr. Rushworth, though driven by jealousy, shares Fanny's opinion:

"Pray, Miss Price, are you such a great admirer of this Mr. Crawford as some people are? For my part, I can see nothing in him."
 "I do not think him at all handsome."
 "Handsome! Nobody can call such an under-sized man handsome. He is not five foot nine. I should not wonder if he was not more than five foot eight. I think he is an ill-looking fellow. In my opinion, these Crawfords are no addition at all. We did very well without them." (MP 104)

As Wright (1967: 135) puts it, Henry shows his hand as a rake almost at once. He starts flirting with the Bertram girls, and he does it impudently although he is well aware of

Maria's engagement to Mr. Rushworth: "Miss Bertrams were both pleasing, and were ready to be pleased; and he began with no object but of making them like him. He did not want them to die of love; but with sense and temper which ought to have made him judge and feel better, he allowed himself great latitude on such points" (MP 44). Henry emerges as a true gentleman of pleasure seeking entertainment in the company of prestigious people and nice young ladies. Attentive and courteous in his address, he has no serious intention to marry and indulge in domestic tranquillity, although his sister maintains that "everybody should marry as soon as they can do it to advantage" (MP 43). Henry has obviously had many possibilities open to him: his past as a womanizer is disclosed in a conversation between the Crawfords and their half-sister, Mrs. Grant. Mary does not reproach her brother; moreover, she is proud of his notorious conquests and unyielding character:

If you can persuade Henry to marry, you must have the address of a Frenchwoman. All that English abilities can do has been tried already. I have three particular friends who have been all dying for him in their turn; and the pains which they, their mothers (very clever women), as well as my dear aunt and myself, have taken to reason, coax, or trick him into marrying, is inconceivable! He is the most horrible flirt that can be imagined. If your Miss Bertrams do not like to have their hearts broke, let them avoid Henry (MP 42).

Sales (1996: 109) calls him a professional lover whose "only profession, however, is to make professions of his love". The irony he uses while talking about marriage is quite intriguing, and could be repeated by any Regency rake: "Nobody can think more highly of the matrimonial state than myself. I consider the blessing of a wife as most justly described in those discreet lines of the poet "Heaven's *last* best gift" (MP 42). He never seems to miss an opportunity to exercise his charms on young ladies who are "pleasing and ready to be pleased" and Mansfield Park makes a perfect setting for him: "He had come, intending to spend only a few days with them; but Mansfield promised well, and there was nothing to call him elsewhere" (MP 46).

Henry's attachment to Fanny comes unexpected to the readers as well as to other characters in the novel. Many critics have questioned the feasibility of such attraction,

since there seems to be nothing in Fanny to captivate a man like Henry. Tomalin (1999: 232) finds Fanny the least joyous of all Austen's heroines, "she is the most reluctant to open her mouth; when she does she speaks in a stilted and wooden manner", and it "is one of the things that makes it hard to believe that Henry Crawford could ever fall in love with her." However, it is at first Henry's ardour as a womanizer to seduce a modest and decent girl like Fanny, and not his love for her:

"And how do you think I mean to amuse myself, Mary, on the days that I do not hunt? I am grown too old to go out more than three times a-week; but I have a plan for the intermediate days, and what do you think it is?"

"To walk and ride with me, to be sure."

"Not exactly, though I shall be happy to do both, but *that* would be exercise to my body, and I must take care of my mind. Besides, *that* would be all recreation and indulgence, without the wholesome alloy of labour, and I do not like to eat the bread of idleness. No, my plan is to make Fanny Price in love with me."

"Fanny Price!.../You ought to be satisfied with her two cousins." (MP 231)

Henry understands that Fanny is beyond his reach because of her persistent refusal to enter into conversation, or flirtatious small talk with him. Henry is prepared to make the effort to captivate her, and he duly refers to it as labour. His villainous plan to tease Fanny into loving him does not show Henry in a new light, and the reason why he has chosen Fanny as his next object of attention is probably best explained by Mary: "The truth is, that she was the only girl in company for you to notice, and you must have a somebody" (MP 232). But it is also the veil of mystery Fanny is covered with and which cannot be understood by gentlemen like Henry: "I do not quite know what to make of Miss Fanny/.../I never was so long in a company with a girl in my life, trying to entertain her, and succeed so ill! Never met with a girl who looked so grave on me!.../Her looks say, "I will not like you, I am determined not to like you"; and I say she shall" (ibid.). Henry as a dandy and courtier seems to be lost in a company of too modest and reticent ladies who cannot or do not want to follow the accepted code of courtly behaviour, which may sometimes verge on flirtation.

Tomalin (1999: 233) agrees that Mr. Crawford can admire Fanny's character, her goodness and even her moral standards, but it remains obscure how he gets to know her

when she barely enters into conversation with him? Nevertheless, Henry is determined to propose to Fanny. No one doubts his serious intentions, and everybody is happy about Fanny's advantageous match but Fanny herself. Edmund believes that Henry has "no faults but what a serious attachment would remove" and he strongly supports the marriage between his friend and cousin (MP 119). Fanny has a good eye for a dandy, as Sales (1996: 114) says, and she, quite expectedly, rejects Henry. But "Fanny's refusal of the proposal only whets Henry's appetite for the part of the ardent suitor" (ibid.: 111). Henry persistently continues courting her and lets the readers believe he has changed: "They will now see what sort of woman it is that can attach me, that can attach a man of sense/.../for I am not such a coxcomb as to suppose her [Maria's] feelings more lasting than other women's, though I was the object of them. Yes, Mary, Fanny will feel a difference, indeed" (MP 301). For the time being, Henry indeed "appears at his most attractive" to Fanny: he helps her brother William to get a commission in the navy, and is genuinely affectionate and attentive (Wright 1967: 136). Fanny's refusal does not discourage him:

"Well," said Crawford after a course of rapid questions and reluctant answers – "I am happier than I was, because I now understand more clearly your opinion of me. You think me unsteady – easily swayed by the whim of the moment – easily tempted – easily put aside. With such an opinion, no wonder that – But we shall see. – It is not by protestations that I shall endeavour to convince you I am wronged, it is not by telling you that my affections are steady. My conduct shall speak for me – absence, distance, time shall speak for me. – *They* shall prove that, as far as you can be deserved by anybody, I do deserve you." (MP 347)

Henry's actions speak loud enough to mislead all the others except Fanny. Both Edmund and Sir Thomas insist on Fanny's accepting him, and it cannot be denied that Henry appears here as an ideal gentleman with the merits of kindness and determination, and credibility, i.e. exactly the kind of gentleman Austen herself admired. As Sir Thomas says: "He [Henry] is a most extraordinary young man, and whatever be the event, you [Fanny] must feel that you have created an attachment of no common character" (MP 333).

Henry's sister assures Fanny that the wife he loved "would be the happiest of women", and being aware of her brother's habits, concedes that even when he ceased to love, Fanny would yet find in him "the liberality and good-breeding of a gentleman" (MP 300). Throughout the novel, Mary Crawford is the most honest critic of her brother, and she knows best the devices that are characteristic of Henry. Although happy about Henry's being in love, knowing him well, she is quite sure the love will not last. Mary is too familiar with the ways of a gentleman of pleasure like her brother to be deceived by his sudden and ardent devotion to a plain and modest girl and his intention to marry her. She sees him through and adds providentially that what counts and remains when passion is gone is "the liberality and good-breeding of a gentleman".

Quite expectedly, the changes in Henry's behaviour are not to last. When Mr. Crawford returns to London "he also reverts to his old self" (Wright 1967: 136). He runs off with Maria, which proves that Fanny's judgement of him was right. From the outset, Austen has created Henry with the qualities which do not let him to be seen as a possible hero and a perfect gentleman. The biggest fault lies in his overt and impudent flirtation with the Bertram girls, which, though not uncommon to Regency dandies, is not acceptable according to the prevalent moral standards. Paradoxically, Henry will not be condemned by the circles he moves in because, as Sales (1996: 115) says, the ambivalent morals of Regency society encouraged male sexual indiscretions and the social conventions "victimised women rather than men in most representations of scandal". Mary, for instance, does not expect Henry to suffer that much from the consequences of the elopement than Maria. She considers Henry's misdeed as a "moment's *etourdie*" (MP 442) and rather accuses the flirtatious Maria, who should not have married the boring and stupid Mr. Rushworth, and also Fanny, who should have accepted Henry preventing thus

the disaster. Austen comments on the predominant double standards in society and hopes that it will be his conscience that metes out the real punishment:

That punishment, the public punishment of disgrace, should in just measure attend his [Henry's] share of the offence is, we know, not one of the barriers, which society gives to virtue. In this world, the penalty is less equal than could be wished; but without presuming to look forward to a juster appointment hereafter, we may fairly consider a man of sense like Henry Crawford, to be providing for himself no small portion of vexation and regret; vexation that must rise sometimes to self-reproach, and regret to wretchedness... (MP 474).

The author also concedes that it may be the bad influence of the environment Henry Crawford has lived in, and with different circumstances he might have been a different person. His uncle Admiral Crawford, who has been his guide since his father's death, is not a paragon of morality. He was a man "of vicious conduct, who chose /.../ to bring his mistress under his own roof" (MP 40) without taking into consideration the consequences it might have on his nephew and niece:

Henry Crawford, ruined by early independence and bad domestic example, indulged in the freaks of a cold-blooded vanity a little too long. Once it had, by an opening undersigned and unmerited, led him into the way of happiness. Could he have been satisfied with the conquest of one amiable woman's affections, could he have found sufficient exultation in overcoming the reluctance, in working himself into the esteem and tenderness of Fanny Price, there would have been every probability of success and felicity for him. His affection had already done something (MP 472).

As it is revealed, Henry could have made a perfect gentleman in the author's eyes, if he had not indulged in the vanity and temptations. Therefore Henry Crawford can be seen as a very good reflection of the governing standards and code of behaviour of the Regency period. Regardless of all his misdeeds Hawkrige (2002: 131) concedes that at the end of the novel "one is still left with the feeling that he [Henry] might have made as good a hero as not and a far more entertaining mate for Fanny than the one she chose."

2.3 Sir Walter Elliot

Sir Walter Elliot is the best example of the Regency dandy in Austen's novels when one thinks of dandyism in terms of clothing and appearance. None of Austen's characters gets as close to Brummell-like absurdity as the old baronet. Though there are no direct references that Austen has modelled the character on Brummell, the allusions to Sir Walter's snobbery and vanity hardly leave any doubt that he was designed to mock the follies of the dandy lifestyle. Hawkrige (2002: 115) calls Sir Walter "the vainest man imaginable", who is "so puffed up with pride in his ancestry, his position in the world – the best that credit can buy – and his personal appearance that he is unable to carry on a normal conversation". Apart from dandyism, the baronet also represents the tension between the gentlemen of pedigree and gentlemen of profession, or the self-made gentlemen. By the late eighteenth century, the British aristocracy had become "acutely sensitive to questions of rank" (McCahill quoted by Cannadine 1995: 29). The influx of the professionals into the ranks of gentlemen posed a threat to the lower strata of nobility. Sir Walter is deeply class-conscious and makes constant inquiries about Admiral Croft's resources as if he were afraid of being overshadowed by a mere sailor in Bath society.

Sir Walter has a lot in common with the Regent, the finest gentleman in Europe, especially when it comes to conspicuous consumption. They both indulge in an ostentatious lifestyle which costs more than they can afford. It is their reputation as fine gentlemen and dandies that impels them to spend accordingly, and economising was out of the question for the gentleman whose aim was to impress people with their casual lavishness and impeccable taste in fashion. It was exactly the case with Sir Walter: "The Kellynch property was good, but not equal to Sir Walter's apprehension of the state required in its possessor/.../It had not been possible for him to spend less; he had done nothing but what Sir Walter Elliot was imperiously called on to do..." (P 7).

As Sales (1996: 174) says, Sir Walter believes that he is “entitled to live in the same style as his supposedly illustrious ancestors”, and he is “unable to economise as this would represent a great betrayal of the glorious past”. In Sir Walter’s opinion, there is not a single article or entertainment to give up (“Can we retrench? Does it occur to you that there is any one article in which we can retrench?” (P 8)) without posing a threat to the comforts the baronet has enjoyed so far. Anne, knowing her father well, is sure that “the sacrifice of one pair of horses would be hardly less painful than of both” (P 10), and there is not much to do to stop her father spending more. Elizabeth, the baronet’s eldest daughter, who acts just like her father, is “ingenious” by suggesting that they buy no present to Anne from London, refrain from buying new drawing-room furniture and cut off some unnecessary charities. Her suggestions, though eventually welcomed by Sir Walter, are in obvious contradiction to the ancient aristocratic principle of hospitality and charity by which every country gentleman was obliged to donate to those who suffered from need. By calling these charities unnecessary is a clear allusion to the neglect the ancestral principle of generosity that should be followed by every nobleman. Like the Prince of Wales, Sir Walter has indulged in an extravagant life and failed in his duty to his people. He can only think of his personal comforts, and is unwilling to make any concessions: “What! Every comfort of life knocked off! Journeys, London, servants, horses, table – contractions and restrictions everywhere. To live no longer with the decencies even of a private gentleman! No, he would sooner quit Kellynch Hall at once, than remain in it on such disgraceful terms” (ibid.). The hint is immediately taken up by Mr. Shepherd, Sir Walter’s lawyer and advisor, and Sir Walter is shrewdly persuaded into renting his estate and leaving Kellynch for the time being.

Instead of London, though considered at first, the baronet is talked into moving to Bath, which is “a much safer place for a gentleman in his predicament – he might there be

important at comparatively little expense” (P 11). Bath is a respectable place and in a convenient distance from Kellynch, a fact which avoids Sir Walter falling into disgrace as a man who is not able to live up to the expected image. That Kellynch Hall was to be let was kept secret “not to be breathed beyond their own circle” because “Sir Walter could not have borne the degradation of being known to design letting his house” (ibid.). A step like that, though quite common at the time, was a real “trial of fortitude” which even “stronger heads than Sir Walter have found too much” (ibid.). Sales (1996: 175) doubts whether Sir Walter saves much money by going to Bath because he rents an expensive house there and makes no changes in his lifestyle: “Their house was undoubtedly the best in Camden Place; their drawing-rooms had many decided advantages over all the others which they had either seen or heard of; and the superiority was not less in the style of the fitting up, or the taste of the furniture. Their acquaintance was exceedingly sought after” (P 97). Austen notes that Sir Walter never makes inquiries about Kellynch as if it had never been his home and symbol of the Elliot family, “it was all Bath” (P 96).

The Prince Regent also used to retire to Brighton, another watering place, “in an equally vain attempt to try to control his debts” (Sales 1996: 174). The Prince Regent, like other dandies, had a “talent for spending money never before equalled in his family” (Plumb 1974: 188). Incurring debts for him was constant and spectacular, and the consequences were alarming. George’s manias were adornment, building and furnishing, and everything was done as magnificently as possible (Hibbert 2002: 70). Sir Walter is also fond of decorating his house by spending on new furniture and various expensive *objets d’art*. With a heavy heart he yields to his daughter’s proposal to postpone having new drawing-room furniture in order to retrench.

The Regency period was paradoxical in nature: while good manners were universally regarded as an absolutely necessary asset to establish oneself in certain circles,

it is curious that nobody frowned upon the arrogance the dandies used to address people regardless of their origin or background. Brummell as a dandy was one of the few who had the licence to abuse people to their faces and nobody dared to complain about his judgement. He playfully punished those whom he considered to lack style making the members of high society to live under constant fear of being ashamed. Beau Brummell was famous for his sarcastic and scornful remarks about people's appearance, no matter whether the object of his criticism was a man or a woman, an aristocrat or a person without pedigree. A legend has it that Brummell once ordered a duchess to walk out of a ballroom backwards because the sight of her back had offended him as the king of good taste (Sales 1996: 77). Although cruel comments on somebody's appearance were rather frequent, people kept on seeking his opinion on almost everything. The dandies terrorised the members of high society, and at the same time mocked their own credentials as arbiters of taste (ibid.: 73).

Sir Walter has much in common with Brummell, but he lacks the power and influence Brummell was notorious for. To make rude remarks about somebody's appearance was very dandylike, and it was considered very impudent in some circles. Sir Walter is not an arbiter of taste in the sense Brummell was, but he definitely acts like one when he takes the liberty to express his disapproval in a most snobbish way. He does not move among the most dandylike gentlemen and has no connection with the most influential people in London circles, which makes his impudence verge on ridiculousness. He judges people by their appearance and does not hesitate to express his scorn whenever he finds fault with somebody. Hawkrige (2002: 117) notes that Sir Walter is so concerned with "outward show that there is never any room in his heart for humanity". For instance, when Anne decides to visit Mrs. Smith, a friend of hers from her schooldays, instead of joining her father at an evening party, Sir Walter "unleashes the full flood of his sarcastic

snobbery on her” (ibid.): “And what is her attraction? That she is old and sickly. Upon my word, Miss Anne Elliot, you have the most extraordinary taste! /.../ But surely, you may put off this old lady till tomorrow. She is not so near her end, I presume, but that she may hope to see another day” (P 111).

Hawkrige (2002: 116) draws attention to the fact that “Sir Walter is no more gallant when the blemishes are on the opposite sex and makes so little secret of his scorn”. He takes the liberty to comment publicly on ladies’ unattractive appearance, which goes beyond good manners: “The worst of Bath was the number of its plain women. He did not mean to say that there were no pretty women, but the number of the plain was out of all proportion/.../as he had stood in a shop in Bond-street, he had counted eighty-seven women go by, one after another, without there being a tolerable face among them” (P 99-100). He also thinks Lady Russell does not look good enough for him to be seen in her company. He complains that she does herself up so little and “if she would only wear rouge, she would not be afraid of being seen; but last time I called, I observed the blinds were let down immediately” (P 153).

Sir Walter is also a very class-conscious man who does not get tired of emphasising his noble origin. He is cynical about the achievements of the men of profession, and scorns the way they have established themselves. He strongly objects the means that enable a nobody to become a somebody and bring “persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and rising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of” (P 15). Austen refers to Sir Walter’s habit to admire the Baronetage and the “unique” history of the Elliott family. She presents it as an ironic justification to the baronet’s haughty attitude to the people socially inferior to him:

Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch Hall, in Somersetshire, was a man who, for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage; there he found occupation for an idle hour, and consolation in a distressed one; there his faculties were roused into admiration and respect, by contemplating the limited remnant of the earliest patents...As he turned over the almost endless creations of the last century – and there, if every other

leaf was powerless, he could read his own history with an interest which never failed – this was the page at which the favourite volume always opened: “Elliot of Kellynch Hall” (P 3).

However, Sales (1996: 172) concludes that the Elliot family history is probably not that glorious as it is described from the baronet’s point of view. There is a reason to believe that the title was rewarded for loyal rather than outstanding services, or it was purchased because it was granted at the accession of Charles II when honours were openly on sale to provide the means for an appropriate royal lifestyle. Sales (ibid.) adds that Sir Walter “only sees what he wants to see in both the mirror and the book”. The knowledge of being a nobleman of birth gives him boundless self-confidence that should compensate for all possible disadvantages, in case, of course, there are any.

Harding (1976: 18) brings out that Austen has created a perfect starting point by giving Sir Walter a baronetcy, thus setting the family between the nobility and the gentry. He admits that though being a baronet, the Elliot family is actually no more than gentry, which makes the baronet particularly sensitive to the question of who can be considered gentleman. On the other hand, the mobility of the upper ranks had always characterised English society. Webb (1980: 8) argues that there were actually very few noble families in England who could trace their origin and titles further back than to the 16th century because the wars and political conflicts had wiped out many noble families while the others rose due to these turning points in history. Therefore Sir Walter’s title, either bought or bestowed on him, is nothing to be ashamed of in the context of overall social mobility. What makes his conduct comical is his reliance on his title and origin when the estate is on the verge of bankruptcy, and there is nothing left but debts. According to Butler (*sine anno*: 107),

Sir Walter Elliot is vain of his appearance and of his rank, but only for the status it gives him. He has been a selfish, self-indulgent landlord. Giving up Kellynch causes him no wretch, provided he can find means of flattering his social esteem at Bath. There, his circle is narrow, cold and stupid, rank being the only principle used in selecting it.

Sir Walter does not conceal his surprise when he hears a man of no distinction called gentleman: “Wentworth? Oh! Ay/.../You misled me by the term *gentleman*. I thought you were speaking of some man of property. Mr. Wentworth was nobody, I remember, quite unconnected; nothing to do with the Strafford family. One wonders how the names of many of our nobility become so common” (P 18). Though Sir Walter never prohibited the marriage between his daughter Anne and Captain Wentworth, the brother of the gentleman mentioned, “he thought it a very degrading alliance” (P 19). Towards the end of the novel, Captain Wentworth “with five-and-twenty thousand pounds” is, however, regarded good enough to propose to a daughter of an indebted baronet, who did not have “principle or sense enough to maintain himself in the situation in which Providence had placed him...” (P 177). Sir Walter is delighted to have a son-in-law, whose name Wentworth, though without title, sounds noble, and will not therefore “pollute” the pages of the Baronetage.

Sir Walter has developed a strong prejudice against the men of the navy, and admits that the profession has its utility, but he should be sorry to see any friend of his belonging to it (P 14). According to the baronet, naval officers cannot be true gentlemen because they have profession, which means that they have “visible means of support” (Murray 1999: 22). As Mason (1982: 62) explains, “it is only “fainéants”, people with neither *métier* nor profession, who can develop cultivated minds and tender hearts”, and only men like that deserve to be called gentlemen. Sir Walter’s attitudes towards those who are of non-aristocratic origin are best revealed when the question of renting his estate arises. He only agrees to make concessions because of the urgent need to pay his accumulating debts, and not because he sees the naval officers in a better light than the representatives of other professions. The first application for the house comes from Admiral Croft, who, as described by Mr. Shepherd, is “a very hale, hearty, well-looking

man, a little weather-beaten, to be sure, but not much, and quite the gentleman in all his notions and behaviour...he sometimes took out a gun, but never killed – quite the gentleman” (P 16-17). Thanks to Mr. Shepherd’s accolade, Admiral Croft is eventually considered good enough to become the tenant of such a precious place as Kellynch. The class-conscious baronet agrees that to let his house to Admiral Croft “would sound extremely well; very much better than to any mere *Mr-*; a *Mr/.../*always needs a note of explanation. An admiral speaks his own consequence, and at the same time can never make a baronet look small. In all their dealings and intercourse, Sir Walter Elliot must ever have precedence” (P 18).

Sales (1996: 176) refers to the contrast in which Sir Walter’s patronising attitude towards the Crofts is opposed to the way he fawns upon anyone who possesses a hereditary title: “he ingratiates himself back into favour with his cousin, Lady Dalrymple, simply because of her rank.” Sir Walter overlooks the lack of aristocratic blood only if a person proves to be useful in some other way. Elizabeth and Sir Walter invite Captain Wentworth only because “in conditions of Bath society a man of such distinguished bearing, whatever his forebears, will be an asset to their party” (Harding 1976: 18). At the same time, Sir Walter wonders whether it would be a good idea to present the Crofts to Lady Dalrymple, a viscountess, but Elizabeth’s resolution eliminates the possibility since they “ought to be very careful not to embarrass her with acquaintance she might not approve” (P 117). The Crofts should be better left with some “odd-looking” men in Bath, who are allegedly sailors, and not intrude into the circle they do not belong to. Sir Walter’s concern is also to find out “whether the Crofts travelled with four horses, and whether they are situated in such part of Bath as it might suit Miss Elliot and himself to visit in” (ibid.). The Admiral and his wife reside in lodgings which are perfectly to Sir Walter’s satisfaction, and make him not to be ashamed of the acquaintance. But against the hope of the baronet, Mr. and

Mrs. Croft do not seek his company to pave their way into society. The Crofts are well-known enough to have quite as many acquaintances in Bath as they wished for, and “considered their intercourse with the Elliots as a mere matter of form, and not in the least likely to afford them any pleasure” (P 119).

Although Sir Walter fears the possible intrusiveness of the Crofts, he would be greatly flattered if they fawned upon him just like many others in Bath: “Their acquaintance was exceedingly sought after. Everybody was wanting to visit them. They had drawn back from many introductions, and still were perpetually having cards left by people of whom they knew nothing” (P 97). His acquaintance is sought after just as he seeks the company of eminent people and title bearers, who would make an invaluable asset to his circle of acquaintances. On the other hand, Sir Walter is also concerned about the Crofts’ success in the society, since the Admiral is exactly the type of man who could pose a threat to the impoverished title bearers. The so-called newcomers could easily outdo the baronets and barons since their education, manners and financial means met the demands set by high society. The situation in society also explains why Sir Walter is so curious about the house the Crofts have rented and the number of horses they use. Austen mentions that the baronet actually thinks and talks “a great deal more about the Admiral than the Admiral ever thought of talked about him” (P 119).

Like the dandies’, Sir Walter’s main concern is his appearance; his house is filled with mirrors, and his opinion of other people depends very much on what they look like. Sales (1996: 171) notes that Sir Walter Elliot is just two years older than the Prince Regent, but looks younger, as he himself would probably insist. He is an ageing dandy who spends a lot of time admiring his face and figure in large looking-glasses (ibid.: 172). Admiral Croft, who rents the Kellynch estate, is surprised at the condition of the rooms Sir Walter leaves behind, and concludes that the owner of the estate is “very much the

gentleman /.../ but I should think he must be rather a dressy man for his time of life. – Such a number of looking-glasses! Oh Lord! There was no getting away from oneself!”

(P 90). To Sir Walter’s mind, one of the main drawbacks of the naval profession is that it spoils the complexion. He talks about “a certain Admiral Baldwin” who is “the most deplorable looking personage you can imagine, his face the colour of mahogany, rough and rugged to the last degree, all lines and wrinkles, nine grey hairs of a side, and nothing but a dab of powder at the top” (P 15). To his surprise, the Admiral turned out to be twenty years younger than he thought him to be:

Picture to yourselves my amazement...I never saw quite so wretched an example of what a sea-faring life can do; but to a degree, I know it is the same with them all. They are all knocked about, and exposed to every climate, and every weather, till they are not fit to be seen. It is a pity they are not knocked on the head at once, before they reach Admiral Baldwin’s age (ibid.).

However, he is pleasantly surprised when he meets Admiral Croft: “Sir Walter, without hesitation, declared the Admiral to be the best-looking sailor he had ever met with, and went so far as to say that, if his own man might have had the arranging of his hair, he should not be ashamed of being seen with him anywhere” (P 23).

Sir Walter’s principles and lifestyle represent that of a typical dandy in Regency England, and his values, though exactly opposite to the ones cherished by the author and many of her characters, convey the mentality of the era. His behaviour seems to be a vivid reflection of the way of life led by dandies. Although Sir Walter deviates from the concept of the ideal gentleman, it seems to the present author that he is a respectable and an elegant gentleman according to the norms of the time. His manners, like that of all dandies, are spiced with impertinence; his extravagance verges on absurdity; he is an odd mixture of gentlemanly qualities distorted by the society of paradoxes. As d’Aurevilly (2002: 82) has said, dandies were gentlemen of elegance, an elegance that was “perverted under social pressures”.

Mr. Wentworth, Mr. Crawford and Sir Walter all enjoy a social position which guarantees that they are called gentlemen. As Cannadine (2000: 30) has said, being a gentleman also involved a standard of conduct which had developed since the Middle Ages. However, as the sources reveal, the men of higher social standing were not always able to meet the standards. John Willoughby, Henry Crawford and Sir Walter Elliot are all good examples to this case. Their manners and address are perfect, and yet they fail to display principle and concern for others, which was expected from a true gentleman. They can be seen as gentlemen representing different aspects of dandyism. While Willoughby and Crawford demonstrate the phenomenon as womanizing socialites, Sir Walter embodies the conspicuous consumption and ludicrous devotion to fashion characteristic of the Regency dandies. As representatives of the phenomenon, they also display the raffishness and refined arrogance which were not quite accepted as gentlemanly qualities but which were not publicly denounced either. Willoughby, Crawford and Sir Walter are gentlemen according to the norms of the time, though they may fail to display the desired qualities of the ideal gentleman.

Chapter 3

Gentlemen of profession

3.1 Gentlemen of religion

The clergymen of Austen's novels form a group of colourful characters who, despite their common professional calling, cannot be attributed with the same qualities. Her clergymen or candidates for ordination range, for example, from the almost perfect gentleman Edmund Bertram to the narrow-minded eccentric Mr. Collins, which implies that Austen never intended to present her clerical characters as a homogeneous group of men. Like all professional classes at the time, the clergy varied a lot; there were men who were dedicated to their calling as well as those who neglected their duties and were no credit to their profession. Tucker (1994: 202) suggests that it was from Austen's personal observation rather than imagination that she created "a representative fictitious portrait gallery of the Anglican clergy in her novels". Edward Ferrars and Edmund Bertram in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park* respectively are good manifestations of religious gentlemen representing the idea that the deeds of a gentleman are more important than the privileges of money and birth. Although they take up their job in the church at the end of the novels, they have been unanimously classified as "Austen's clergymen" (Hawkridge, Seymour, Tucker, etc.), who represent, unlike some other men of the church in her novels, the good and exemplary part of this varying professional class. The novels focus on the men's endeavours to gain acceptance of their calling from the family (Edward) or friends (Edmund). Their determination and principles are put to the test to let them finally emerge as the gentlemen of sense and principle.

At the end of the eighteenth and the dawn of the nineteenth century religion was starting to take a firmer hold on people's lives. Religion, as Castronovo (1987: 45-46) says, became a behavioural guideline for gentlemen, which, with its emphasis on morality, went

sometimes even so far as to declare the libertines of the upper classes unsuitable to be called gentleman. According to Christian teaching, the lifestyle and pleasures of the upper classes were not morally refined enough to set an example to the lower ranks, who were allegedly more concerned and conscious of what was considered moral or immoral.

The parsons and curates of poorer parishes in the eighteenth and preceding centuries did not enjoy the status of the gentleman and they often had little respect in the eyes of the local aristocracy. The church had its own hierarchical gradation which was as good a system of privilege as that of the aristocracy. Higher positions in the church were tightly connected to money and rank, which resulted in the fact that higher clergymen were often of gentle blood and connected with the aristocracy. In parishes, it was the landowner's right to present a clergyman with a living, a prerogative which was viewed as a quite valuable form of property. In this way the church became a market where gentlemen bought and sold profitable positions in the church in order to provide for their sons and nephews (Le Faye 2003: 80).

Thus the background of the second and third sons of gentry families allowed them rather easily to embark on a promising career in the church, the only problem being to find a parish rich enough to enable the clergyman to live like any other country landowner without bothering themselves with the toilsome tasks of a parson (Le Faye 2003: 79). By Austen's day, as Kelly (1998: 154) describes, clergymen of all sects were engaged in party politics, the patronage systems in church and state were intertwined, and the Anglican clergy increasingly came from the landed gentry. Nevertheless, there was no fixed income for the clergy because it was made up of several sources (tithes, surplice fees, farming produce of their glebe lands), and smaller parishes could not afford to pay substantial monetary rewards (Le Faye 2003: 79). It was therefore necessary to get a good living in a rich parish which would allow a gentlemanly lifestyle. Austen's youth coincided with that

period of clerical history which witnessed a great deal of laxity among the members of the church, and the so-called “buckish” parsons were quite common at the time. There was nothing extraordinary in a clergyman preferring to spend his time on sports and social gatherings rather than on clerical duties, paying his curate a minimal wage to deal with the cumbersome tasks of a man of God (Tucker 1994: 201; Le Faye 2003: 80).

The rise of Evangelicalism at the end of the 18th century was to a large extent caused by the situation in England’s parishes where clerical duties were abused and neglected, and a good position in the church depended on money and connections rather than spiritual calling. The Evangelical segment in the church strongly criticized the moral laxity dominant among the clergymen and upper classes, who were regarded as responsible for the situation which had evolved. For instance, in 1794, Isaac Milner criticized the clergy and aristocracy: “The great and high have forgotten they have souls” (in Castronovo 1987: 47). Proceeding from the need to refine the procedures in the church, the Evangelical movement also influenced the laity, providing a new perspective to define the gentlemanly ideal. What counted most was not only the social advantages gentlemen were entitled to but also the right and honourable deeds, which became the key factor in distinguishing a true gentleman from a non-gentleman. In 1782 Vicesimus Knox also assured in his essay *Hints to Those Who Are Designed for the Life of a Gentleman without a Profession* that the privileges alone do not make a gentleman:

The world abounds with evil, moral, natural, real and imaginary. He alone who does all he can, wherever his influence extends, to mitigate and remove it, is the *true gentleman*. Others are only esquires, knights, baronets, barons, viscounts, earls, marquises, dukes, and kings (in Castronovo 1987: 48).

The movement therefore reminded a gentleman that he had a duty to do good and not just to enjoy the privileges of his status (ibid.). The lack of morality among the upper classes became a topical issue leading up to an understanding that the gentleman was, in the first place, the man who did right, and not the man who had had the advantage of having been

born into a noble family (hence probably the Duke of Wellington's preference for the title of English gentleman before any other designation bestowed on him) (ibid.).

Despite the growing influence of Evangelicalism at the beginning of the nineteenth century, contemporary critics have questioned the relevance of Austen's religion to her fictional art, and so did nineteenth-century scholars, many of whom approved of the author's apparent reticence about religion and her secularized attitude to it (Kelly 1998: 154). For instance, Richard Simpson praised Austen in 1870 because she "let the church stand in the churchyard, and did not attempt to transport it into her novels" (ibid.). Although some critics have maintained that Austen was indifferent to religious matters and she was a "profoundly irreligious woman", there is ample evidence from her letters that she was not (Tucker 1994: 199). The Austen family belonged to the Anglican Church and Jane's father was a rector in Hampshire, which means that the family life was governed by religious rites and beliefs. According to the memories of her family, she practiced "an unostentatious yet consistent and mainstream Anglican faith" (Kelly 1998: 152). She allegedly regarded religious enthusiasm unfavourably, and started to express more disapproval at the Evangelicals later in her life. For example, in one of her letters to her sister Cassandra in 1809, she is disappointed at Hannah More's *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* saying plainly "I do not like the Evangelicals" (in Le Faye 1997: 170). More, who was personally encouraged by John Wesley in her literary pursuits, placed a great importance on Christianity in establishing moral laws and her writings were permeated with a strong didactic purpose. More's religious ardour did not appeal to Austen, who condemned this kind of zeal and resented the Evangelicals' attempt to impose a restrictive moral code on the more liberal clergy and public (Tucker 1994: 208).

Austen is reticent about the deeper religious feelings of her clerical characters; all the readers can gather is that they are determined to follow their calling in the Anglican

Church and set a good example to their congregation. As Tucker (1994: 201-202) has said, Austen saw nothing wrong with combining her characters' clerical duties with more mundane matters. All the clerical connections of the Austen family were also men of varying spiritual orientation, who saw no inconsistency in making riding, dancing and dinner parties a part of their lives. Therefore, Austen's fictional clergymen are, first of all, realistic human beings; they are professed Christians and professional gentlemen with a recognised and defined social position (Seymour: www.starcourse.org/abbey/JAC1.html).

3.1.1 Edward Ferrars

Edward Ferrars in *Sense and Sensibility* is the character of Austen's novels who probably best represents the conflict between the acute social pressure on the rising middle classes and the person's own callings. The gentlemen of similar background were usually very concerned about their position in society since their genteelness could easily be questioned. Edward finds himself in a situation where he has to choose between his duty to live up to the expectations of his family and his own ambition to take on not so genteel a post in the church. But it is through this conflict that he emerges as a man of exemplary gentlemanly virtues.

Edward Ferrars comes from a rich London family who do not support him in his humble ambition to become a clergyman: a position in the church is just not smart enough for a young man from a wealthy family. Edward's father was probably a younger son of a baronet, since it is his uncle Robert who bears the title "Sir". Mrs. Ferrars, Edward's widowed mother, is very rich and therefore respected in London circles, and the readers are assured of her pride in her position. The conflict between Edward and his family can be seen as the conflict between one's principles and the social pressure: Edward is reluctant to give up his calling only because it would be more suitable for such a smart man to pursue a

political career, or to be just an elegant young man “about town driving a barouche” (Le Faye 2003: 169):

But he [Edward] was neither fitted by abilities nor disposition to answer the wishes of his mother and sister, who longed to see him distinguished/.../They wanted him to make a fine figure in the world in some manner or other. His mother wished to interest him in political concerns, to get him into parliament, or to see him connected with some of the great men of the day/.../but meanwhile, till one of these superior blessings could be attained, it would have quieted her ambition to see him driving a barouche. But Edward had no turn for great men or barouches. All his wishes centred in domestic comfort and the quiet of private life (S&S 13-14).

Edward prefers domestic comfort and spiritual calling to financial and social advantages, which probably makes him quite exceptional among the people with whom his family keep company. Edward, as a true Christian, has a deep respect for his mother’s wishes and therefore does not rush to settle down as a country parson. His melancholy and sad determination to leave the Dashwood ladies despite his wish to stay longer at Barton Cottage is unanimously attributed by them to “the old well-established grievance of duty against will, parent against child” (S&S 98). Without knowing the real cause of Edward’s distress, Mrs. Dashwood’s suggests that he would be a happier man if he had any profession to engage his time. Edward assures that he has been long thinking about it:

It has been, and is, and probably will always be a heavy misfortune to me, that I have had no necessary business to engage me, no profession to give me employment or afford me anything like independence. But unfortunately my nicety and the nicety of my friends, have made me what I am, an idle, helpless being. We never could agree in our choice of a profession. I always preferred the church, as I still do. But that was not smart enough for my family. They recommended the army. That was a great deal too smart for me. The law was allowed to be genteel enough; many young men, who had chambers in the Temple, made a very good appearance in the first circles, and drove about town in very knowing gigs. But I had no inclination for the law/.../As for the navy, it had fashion on its side, but I was too old when the subject was first started to enter it, - and, at length, as there was no necessity for my having any profession at all, as I might be as dashing and expensive without a red coat on my back as with one, idleness was pronounced on the whole to be the most advantageous and honourable/.../I entered at Oxford, and have been properly idle ever since (S&S 99-100).

To Mrs. Ferrars, a “properly idle” son is the best possible solution since true gentlemen have “no visible means of support” (Murray 1999: 22). A profession can only be a good thing *per se* if it is practised in a “genteel” field with good perspectives and useful

connections. Edward himself is not happy about his idleness and his misfortune lies in his lack of resolution to solve the situation. For a moment he even considers giving up his calling, but rejects the idea.

Though everything said about Edward refers to his affectionate and amiable personality, he lacks the grace of John Willoughby. He does not have spirit like his dandylike counterpart and his restraint and melancholic moods do not contribute to his being seen as a perfect gentleman. However, Edward's lack of openness is attributed by the Dashwood ladies to his want of independence, and his better knowledge of Mrs. Ferrar's dispositions and designs (S&S 98). Nevertheless, he was "a gentleman-like and pleasing young man" but without "any peculiar graces of person or address" (S&S 13):

He was not handsome, and his manners required intimacy to make them pleasing. He was too diffident to do justice to himself; but when his natural shyness was overcome, his behaviour gave every indication of an open, affectionate heart. His understanding was good, and his education had given it solid improvement (ibid.).

Austen, who attached a great importance to the accomplishment and manners of a gentleman, does not dedicate as many passages to Edward as to Willoughby. It is probably not that Austen prefers Willoughby to Edward, but that Edward, in his awkward goodness, does not possess the intriguing charm to inspire the readers' imagination as a gallant and courteous gentleman. Edward's merits are only revealed at a more intimate acquaintance because he is too modest, and modesty is not the kind of quality Austen seemed to value. In one of her letters to her niece Fanny Knight she regrets that the only fault John Plumptre (the man to whom Fanny was supposed to become engaged) had was modesty: "Mr. J. P. – has advantages which do not often meet in one person. His only fault indeed seems Modesty. If he were less modest, he would be more agreeable [agreeable]..." (in Le Faye 1997: 280).

Edward's reserve and natural awkwardness are most sharply criticised by Marianne:

Edward is very amiable/.../but yet he is not the kind of young man – there is a something wanting, his figure is not striking – it has none of the grace which I should expect in the man who could seriously attach my sister. His eyes want all the spirit, that fire, which at once announces virtue and intelligence. And besides all this, I am afraid, mama, he has no real taste. Music seems scarcely to attract him, and though he admires Elinor’s drawings very much, it is not the admiration of a person who can understand their worth. It is evident, in spite of his frequent attention to her while she draws, that in fact he knows nothing of the matter (S&S 15).

According to Marianne’s portrayal, Edward does not make a perfect Castiglionesque courtier, the kind of man she saw in Willoughby. Edward has not developed a taste in the arts, he does not indulge in conversations about the subjects which were common among the gentlemen of the day. And yet Marianne has to admit that she has “the highest opinion in the world of his goodness and sense” and she thinks “him everything that is worthy and amiable” (S&S 17). To Elinor, “goodness and sense” are superior to elegance and refinement, and these merits acquire even more weight when it becomes clear that Edward has remained true to his word to Lucy Steele. Although Edward regrets deeply his youthful impetuous decision to become engaged to Lucy, he, as a man of honour, cannot break his promise to her. The relief comes when Lucy elopes with his brother Robert and exempts Edward from his vows. It is where Edward emerges as a true gentleman surpassing the courteous and elegant Willoughby, who is a valuable asset to every polite company, but who fails when he has to prove his sound qualities.

3.1.2 Edmund Bertram

Edmund Bertram in *Mansfield Park* is another example of Austen’s gentlemen-clergymen. As for his ambitions, Edmund is similar to Edward Ferrars, but the opportunities opened to these two gentlemen are different. Edmund, who is the youngest son of a baronet is in a much better position to pursue a career in the church. He has his family’s unswerving support since taking orders was a conventional way for a younger son of aristocratic

background to establish himself in life. Edmund's decision to enter a clerical profession is seen as "entirely appropriate" (Sales 1997: 110).

Austen herself considered Edmund one of her favourite fictional characters in whom gallantry and sense are combined. However, not all the critics share the author's opinion of Edmund as an exemplary gentleman, and there are somewhat contradictory attitudes to his character. Wright (1967: 133), for example, regards Edmund Bertram as a prig and the least likely of all Austen's characters to capture the readers' sympathy and affection. Tomalin (1999: 228) also refers to some critics who see him and Fanny "humourless and pompous" and conclude that Austen's own judgement had gone seriously astray while portraying them both. Yet the reviews that appeared right after the novel was published were much more favourable, and the author herself had allegedly said that Edmund was everything of what she "expected real gentlemen to be" (Tucker 1994: 111). Nevertheless, she remained a realist and admitted that her creation was very far from being what she knew English gentlemen often were (*ibid.*).

The conflicting opinions probably proceed from Edmund's being a clergyman, the profession which he is determined to practise more devotedly and ardently than any other clergyman in Austen's novels. It is his dedication that estranges him from Mary Crawford, and also from the readers, who do not understand his exceptional commitment. Nevertheless, Edmund emerges as embodying all that is good from the beginning of the novel (Wright 1967: 133). As a boy, he is the only person who really cares for his cousin Fanny, a lonely and confused child taken to Mansfield Park to live with her aunt's family. Edmund's concerns and behaviour as a boy are an implication of what he will be like in the future. He develops into a fine young man whose determination and concern for others are very much opposed to his elder brother's hedonism. Tom Bertram, the heir to Sir Thomas, seems to have been bred for idleness while Edmund has learned to rely on his talents and

merits to make his way in life. Although, as a son of a baronet, he has a good starting point, there is nothing ready for him as for Tom, the heir to the title. Edmund's spiritual calling has made him choose the church and he is prepared for the ordination.

It is in relation to Mary Crawford that he emerges most fully as a human being with usual blindness and self-deceptions (Wright 1967: 134). Mary Crawford, by whom he is bewitched from the start and to whom he intends to propose, strongly objects Edmund's plan to devote himself entirely to his calling. Despite her determination to like the eldest Bertram brother more, she has fallen in love with Edmund, and cannot bear the thought of losing him to such a humble profession. The conversation between Edmund and Mary reveals the different worlds the two young people inhabit:

“So you are to be a clergyman, Mr Bertram. This is rather a surprise to me.”

“Why should it surprise you? You must suppose me designed for some profession, and might perceive that I am neither a lawyer, nor a soldier, nor a sailor.”

“Very true; but, in short, it had not occurred to me. And you know there is generally an uncle or a grandfather to leave fortune to the second son.”

“A very praiseworthy practice/.../but not quite universal. I am one of the exceptions, and being one, must do something for myself.”/.../

“For what is to be done in the church? Men love to distinguish themselves, and in either of the other lines of distinction may be gained but not in the church. A clergyman is nothing.”
(MP 93)

Though it was not uncommon for higher ranking clergymen to lead a worldly life and delegate their duties as a spiritual guardian to their subordinate colleagues, the profession still had certain social confinements which are not to Mary's liking. Or as Edmund says: “A clergyman cannot be high in state or fashion. He must not head mobs, or set the ton in dress” (MP 94).

Edmund's vision of the profession corresponds to what was seen as an ideal: “... I cannot call the situation nothing which has the charge of all that is of the first importance to mankind individually or collectively considered, temporally and eternally, which has the guardianship of religion and morals, and consequently of the manners which result from their influence” (MP 94). This conception was also trumpeted by the Evangelicals but it

seldom bore resemblance to the reality. Thus Mary shrewdly tries to refute Edmund's statements: "You assign greater consequence to the clergyman than one has been used to hear given, or than I can quite comprehend. One does not see much of this influence and importance in society, and how can it be acquired where they are so seldom seen themselves?" (ibid.). As it was mentioned above, the period was known for an extraordinary laxity among the clergy, and this is what Mary seems to be implying. However, there were also Anglican clergymen who did not follow the prevailing trend of paying pittances to curates in order to live in idleness and comfort. For instance, Austen's own father Reverend George Austen must have been an example of it: "...he lived among his parishioners and set them a good example by his kindness and upright behaviour" (Tucker 1994: 201). Edmund seems to bear resemblance to Austen's father being a realistic representation of a good and conscientious rector and not a fictional embodiment of Evangelical doctrine.

Edmund is depicted as a principled man who does not go back on his promises even if it costs him his peace of mind. However, he is to allow "his own good judgement to be quite overthrown by Mary" (Wright 1967: 134). While Sir Thomas is in Antigua, Edmund has a large share of the responsibility for seeing that things run properly at Mansfield Park. Although it is Tom who is at the head of the estate in their father's absence, Edmund thinks it also his duty to avoid things Sir Thomas would not approve of. When the plan of putting on a play is suggested, he disapproves strongly, and feels that his father would also disapprove:

"I think it would be very wrong. In a *general* light, private theatrical are open to some objections, but as we are circumstanced, I must think it would be highly injudicious and more than injudicious, to attempt anything of the kind. It would show great want of feeling on my father's account, absent as he is /.../and it would be imprudent, I think, with regard to Maria, whose situation is a very delicate one, considering everything, very delicate." (MP 128)

Butler (1999: 231) points out that “by 1814 the increasingly strong Evangelical movement had sufficiently publicized the link between upper-class immorality and its rage for private theatricals”. Yet in the Bertrams’ case the implied impropriety of acting probably does not lie in the growing disapproval of theatricals but in the fact “that they are not acting, but are finding an indirect means to gratify desires which are illicit, and should have been contained” (ibid.: 232).

Edmund declares that his father’s sense of decorum is strict (MP 130), and so is his. And yet his personality lets him down though he is a good and conscientious man (Hawkrigde 2002: 146). When Miss Crawford approves of the scheme, Edmund cannot afford to contradict her. He is shrewdly tricked into agreeing to the plan and he even “allows himself to be overridden as to the choice of a play”, though he finds Koetzebue’s *Lovers’ Vows* shocking and compromising (Wright 1967: 134). And to cap it all, he yields to playing a love-scene with Mary (ibid.):

Edmund might still look grave, and say he did not like the scheme in general, and must disapprove the play in particular; their point was gained; he was to act, and he was driven to it by the force of selfish inclinations only. Edmund had descended from that moral elevation which he had maintained before, and they were both as much the better as the happier for the descent (MP 160).

The theatricals and the company of the Crawfords make Edmund neglect Fanny whom he has always supported and protected. This is where Austen shows him slipping: true gentlemen should never fail in fulfilling their duties and forget their promises. However, some readers and critics have said that his blindness to the scheming of the Crawfords makes Edmund’s character more convincing (e.g. Wright 1967).

Although devoted to his career in the church, Edmund can by no means be accused of priggishness and hypocrisy. There is an episode at the beginning of the novel, which seems to have been overlooked by those critics who blame him for priggishness. After his sister’s engagement to the wealthy but unintelligent James Rushworth Edmund remarks

pointedly: “If this man had not twelve thousand a year, he would be a very stupid fellow” (MP 39). This ironic statement shows Edmund in a different light: he is not an ideal-ridden clergyman hardly found in real life but a smart and witty man who is well aware of the ways of the world where money is given precedence over everything else. Wright (1967: 134) points out that Edmund shows us “something of a straightforward honesty which will not be obscured by the demands of convention”. This is exactly the type of gentleman who would have appealed to Austen herself since she valued sense and goodness combined with wit and social accomplishments.

While John Willoughby and Henry Crawford represent the elegant libertine dandy-gentlemen characteristic of the period, Edward Ferrars and Edmund Bertram stand for the sound qualities of goodness, sense and determination, which are always valued but not always found in gentlemen. The last two are also more close to the timeless ideal of the gentleman according to which personal merits outweigh the external elegance. Yet one may argue that in the Regency period elegance and style were what made a man gentleman and the solid qualities were a thing of the past. Characters like Edward and Edmund may seem out of place in the profligate Regency context and represent something which was not part of it. Although the First Gentleman of Europe in the person of the Prince of Wales set the high society standards and encouraged Brummell-like extravagance, the ideals sustaining chivalric virtues of goodness and honour continued to exist, if not dominating the standards. As it seems to the present author, Edward and Edmund fully illustrate this aspect.

3.2 Gentlemen of the navy. Captain Wentworth and Admiral Croft

During the eighteenth century the British Navy had become the best in the world, and this image was reinforced by the successful campaigns during the Napoleonic Wars. In Austen's day, the navy was held in high esteem and the profession itself was associated with everything that was considered good and honourable. The men of the navy enjoyed a good reputation, and the officers, regardless of their background, were easily accepted in high society. Austen must have taken a deep personal interest in the naval affairs since two of her brothers had embarked on a career in the navy already years before she started writing *Persuasion*. It was probably the overall patriotic sentiments combined with her sisterly admiration for her brothers' career in the navy that inspired her to make her naval characters embody all the gentlemanly qualities. *Persuasion* is very much a wartime story covering the years 1814 and 1815 where Captain Frederick Wentworth and Admiral Croft emerge as true gentlemen in a sharp contrast to the dandylike baronet Sir Walter Elliot.

Writing about the navy, Austen was "on the firm ground" (Tucker 1994: 85). Apart from the church, the navy was the profession she knew well and probably admired most, like many of her contemporaries. Her brother Frank was by the age of twenty five moving upwards in the navy "at a very brisk rate – owing partly to the Napoleonic Wars being conducive to quick promotion, and partly to friends in high places" (Hawkridge 1999: 79). Hawkridge (ibid.) emphasises that one cannot underestimate the role of influential people in making the most of one's career: without connections, a senior position in the navy as well as in the army would have been impossible to obtain. The Austens also relied on influential connections, for example, on Warren Hastings, who was the guardian of Mr. Austen's niece Eliza. Charles, the youngest of Austen's brothers, started his career in the navy serving under the command of Sir Thomas Williams, the husband of one of his cousins (Tomalin 1999: 118). The family knew exactly how the system worked, and

Austen ably applied it in her novels. In *Mansfield Park*, for instance, William Price is also put on the threshold of his career thanks to Henry's uncle Admiral Crawford, without whose recommendation William's chances would have been slim.

The navy together with the army, church and law formed the main source of genteel professions for the younger sons of the nobility, but a career in the navy seemed especially promising in the context of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Although the highest posts could only be occupied by those who had influential connections, the financial awards were lucrative enough to make men from the lower classes choose the navy. Le Faye (2003: 76) asserts that captains and admirals could certainly grow rich, and even the lower deck could gain considerable sums. Captain Wentworth, for example, has accumulated £25,000, which is sufficient enough to lead a gentlemanly lifestyle, and Admiral Croft has probably earned even more. The opportunities of the war were eagerly seized upon in the hope of gaining both honours and prize-money (ibid.).

Le Faye (2003: 77) refers to the fact that in Spain and in pre-revolutionary France naval officers had to be members of the nobility, but in England rank and promotion could be gained by men of a much humbler origin. It was a well-known fact that Admiral Nelson's father was a country parson in Norfolk, and it perfectly illustrates the possibilities of upward mobility in England. Admiral Croft in *Persuasion* is not a nobleman either. His father was evidently a younger son of a gentry family, since it is the Admiral's nephew who inherited the family property of Everingham in Somersetshire (ibid.). Captain Wentworth's father or forefathers were probably the younger sons of a gentry family too. This can be inferred from the fact that his brother is a curate of Monkford and neither he nor Frederick possesses land. However, their professions as well as their sister's marriage to Admiral Croft refer to the Wentworth brothers' ambition to lead a genteel life and, if possible, to make their way back to the ranks of the gentry.

Though Frederick Wentworth was evidently not well-off, he must also have had some useful connections thanks to his family background that proved valuable in paving his way and getting a good start in life. He had already been made a commander in 1806 in consequence of the action off St Domingo (P 19), and has now, by the year 1814 when the novel starts, promoted to post-captain and is therefore assured of rising to the rank of Admiral (Le Faye 2003: 287). By 1814 Admiral Croft, too, has made a brilliant career in the navy and has a sufficient fortune to consider purchasing an estate. He first rents Kellynch Hall which is situated in the region where he finally plans to settle down. The officers in general were eager to invest their money in land because the ownership of land was an important social marker and only landed property guaranteed a man a strong social position and political influence. According to Marshall (1993: 29), as soon as he could, a man bought land, whatever his source of wealth, and so did the admirals and captains who needed the landed property to secure their position.

In Sir Walter's opinion, the navy is just an institution to help men raise their status, and the baronet's attitude seems to present clearly the situation in the Regency period. This kind of quick promotion, reputation and riches that went with a post in the navy were very often frowned upon by the noblemen who were not willing to consider naval officers as their equals even if they had sufficient means and acted like gentlemen. Sir Walter expresses his contempt and ignorance by saying that the navy is

the means of bringing persons of obscure origin into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of /.../ A man is in greater danger in the navy of being insulted by the rise of one whose father, his father might have disdained to speak to, and of becoming prematurely an object of disgust himself than in any other line (P 15).

Sir Walter Elliot considers a person gentleman only if he is socially as good as he is or better, and, of course, if he owns some land. This attitude does not let him take the naval officers as gentlemen and his equals because they do not meet certain requirements. Yet

the author herself and the characters who seem to represent her beliefs see the naval officers in a different light: they are gentlemen since their conduct is without doubt gentlemanly, and maybe even more so than that of Sir Walter. Humble (1993: viii) asserts that Austen seems to offer the navy as a moral replacement for the dissipated aristocracy for they are the characters who represent all the virtues in the novel and are opposed to the vain baronet. In its anxiety about manners and their meaning, *Persuasion* seems to start to replace an eighteenth-century emphasis on social forms with a concern with underlying substance (Humble *ibid.*: ix). However, it is not to be understood that the old social norms should be entirely neglected, but they can only have effect if accompanied by moral virtues. Mr. William Elliot, the heir presumptive to Sir Walter, fools the baronet because he is charming and has impeccable manners. His misdeeds in the past are forgotten since he behaves as a perfect gentleman. Austen shows in *Persuasion* that the old aristocracy can be easily deceived by pleasant manners which can often be a disguise for moral inferiority (*ibid.*).

The novel starts in 1814, a year of overall national rejoicing: Napoleon was forced to abdicate, a peace treaty with France was signed, and the navy officers were returning home, or as Mr. Shepherd puts it:

“...The peace will be turning all our rich navy officers ashore. They will be all wanting a home. Could not be a better time, Sir Walter, for having a choice of tenants, very responsible tenants. Many a noble fortune has been made during the war. If a rich Admiral were to come in our way, Sir Walter – “
 “He would be a very lucky man, Shepherd,” replied Sir Walter, “that’s all I have to remark. A prize indeed would Kellynch Hall be to him; rather the greatest prize of all, let him have taken ever so many before...” (P 13).

Sir Walter’s sarcastic remark refers to the prize-money, the money paid for capturing enemy’s ships, which made it possible for many a naval officer to consider buying land and an estate, or at least renting a fine house to live in. According to him, Kellynch Hall, his ancestral estate, would be just like a captured vessel for a fortune hunting navy officer

of dubious background: “There are few among the gentlemen of the navy, I imagine, who would not be surprised to find themselves in a house of this description” (P 13-14). However, both Mr. Shepherd and his daughter Mrs. Clay speak in favour of the navy officers as tenants:

“...a sailor might be very desirable tenant. I have known a good deal of their profession and besides their liberality, they are so neat and careful in all their ways! These valuable pictures of yours, Sir Walter, if you chose to leave them, would be perfectly safe. Everything in and about the house would be taken such excellent care of! the gardens and shrubberies would be kept in almost as high order as they are now. You need not be afraid, Miss Elliot, of your own sweet flower-garden’s being neglected” (P 14).

There are allusions throughout the novel implying that the sailors may emerge as far better leaders than the aristocracy. The Crofts as tenants of Kellynch Hall might turn out to be better owners than Sir Walter, and only under their management the estate will show signs of improvement (Sirkel 2001: 141). Once the Crofts have moved in, they launch a range of improvements. Though the renovations are not large-scale, they reflect practicality and indifference towards luxury. They introduce a number of changes to the house, making repairs in the parts of the building where it was beneath the baronet’s dignity to visit (Sales 1996: 179). For example, the Crofts fix the laundry door which, according to Mr. Shepherd, is “the greatest improvement the house ever had” and the Admiral wonders how any family upon the earth could have tolerated the inconvenience of opening it so long as the Elliots did (P 90). Admiral Croft also has all the large mirrors removed from his dressing room that had belonged to Sir Walter. As the Admiral prefers a more functional lifestyle, he is happy with only a small shaving-glass in one corner, which definitely would not be enough for a dandy.

Sales (1996: 179) points out that Admiral Croft and his wife maintain Anne’s charitable work when they move into Kellynch Hall, an ancient duty and tradition of the landowners which the baronet has long forgotten. Austen shows that the estate becomes a more functional place under the rule of the Crofts (ibid.). As the story unfolds, the sailors

emerge as gentlemen not only suitable to lead their crew but to govern a landed estate. Admiral Croft as a master of an estate shows ingenuity and enterprising spirit in dealing with Kellynch Hall and emerges as a true gentleman-leader not spoiled by the haughtiness and extravagance of the real owner of the estate. The naval officers present a considerable contrast to the values that to Sir Walter are above all. Their alertness, practicality of mind and conscientiousness are opposed to Sir Walter's narrow-mindedness and inability to make appropriate decisions (Sirkel 2001: 140-1). Butler (sine anno: 108) has suggested that Austen put her sailors "Captain Wentworth and Admiral Croft into the novel to make an entirely moral point that the old system absolutely depended upon its belief in the gentleman as a leader." Even Anne, though sorry for the removal from Kellynch Hall, "could not but in conscience feel that they were gone who deserved not to stay, and that Kellynch Hall has passed into better hands than its owner" (P 188).

Austen has also given Wentworth and Admiral Croft the manners of the gentleman. Wentworth "by his verbal fluency and poise, by his chivalrous behaviour ... proves his right to a place in a drawing room" (Butler sine anno: 108), i.e. in the company of refined and polite people. Wentworth is a true gentleman according to the old chivalric tradition: he shows courage in the action and courtesy in the company of ladies. Admiral Croft is described by Mr. Shepherd as "quite the gentleman in all his notions and behaviour" (P 16). When Wentworth and Croft return from active service, Lascelles (1963: 117) draws attention to their composed state of mind and dignity: "It has been a surprise to more than one generation of Jane Austen readers that her naval officers do not march across the stage confusedly, as though returning from the Napoleonic Wars. Instead, they enter very composedly, as though returning from walking up partridges in the stubble". Hawkrigde (2002: 94) confirms that Wentworth and Croft "do seem very peaceable /.../, but surely that is part of being a gentleman". Both Wentworth and Croft could be seen as ideal, and

yet realistic hero-gentlemen of their day: being newcomers to high society, they champion old traditions, but they do not belong to the class who established them. They do not possess land or a country house, but they have every chance of succeeding in becoming good owners of estates and they value the things once valued by noblemen but now very often neglected. As younger sons of gentry families, Wentworth and Croft are also well aware that to retain the gentlemanly lifestyle they can only rely on themselves. Wentworth, for example, has been an ambitious man since his youth and his confidence to fulfil his dreams appeals to Anne.

Despite the praise of the naval virtues that permeates the novel, Austen is too realistic to overlook some minor faults. The characters she has created are not perfect, but close to what was seen as the ideal. Although Wentworth and Croft lack the extravagance of the baronet, they are keenly conscious of the importance of money. Admiral Croft, for example, makes no secret about the economic motive of war (McMaster 1998: 122). He is waiting for another war only to fill his purse; he hopes for “the good luck to live to another war” and to see Captain Wentworth do as well as he has done (P 50). Captain Wentworth also indulges in nostalgia while recollecting the days at sea: “Ah! Those were pleasant days when I had the *Laconia*. How fast I made money in her” (P 47). Though the concern for money was not considered gentlemanly, the sailors cannot be accused of laying a great importance on the materialistic side of their profession. In the Regency period, money was a major asset that helped to open the doors, and it was obvious that a gentleman could not do well without a good sum of money to his name. What is inappropriate about their high economic motives is the way how they express it: it was not polite to talk about making money. What is more, their supposed loyalty to the nation and the courage they have shown in the battle can rather be associated with their financial concerns and not so much with their chivalric principles and patriotic feelings.

Nevertheless, the naval officers, in contrast to Sir Walter, embody almost all the qualities expected from a true gentleman. Humble (1993: viii) also confirms that in *Persuasion* the pleasing manners, good company and pleasant conversation that should be supplied by aristocratic society are instead found in the company of the men of the navy. McMaster (1998: 121) has suggested that Austen uses the navy as “the model of a system of promotion by merit, to contrast with the old-world system of hereditary that Sir Walter considers sacred”. The present author of the thesis finds *Persuasion* therefore a good example of the conception of the word “gentleman” according to which manners and merits are given precedence over class. The virtuous men of the navy in *Persuasion* are clearly placed above the degenerate aristocracy. Such an approach implies that those who were considered gentlemen were the moral and honourable men of profession rather than the extravagant and narrow-minded aristocracy. Austen seems to emphasize that privileges cannot be separated from responsibilities. It is an old chivalric tenet, which seems to have fallen into oblivion in the Regency period, and which is revived in the novel by Captain Wentworth and Admiral Croft. They, unlike Sir Walter, are admired for their concern and ability to carry out their duties and responsibilities and the novel implies that such merit deserves privileges that society is not always eager to grant.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis of the novels *Sense and Sensibility*, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* by Austen shows that the gentlemanly ideal, as it had developed through centuries, is sustained and cherished by the representative male characters under discussion in the present thesis, but not necessarily followed as a strict code of conventions. The characters in these novels are aware of how the true gentleman should behave, but it is also admitted that the social and moral meanings of the word “gentleman” do not always coincide.

The difference between the social and moral meanings is perfectly illustrated by John Willoughby and Henry Crawford. They both belong to the rank of the gentry, and can therefore be socially classified as gentlemen. They are also perfect gentlemen according to the norms of the polite society, and are considered a desired addition to every company. Their manners and accomplishments correspond to the ideal, but they fail to meet the standard when it comes to their morality. Both Willoughby and Crawford are pleasure-loving dandies and womanisers who lack the necessary consideration for others. Although they act in an ungentlemanly way when they deny any serious intentions with the ladies whom they have publicly courted, they do not lose their reputation as gentlemen in their own circle. The Regency society was relatively flexible about sexual promiscuity and a man’s name was not seriously damaged by casual affairs. Willoughby, although deserting both Eliza and Marianne in a most ungentlemanly way, is not deprived of his social position as a gentleman. His immoral deeds do not affect his reputation in society, he is still accepted in the circles he moves in and no one condemns him for courting an heiress instead of a poor girl without connections. Crawford, though having committed a more serious “crime” of eloping with a married woman, does not have to worry much about his gentlemanly status either. His “moment’s *étourdie*” will be soon forgotten since a man of such grace and amiability is always welcome in the best circles. Austen does not deny that

they make perfect gentlemen when gallant and courteous manners are concerned, but what she disapproves of is the neglect of universal ethics. Elegant accomplishments cannot compensate for the lack of honour and consideration for others which are an essential part of the gentlemanly ideal.

Although the word “dandy” tends to be associated with negative attributes, being a dandy did not mean lacking the qualities that are characteristic of the ideal type of gentleman. Willoughby and Crawford in their raffishness and refined arrogance act like true dandies, whose primary aim is to look for pleasure. However, they are not such vivid paragons of the phenomenon as Sir Walter Elliot. Ridiculous devotion to fashion and an extravagant lifestyle are added to his raffish air, which make him the best example of dandyism in Austen’s novels. Sir Walter’s principles and lifestyle represent that of a typical dandy in Regency England, and his values, though exactly opposite to the ones cherished as the ideal, convey the mentality of the era. His manners are spiced with impertinence and his extravagance verges on absurdity, like that of all dandies. Apart from dandyism, the baronet also represents the tension between the gentlemen of pedigree and gentlemen of profession. Here the difference between the social and moral aspect of the term “gentleman” again becomes crystallised. To Sir Walter, the title and pedigree are above all, and he refuses to regard the naval officers as true gentlemen only because they do not possess these qualifications.

While Willoughby and Crawford represent the elegant libertine dandy-gentlemen characteristic of the period, Edward Ferrars and Edmund Bertram stand for the sound qualities of goodness, sense and determination, which are highly valued but not always found in gentlemen. Both Edward and Edmund are more close to the timeless ideal of the gentleman according to which personal merits outweigh the external elegance. Edward and Edmund do not display the charm both Willoughby and Crawford possess in abundance,

and they are not the kind of socialites who would be the heart and soul of every company. Edward, being the more reserved of the two, lacks the qualities that were widely admired in the period: he is a modest, slightly awkward man, who lacks the accomplishments of a courtier-gentleman; he has a limited knowledge of art and literature and is not very sociable. However, he emerges as a man of sense and goodness who, unlike his dashing and gallant counterpart Willoughby, displays consideration for others. Edmund, though not as reserved as Edward, represents similar qualities. He is a man of principles with a strong moral sense. But unlike Edward, he is a more sociable man who is at ease in any kind of social conversation. He is probably the closest to the ideal of Austen's gentlemen, combining both sense and goodness with wit and accomplishments.

As for the social meaning of the word "gentleman", Edward's condition illustrates the pressure society laid on those without an aristocratic title. Edward's mother is anxious to retain the respectable position the family has achieved, and she cannot therefore allow his son to pursue a career that is not genteel enough. Though no one in the novel questions Edward's gentlemanliness, his position in society was not that securely established as that of Edmund's. The second generation descendants of a baronet still had to prove their standing, and Edward's humble ambition to become a clergyman would not support his family's efforts in doing so. However, Edward's credibility as a gentleman is not diminished by his taking orders, on the contrary, he emerges as a man of his word and principles, qualities that form the basis of the moral aspect of gentlemanliness.

The naval officers in *Persuasion* are a good example of the understanding of the word "gentleman" according to which merits are given precedence over class. Captain Wentworth and Admiral Croft seem to embody all the qualities of the ideal gentlemen. With their sense of duty and responsibility, they are placed above the degenerate aristocratic gentlemen, who are represented in the novel by Sir Walter Elliot. The navy

officers are everything the old baronet is not: they are so “neat and careful in all their ways” (P 14), and they display courage in action and courtesy in the company of ladies. The fact that neither Croft nor Wentworth comes from an aristocratic family seems to emphasise the significance of the moral aspect of the term “gentleman”. Although their fathers or forefathers were probably the younger sons of gentry families, Croft and Wentworth do not enjoy such a high status in society which would be a valuable asset *per se* for identifying oneself as a gentleman. Such an approach implies that those who were considered gentlemen were the moral and honourable men of profession rather than the extravagant and narrow-minded aristocracy. In *Persuasion*, Austen seems to emphasize that privileges cannot be separated from responsibilities - an old chivalric tenet, which seems to have fallen into oblivion in the Regency period, and which is revived in the novel by Captain Wentworth and Admiral Croft.

In conclusion, it can be said that the male characters analysed in the present thesis are in full accord with the notion of the English gentleman at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Both moral and social aspect of the term are illustrated in the novels, and Austen has shown that the gentlemanly ideal that had developed through centuries and that was widely cherished, was often subjected to concessions made under the pressure of the norms of the Regency society.

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Resümees

Tartu Ülikool
Inglise filoloogia õppetool

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Inglise džentelmeni erinevaid aspekte Jane Austeni romaanides „Mõistus ja tunded“, „Mansfield Park“ ja „Veenmine“ (Various Aspects of the English Gentleman in Jane Austen's Novels *Sense and Sensibility*, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*)

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Käesolev magistritöö analüüsib inglise džentelmeni kontseptsiooni erinevaid aspekte Jane Austeni romaanides „Mõistus ja tunded“, „Mansfield Park“ ja „Veenmine“. Kuigi Austeni teoseid peetakse laialdaselt eelkõige klassikalisteks romantilisteks romaanideks, pakuvad nad ka väga nüansirikast ülevaadet toleaeegsest inglise maa-aadli ja kõrgema keskklassi eluolust, tuues esile erinevaid arusaamu inglise džentelmeni olemusest. Võrreldes Austeni naistegelastega ei ole romaanide meestegelased pälvinud uurimustes nii ulatuslikult tähelepanu ning neid on harva käsitletud kui džentelmeni kontseptsiooni avaldusi. Magistritöö eesmärgiks ongi vaadelda kas ja kuidas vastavad eelpool mainitud romaanide meespeategelased regendiajal valitsenud inglise džentelmeni ideaalile ja anda panus Austeni teoste paremaks mõistmiseks oma ajastu kontekstis.

Termin „inglise džentelmen“ ei ole kaugeltki üheselt defineeritav. Ühelt poolt hõlmab termin sotsiaalset aspekti, mille kohaselt on džentelmen eelkõige aristokraat või maa-aadel, kuuludes seega ühiskonna kõrgemasse ja privilegieritud kihti. Taoline klassifikatsioon ei ole aga pärast keskaega kunagi olnud ühiskonnas prevaleeriv. Järkjärgult on džentelmeni tiitlit omistatud ka kõrgkeskklassi kuuluvatele, teatud erialade nagu kõrgemad vaimulikud, kohtunikud, sõja- ja mereväelased esindajatele. Samuti on terminil „džentelmen“ ka väga tugev moraalne tähendus, mille juured ulatuvad keskaegsesse rüütlikultuuri ja mis kätkeb endas kindlaid isikuomadusi: ideaalne džentelmen peab olema suursugune ja väärikas, vapper, suuremeelne, põhimõttekindel, külalislahke, kohusetundlik jne. Sajandite jooksul on neile rüütlikele omadustele lisandunud veel ka haritus ja kõrgseltskonnas domineerivate kultuursete vestlusteemade laitmatu valdamine. Tõeline džentelmen peab tundma nii kunsti kui kirjandust, valdama keeli ja kõnekunsti, et pakkuda daamidele igati huvitavat ja meeldivat seltskonda. Inglise džentelmeni kontseptsiooni

kujunemist ja arengut sajandite vältel kuni regendiajani vaadeldakse magistritöö esimeses peatükis.

Töö teine ja kolmas peatükk käsitlevad inglise džentelmeni avaldumisvormi romaanides „Mõistus ja tunded“, „Mansfield Park“ ja „Veenmine“, mis selgelt illustreerivad kontseptsiooni erinevaid tahke. Regendiajastule kõige iseloomulikumat ja kurioosemat džentelmeni tüüpi dändit käsitletakse tegelaste John Willoughby, Henry Crawfordi ja Sir Walter Ellioti kaudu. Neile omased rafineeritud arrogants, soov seltskonnas domineerida ja enesekesksus näitavad mainitud tegelasi kui ajastule omase nähtuse, dändismi esindajaid. Baroneti tiitlit kandev Sir Walter kehastab aga vast kõige ilmekamalt beaubrumellikke, dändilikke veidrusi, vastandudes teravalt rüütellikke väärtusi kandvatele mereväelastele admiral Croftile ja kapten Wentworthile. Kuigi dändid-džentelmenid Willoughby, Crawford ja Sir Walter ei vasta džentelmeni ideaalile, mis rõhutab kontseptsiooni moraalselt poolt, aktsepteeritakse neid sellest hoolimata kaasaegses kõrgseltskonnas kui džentelmene, mis selgelt viitab termini „džentelmen“ varieeruvale tähendusele ühiskonnas.

Teine väljapaistev džentelmeni tüüp neis kolmes romaanis on lugupeetud ameteid esindavad džentelmenid. Erinevalt libertiini kuulsust omavast Willoughby'ist ja Crawfordist, kehastavad tulevased vaimulikud Edward Ferrars ja Edmund Bertram omadusi, mis ei ole omased vabameelsele ja pillavale regendiaegsele kõrgseltskonnale, kuid vastavad see-eest suures osas ajastule džentelmeni ideaalile. Edward ja Edmund on mõlemad põhimõttekindlad, vastutustundlikud ja väärivad džentelmenid, rõhutades seega omadusi, mida on džentelmenides alati hinnatud.

Samuti kehastavad termini „džentelmen“ moraalselt aspekti admiral Croft ja kapten Wentworth romaanis „Veenmine“, kes oma laitmatute kommete ja põhimõttekindlusega seljatab aristokraatia ridadesse kuuluva baroneti. Sir Walter, kes omab õigustatult tiitlit „džentelmen“ sotsiaalsest aspektist lähtuvalt, ei vasta selle tiitliga kaasnevatele ideaaliks peetavatele omadustele.

Analüüsi tulemusena selgub, et kuigi džentelmeni ideaal ühiskonnas järjepidevalt eksisteerib, ei leia see regendiajastu kontekstis alati järgimist ning ideaalist eemaldumist ei peeta ka taunitavaks. Termin „džentelmen“ sotsiaalne ja moraalne tähendus ei ole alati kattuvad ning sellest tulenevalt eeldab kontseptsiooni analüüs erinevatest aspektide käsitlust.

Märksõnad: Jane Austen, 19. saj inglise kirjandus, inglise džentelmen