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The Perfect Gentleman

Exploring a Development of Masculine Ideals in
Jane Austen's Heroes

Jenny Rothman
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Centre for Languages and Literature
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Supervisor: Birgitta Berglund

Abstract

The fact that Jane Austen composed and edited her novels during two eventful decades in Britain's history excites an interest to investigate if this has affected the creation of her characters. This thesis explores whether Austen's heroes develop in accordance with a shift in masculine ideals that can be discerned around the turn of the nineteenth century. The masculine ideal for gentlemen can be seen to have transformed from politeness in the eighteenth century to chivalry in the nineteenth century. The aim for the polite gentleman was to please others with his own sociability. Towards the end of the eighteenth century this French inspired ideal was accused of insincerity and effeminacy. Thus, the medieval chivalry was revived as a more patriotic, trustworthy and manly ideal. This study reveals that there is a development in the characteristics of Austen's heroes, which corresponds with the shift from politeness to chivalry. The first of her heroes is a gregarious gentleman who strives to entertain women, whereas the later heroes display more chivalrous qualities, such as sincerity and loyalty. In connection with the heroes' adherence to chivalry, politeness is demonstrated in the anti-heroes who use it as an insincere façade.

Table of contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Historical context..... | 3 |
| Chronology of Jane Austen's novels | 10 |
| Jane Austen's heroes | 11 |
| The charming hero in <i>Northanger Abbey</i> | 11 |
| The heroes between ideals in <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> and <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> | 14 |
| The industrious heroes in <i>Mansfield Park</i> , <i>Emma</i> and <i>Persuasion</i> | 24 |
| Discussion | 35 |
| Conclusion | 39 |
| Works cited | 41 |

Introduction

Jane Austen's novels can be said to circle around the theme of courtship. All of her heroines are at the outset of the novels unmarried and by the end of them married, or about to be married; thus all of the novels involve the heroine's way to matrimony. Though the heroines are to different extents pressured to marry well in terms of wealth and social status, they are still primarily guided by their feelings in the choice of a suitable husband. Consequently, the suitors' personal qualities are of vital importance to the young women they court. The characterisation of Austen's six heroes therefore invites a discussion and analysis of the male ideals in the novels and how those fictitious representations compare with actual masculine ideals in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Austen lived and wrote during years of great turbulence; the period around 1800 was a time of industrialisation, political tumult and war. In 1783 Britain was forced to acknowledge itself beaten in the American War of Independence. Not long after this defeat Britain fought against France in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, which went on from 1793 to 1815 with only one short intermission. Revolutionary trends were also taking place in Britain with appeals for social changes and the gradual rise of the middle class. Whereas Austen's novels were for a long time considered both timeless and apolitical, in 1975 Marilyn Butler stressed the significance of the political climate of Austen's time and put the novels in a historical context, in *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*. Butler's highly influential book has incited critics to consider Austen's texts within a historical and political framework (Sunder Rajan 101).

Although Austen's six novels were all published between 1811 and 1818, dating the composition of her novels is less straightforward. In the mid-1790s Austen made her first attempts at novel writing with early versions of *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey*. These manuscripts were later revised, but to what extent remains uncertain. *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* and *Persuasion* were written successively in the years 1811 to 1816 (Sutherland, "Chronology" 12-19). Thus Austen composed her novels in the course of at least twenty years, during the chaotic and eventful period around the turn of the nineteenth century. It seems reasonable to assume that this considerable length of time and the many changes occurring in Britain during those years would have affected the creation and conception of the ideal hero. It is possible that Austen from one novel to the next adjusted the hero's characteristics to conform to the masculine ideal at the time of writing, which would

involve a development of her heroes' qualities. This is indeed an intriguing thought and one that has not been thoroughly explored in Austen studies before.

Michèle Cohen, who has done research on eighteenth-century masculinities, claims that the masculine ideal underwent a transformation period around the turn of the nineteenth century. She argues that politeness was the most important trait of refined masculinity during the eighteenth century. Cohen describes the eighteenth-century polite gentleman as “a man of conversation, distinguished by his civility, good breeding, manners, and his ability to please and make others feel easy” (“Manners” 325). However, according to Cohen politeness gradually became associated with effeminacy and with the French model of gentleman, which meant that politeness declined as an ideal for men in Britain. Instead a new masculine ideal emerged based on the concept of chivalry. The term’s original medieval meaning is connected with knighthood, “knightly skill and practice in arms and martial achievements” as well as “[t]he brave, honourable, and courteous character attributed to the ideal knight; disinterested bravery, honour, and courtesy” (“Chivalry,” def. 3c, 6). Cohen argues that chivalry was revived in the mid- to late eighteenth century as a more British and traditionally manly attribute than politeness.

As an example of her argument Cohen discusses masculinities depicted in one of Austen’s novels. In *Emma* Mr. Knightley can be seen as the embodiment of a nineteenth-century chivalric man, whilst Frank Churchill and Mr. Elton represent eighteenth-century polite men (“Manners” 326-8). This excites curiosity to investigate whether Austen’s other heroes also can be seen to represent the dominant model of refined masculinity at the time of their creation. Since Austen wrote her novels during the period where Cohen discerns an alteration in the masculine ideal, it is conceivable that Austen’s male characters bear witness of this shift. In other words, an Austen novel composed in the 1790s is more likely to have a polite man depicted as a hero, whereas a later Austen novel, like *Emma*, favours a chivalric hero.

This thesis is going to examine Jane Austen’s heroes to see whether the ideal alters from novel to novel. Consequently, all of her novels and hence all of her heroes will be analysed in this study: Edward Ferrars and Colonel Brandon in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811)¹, Fitzwilliam Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Edmund Bertram in *Mansfield Park* (1814), George Knightley in *Emma* (1815), Henry Tilney in *Northanger Abbey* (1818) and Captain

¹ *Sense and Sensibility* is the only one of Jane Austen’s novels that can be said to have two heroines and accordingly two heroes. As the focaliser of the novel Elinor must be considered a heroine, while the considerable space given to Marianne’s story qualifies her as a heroine.

Frederick Wentworth in *Persuasion* (1818). The aim is to explore whether a development can be distinguished in the heroes' personal characteristics from novel to novel, and specifically if Austen's heroes develop in accordance with the gradual shift in masculine ideal that Cohen describes. To broaden the spectrum of male representations the anti-hero in each novel will be discussed in connection with the analysis of the corresponding hero/es. In addition, the thesis will consider whether a change of masculine ideal in the heroes also involves an alteration of the anti-heroes' characteristics.

In this thesis the term anti-hero is not used in the modern sense. Commonly a protagonist who does not possess traditionally heroic traits is referred to as an anti-hero. However, in Austen studies the label anti-hero is occasionally used for the male characters who threaten to distract the heroines' attention from the heroes. Some critics refer to these characters as the villains, but that denomination is rather harsh since not all of them have malicious intentions. They are merely less deserving of the heroines' affection than the heroes, which is why the label anti-hero is more appropriate. Thus, for the purposes of this study the term anti-hero will be used for the male character in each novel who proves to be a less worthy candidate for the heroine's love than the hero.

Historical context

Since this thesis is going to explore the possible development of a masculine ideal in Jane Austen's novels in relation to the ideals of the time, it is essential to first establish what those ideals actually were. An ideal can be said to be reflective of the current social climate and it is, therefore, useful to begin with a brief outline of the novels' historical setting. Consequently, the historical context of the novels will be a point of departure for the discussion of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century ideal refined gentleman.

In 1789 the French Revolution was a fact with the storming of the Bastille. This significant event in French history produced a series of responses in Britain. Edmund Burke expressed strong opposition to the revolution with his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Burke was repulsed by the revolutionaries' harsh treatment of the French king and queen and showed his support for the traditional social order in this conservative piece of writing. There were, however, many in Britain who celebrated France's step towards a more democratic society. Radical writers responded to Burke's *Reflections*; Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* defended the revolution, as did Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* that moreover urged Britain to become a democratic republic. The British support of the

French Revolution produced a concern among the ruling order that rebellion might arise in Britain as well. To guard against conspiracies leading radicals, Paine among others, were charged with treason, but a lack of evidence saved them from conviction. The displeasure with the British government was evidently serious at this point, though it became of secondary importance when Napoleonic France threatened to invade (Greenblatt 2; Porter 130-7).

The wars against France began in 1793, when an imminent threat of invasion from the French army required Britain to mobilise a defence force using civilians. The army and the Royal Navy had to enlist new recruits quickly and in large numbers. Thus, despite the recent critique posed against King George III and those in power they were forced to put the British people's loyalty to the test (Colley 284-7). In spite of the hostile climate the recruitment turned out successful, probably because the dislike for the government did not exceed the dread of being invaded by the French. Moreover, "patriotic rhetoric redescribed the war as a crusade for freedom against the forces of military tyranny" (Colley 310-1). Thus the French Revolutionary Wars, 1793–1802, and the Napoleonic Wars, 1803–1815, brought the British people together against an outside enemy and served to produce a growing sense of patriotism (Colley 4-5, 310).

The turn of the nineteenth century was also a time of great socio-economic changes. There was a great growth in population throughout Britain: between 1750 and 1850 it tripled from six to eighteen million inhabitants (Porter 138-9). This naturally also meant an increase of workforce that was needed in the early stages of the industrial advances. The industrial revolution in the late eighteenth century encouraged workers to move into urban areas. But industrialisation did not only involve the cities: "Agricultural improvement, the construction of canals and better roads, and the development of industry and trade led to a growth in national wealth and a different economy" (Black 185-6). Because of the growing population it became very valuable to own arable land, which meant that formerly common land became enclosed. The landowners were provided with a steady income from the tenants who farmed their land (Black 186-7). This is what for instance Mr. Knightley does in *Emma*; he leases Abbey-Mill Farm, which is a part of his estate, to the Martins.

Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall argue in their comprehensive study of the English middle class from 1780 to 1850 that the provincial middle class was formed during those years: "It was the crises of these decades which brought out common interests and drew its disparate membership together; the vicissitudes of war and trade cycles, the near breakdown of the old Poor Law, the pressure from the growing body of wage labourers" (18).

The French Revolution drew attention to how Britain was governed, breeding opposition to the automatic power given to men of certain heritage and men owning land. Furthermore, the ruling order was criticised for neglecting their duties in favour of revelry (Colley 150-2): “Aristocratic claims for leadership had long been based on lavish display and consumption while the middle class stressed domestic moderation” (Davidoff and Hall 21). Consequently, the revolutionaries’ demands in France appealed to many in the British middling strata who desired independence as well as better rights.

The French Revolution also had a great impact on the British economy; some trades prospered while others diminished, and skilful entrepreneurs could improve their situation in life. It was the ambition for many middle-class people to acquire a higher status for themselves and their children. If they were able to create a large enough fortune they could hope to marry their children into the gentry, as gentry status could be bartered for middle-class wealth (Davidoff and Hall 18-22). Employment in trade was generally considered to “[viti]ate any claims to gentility” (Ellis 416), since a gentleman’s status was determined by his financial independence. The difference of labour marked the greatest discrepancy between these classes and many in the upper class disdained all connection with those involved in trade (Davidoff and Hall 20; Ellis 416-7). This can be seen in *Emma* where the Coles’ recently acquired wealth and their “low origin, in trade,” makes Emma Woodhouse disinclined to socialise with them (194). Moreover, in *Pride and Prejudice* Mr. Darcy is at the outset repelled by Elizabeth Bennet’s low family connections. Mrs. Bennet’s father was an attorney in the village of Meryton and her brother, Mr. Gardiner, is “settled in London in a respectable line of trade” (29).

Although labour was frowned upon by the upper class, there were some professions that could be approved of as gentlemanlike. Occupation in the so-called liberal professions, the Church², the law or medicine, and in the profession of arms, the army or the navy, was considered acceptable for a gentleman. Seeing that only the first-born son could inherit the estate, younger sons, to be able to provide for themselves, needed a respectable profession that would not mar their gentlemanly status (Southam, “Professions” 366). In *Mansfield Park* Mary Crawford expresses surprise at Edmund Bertram’s decision to become a clergyman. To this Edmund replies, “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” (86). As the younger brother Edmund Bertram needs a profession and has chosen the path of the

² In this thesis the Church refers to “The established Church of England [which] is the only church mentioned by Austen” (Southam, “Professions” 368).

Church. A rector in a rural parish would, in addition to his clerical duties, often act as a leader of the local community and actively take part in its social life. The income of clergymen varied; in general the southern part of the country, where Jane Austen's novels take place, was more profitable and the earnings rapidly increased from the end of the eighteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century (Southam, "Professions" 368-9). Miss Crawford's astonishment at Edmund Bertram's choice might partly be caused by an apprehension that he will not receive a high income, although the main reason appears to be that it is not manly enough. She advocates a career in the profession of arms: "It has every thing in its favour; heroism, danger, bustle, fashion" (102). Miss Crawford's evident preference for the army and the navy corresponds with the virility and heroism that was connected with the military professions during the wars against France (Colley 288). Moreover, in aristocratic circles the army was generally the preferred profession and "the navy offered fame and fortune" (Southam, "Professions" 366). The latter profession certainly has brought Captain Wentworth in *Persuasion* both increased wealth and higher social status.

As previously mentioned Cohen claims that there is a general agreement among historians researching masculinity in this period that the concept of gentleman altered around the turn of the nineteenth century and that this influenced the notion of masculinity ("Manners" 312). The somewhat vague meaning of the word gentleman requires some clarification. In his investigation of men's role in the British polite society of 1660 to 1800 Philip Carter mentions that the definition of gentleman expanded during the seventeenth hundreds. Traditionally the title of gentleman only applied to men in the upper class, and was a sign of their social status. During the eighteenth century the concept of gentlemanliness became more associated with refined manners, which meant that the right conduct could give a man gentlemanly status (6). Nevertheless, an upper-class man would, of course, automatically be labelled gentleman regardless of his behaviour, that is his actual gentlemanliness.

Cohen argues that the polite gentleman represented the masculine ideal during the eighteenth century. The core of politeness was the ability to please others (Cohen, "Manners" 313). Consequently, the polite gentleman would endeavour to gain a reputation as agreeable. To achieve this he needed to dress, converse and conduct himself in a polite manner (Carter 22, 61). Advice on these matters could be found in the abundance of literary texts, such as magazines and conduct books, which provided behavioural guidance. The conduct writings can be said to give glimpses of the genteel society: "Few would now question the contribution especially of purpose-written behavioural guides in developing a series of eighteenth-century

discourses on individual and societal refinement” (Carter 33). Thus, analyses of conduct literature offer apt reflections of masculine ideals for this thesis.

Eighteenth-century British high society was greatly inspired by French trends, and the style of clothes in Britain followed the French fashion. To dress fashionably was popular, but not necessary in order to be considered a gentleman. The crucial requirement for gentlemen’s clothing was that it should be presentable (Carter 61; Colley 165). The art of conversation was likewise inspired by the French, who were famed for their eloquence. Contrastingly, the English were abroad known for their taciturnity, which was not an appreciated quality in polite society (Cohen, “Manliness” 48-51). The ability to converse at social gatherings was a requisite skill for the polite gentleman. His conversation should be pleurably interesting and the topics had to be respectable. It was also important to be attentive and to uphold a balance in the discussions by respecting others’ wishes to contribute. Excess of emotion was undesirable and self-control was thus the key to a polite conversation. Ladies’ company in particular was considered to steer a man’s conversational skills in the right direction, since women were thought to possess refinement that could polish men’s manners (Carter 61-9). In the presence of ladies the polite gentleman’s ability to please would be put to the test. The overall impression of a polite gentleman ought to be that of ‘easiness’; however the “‘ease’ of politeness was not relaxing, but the effect of artful mastery over one’s manners and conduct [...]” (Cohen, “Manners” 313). These guidelines clearly show that politeness was not considered an innate quality, but something that a man had to strive to obtain. The acquisition of polite manners was naturally promoted by a good education, which as a result favoured men born into the higher echelons of society.

In the later part of the eighteenth century politeness began to receive criticism for being deceitful. As the polite gentleman exerted himself to *appear* pleasing there was a risk that it was not sincere behaviour, but only a charade used to gain esteem. Outward appearances could be deceptive and thus genuine sentiments that could not be hidden behind a mask of politeness were prized. The man of politeness was, hence, challenged by the man of feeling. While the former controlled his emotions, the latter allowed his feelings to show openly. Varying facial expressions and the display of sighs, trembles and tears characterised the men of sensibility. In spite of the tension between the two models of manhood, sensibility did not rule out politeness as such. Rather, the man of feeling was considered refined because he was sincere (Carter 88-94).

The concern regarding the dubious level of sincerity connected with politeness was one factor that can be said to have caused its decline as an ideal. Further, Cohen holds that the

qualities of politeness were incompatible with the conception of masculine traits. At this time 'inherent' masculinity was commonly regarded as rough and boorish; politeness demanded men to control and polish these "natural" characteristics and thereby achieving gentlemanliness, but this process ironically also diluted their manliness ("Manners"). This developed apprehensions that in the pursuit of pleasing women, gentlemen would become like them. These associations to effeminacy further weakened politeness' position as an ideal. (Cohen, "Manliness" 50). Moreover, the upper class' embrace of French values, which helped shape the polite gentleman, generated disapproval among the lower classes in the late eighteenth century. In wartime cultural influences from the enemy are doubtlessly not appreciated. In the case of the wars against France it was even deemed unpatriotic by many British citizens to imitate French manners (Colley 165-7). The accusation of insincerity along with the fear of effeminacy and the objection to French trends together then appear to have caused politeness to gradually disappear as a masculine ideal.

Colley holds that the British upper class had to reshape its social principles, in connection with the French wars, to prove itself worthy of its status. Gentlemen needed to demonstrate their usefulness as well as their patriotism (166-172). Cohen similarly claims that a call for a "masculine national character" conflicted with the qualities of the polite gentleman ("Manners" 314). The turn of the nineteenth century saw a gradual shift from the ideal of the Frenchified, idle gentleman to the ideal of a British, useful gentleman. The first of these men has been recognised by Cohen as the man of politeness; the second of these men she identifies as the man of chivalry. In his survey of the British revival of medieval chivalry Mark Girouard claims that the occurrence was no coincidence. On the contrary, chivalry was restored "to produce a ruling class which deserved to rule because it possessed the moral qualities necessary to rulers" (261). This accords with Colley's discussion of the criticism posed against the privileged class and the need for them to reform in order to maintain their power. Girouard points out that when Edmund Burke lamented in his *Reflections* that "the age of chivalry is gone," the revival of chivalry was actually just beginning (qtd. in Girouard 19). The chivalric ideal fulfilled the conditions that politeness had lacked. In fact Cohen's key point is that "chivalry provided a vocabulary for refashioning the gentleman as masculine, integrating national identity with enlightenment notions of progress and civilization" ("Manners" 315). The term's direct link to the attributes of an ideal knight together with its origin in the Middle Ages provide a connotation of Britishness. Furthermore, the chivalric knight would protect and defend his country and those in need (Cohen "Manners").

Whereas the essence of politeness can be narrowed down to pleasing, the core of chivalry is more complex to pin down. The revival of the term lessened the martial connection, but emphasised the associations with “manliness, bravery, loyalty, courtesy, truthfulness, purity [and] honor [...]” (Cohen, “Manners” 326). Similarly, Girouard describes the chivalric gentleman as “brave, straightforward and honourable, loyal to his monarch, country and friends, unfailingly true to his word, ready to take issue with anyone he saw ill-treating a woman, a child or an animal” (260). These qualities might not strike one as totally opposed to those of politeness, but it is important to remember that the ideals are not opposites. Rather, it is in the subtle nuances of each ideal that we can perceive differences. Earnestness is one element where the ideals differ; the polite gentleman first and foremost endeavoured to please, possibly at the expense of sincerity, while the chivalric gentleman valued honesty above being pleasing. The various meanings attached to chivalry can broadly be described as altruistic. Contrastingly, good deeds were not essential to the polite ideal.

Though the two ideals coincide in their high esteem for women, they differ in their approach to the opposite sex. Unlike the polite gentleman, the chivalric gentleman was not encouraged to spend time with ladies in order to improve his manners or please them with his conversation. The chivalrous relationship to women was founded on love, which was not confined to pleasing them at social gatherings (Cohen, “Manners” 319-321). In medieval days a knight would prove his love through “performing deeds of valour in her honour and under her inspiration” (Girouard 16). The regard for women was consequently linked with adventurous enterprise, making it indisputably manly (Cohen, “Manners” 320).

The concept of chivalry has an undertone of what could be described as usefulness. The ruling order’s notoriety for abusing its power in the decades around 1800, which Colley as well as Davidoff and Hall point to, is inextricably tied to idleness. The precepts of politeness encouraged gentlemen to socialise above all, which certainly can be interpreted as a carefree and lazy lifestyle. Colley describes upper-class indolence as being in close relation to the criticism of unpatriotic behaviour. Patriotism would inevitably require some kind of service to your country; idleness would, therefore, negate claims to nationalism (170-2). This critical view of upper-class life could be amended in the process of designing a new masculine ideal. Ellis mentions that it in the concerned period became more and more common for landowners to actually become involved in the management of their estates (420). This commitment was probably partly caused by the new economic climate; however, this employment would refute accusations of laziness and show the gentlemen’s value to the British society.

Chronology of Jane Austen's novels

When exploring a development in Jane Austen's fiction it is crucial to elucidate the chronology of her novels. As was mentioned in the introduction, this is somewhat difficult because the publications of her novels do not exactly correspond with her creation of them. The first novel to be published was *Sense and Sensibility* in 1811, followed by *Pride and Prejudice* in 1813, *Mansfield Park* in 1814, *Emma* in 1815 and lastly *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, which were published together posthumously in 1817 although the title page indicated the year 1818.³ Austen wrote *MP*, *E*, and *P* in close proximity to their publication dates, while she started working on *S&S*, *P&P* and *NA* already in the 1790s. Brian Southam endeavours to untangle the mystery surrounding the composition and revision of these three early novels, in *Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts*⁴. Since no original manuscripts exist from the novels, excepting two chapters of an alternative ending to *P*, it is difficult to determine how much Austen changed *S&S*, *P&P* and *NA* before their actual publication. Southam's reconstruction of Austen's writing process builds on surviving family records and letters. *S&S* was probably the first novel to be written around 1795; it was then composed as an epistolary novel titled *Elinor and Marianne*. Revisions in 1797 changed the form and the title, but not the content. *P&P* was written in 1796 and was then called *First Impressions*. Both *S&S* and *P&P* were then reworked more than ten years later, prior to their publication. Concerning the revised edition of *P&P* Austen declared that she had "lop't and crop't" (qtd. in Southam, *Literary Manuscripts* 58) the manuscript, indicating that it was significantly shortened. In 1798 to 1799 Austen composed *NA* and in 1803 successfully sold the manuscript, under the title *Susan*, to a publisher who never ventured to publish it. The copyright was finally bought back in 1816 (Southam, *Literary Manuscripts* 45-62). Before her death Austen prepared an advertisement to *NA* that indicates that no major revisions were made after the manuscript's initial completion: "The public are entreated to bear in mind that thirteen years have passed since [*NA*] was finished, many more since it was begun, and that during that period, places, manners, books, and opinions have undergone considerable changes" (*NA* 13). Apologetically Austen asked her readers to overlook the novel's old-fashioned content.

Kathryn Sutherland discusses the difficulty of dating the composition of the works and mentions two approaches to this issue. Most critics tend to separate the novels into early and

³ Hereafter the novels will be abbreviated as follows: *Emma* *E*, *Mansfield Park* *MP*, *Northanger Abbey* *NA*, *Persuasion* *P*, *Pride and Prejudice* *P&P* and *Sense and Sensibility* *S&S*.

⁴ Hereafter referred to as *Literary Manuscripts*.

late productions with *S&S*, *P&P* and *NA* regarded as early works and *MP*, *E* and *P* as late. This grouping is based on when Austen began composing each novel. This is of course a logical division, but it overlooks the possible reworking of the early novels. The other viewpoint reversely lumps all of the novels, except *NA*, together because of the uncertain amount of revision done to *S&S* and *P&P* before they were finally published (Sutherland, “Chronology” 12-13). Because *NA* most likely is closer to its original form than *S&S* and *P&P* it is regarded as the oldest novel in this thesis. Despite the revisions done to *S&S* and *P&P* it is expected that they have retained their original essence to some extent. The analysis of the novels will therefore be divided into three chapters in this study: The first chapter will discuss the earliest novel, *NA*, the second chapter will examine the early but reworked *S&S* and *P&P* and finally the third chapter will be devoted to the later novels, *MP*, *E* and *P*. To make a potential development easily discernible each hero will be analysed separately and chronologically, according to the novels’ composition, within the three chapters. The analysis will be followed by a short discussion of the possibly shifting masculine ideal that the heroes can be seen to represent.

Jane Austen’s heroes

The charming hero in *Northanger Abbey*

Robert Liddell observes in his study of Jane Austen’s novels that Henry Tilney, the hero of *NA*, is unlike the other Austen heroes. Henry Tilney, Liddell claims, “is given all the charm that we expect to find in the worthless (or not very worthy) young man who appears in the later novels to trouble the heroine’s imagination. [...] Henry has a fluency, a suavity and an address that the ‘good’ heroes lack” (10). Granted, Henry Tilney is charming and his personality is reminiscent of later Austen anti-heroes, but that does not mean that he possesses unconventional heroic traits. Excluding Henry from the category of “good heroes” is to simplify the diversity of Austen’s heroes. Henry Tilney can rather be seen to conform to a different, earlier, masculine ideal than the heroes of the later novels. Of Austen’s heroes Henry Tilney is the one who corresponds with the polite masculine model most markedly.

Henry Tilney undoubtedly enjoys being admired by women. In his first appearance at a ball scene in Bath he playfully guides his conversation with the heroine, Catherine Morland, according to the decorous standard. A multitude of trivial questions are put to Catherine in a hurried style: “Have you been long in Bath, madam?”, “Were you never here before,

madam?”, “Have you yet honoured the Upper Rooms?”, “Have you been to the theatre?”, “To the concert?”, “And are you altogether pleased with Bath?” (26). This cascade of questions shows that Henry Tilney is aware of the rules of politeness and he mockingly conforms to them by making a stock conversation humorous. Prior to this forced interview the conversation between the couple was pleasantly spontaneous. Suddenly Henry appears to remember that he ought to be attentive and show interest in Catherine, which he probably already has done unconsciously in the preceding artless discussion. However, it is Henry Tilney’s belief that he should behave in a certain manner that is significant. It is evident that the sudden change of direction in their dialogue is in fact artificial with Henry “forming his features into a set smile, and affectedly softening his voice [...]” before jokingly interrogating Catherine (26). Like the polite gentleman that he aspires to be, Henry Tilney controls his conversation to please the lady; that Catherine was amused before he made an effort to be entertaining and considerate, is beside the point.

Henry Tilney’s politeness is not primarily founded on benevolence; the politeness he exhibits is first and foremost entertainment. Henry jokes about womankind’s use of their intelligence at the same time as he successfully charms the heroine:

‘Miss Morland, no one can think more highly of the understanding of women than I do. In my opinion, nature has given them so much, that they never find it necessary to use more than half.’ [...] It was no effort to Catherine to believe that Henry Tilney could never be wrong. His manner might sometimes surprize [sic], but his meaning must always be just:—and what she did not understand, she was almost as ready to admire, as what she did. (109)

Despite the audacious twist, Henry Tilney succeeds in delighting Catherine. He gets away with this kind of teasing because he keeps it on a level that is almost incomprehensible to her. Furthermore, Catherine is prepared to be dazzled by anything that Henry utters, since he always makes sure to say amusing and clever things that will fascinate her. Claudia L. Johnson, who approaches Jane Austen’s works from a feminist standpoint, describes Henry Tilney as a man who domineers women, albeit in an equivocal and polished manner. She argues that Henry Tilney’s confidence in his mastery of language enables him to control women (36-44). Indeed, Henry is an eloquent and persuasive conversationalist, which can be a powerful ability. The caricature of gothic fiction that he makes in jest, on the journey to Northanger Abbey, is so forceful that Catherine ultimately confuses fact and fiction. This outcome doubtlessly comes as a surprise to Henry Tilney, who only meant to amuse her.

Since she enjoys reading gothic novels, Henry assumes that his eerie depiction of the abbey will entertain her, which shows that above all Henry Tilney aims to please.

Another attribute that connects Henry Tilney's character with politeness is the interest he takes in clothes: "I always buy my own cravats, and am allowed to be an excellent judge; and my sister has often trusted me in the choice of a gown" (28). Mrs. Allen is impressed by Henry's knowledge of fabrics because, as she observes, most men "take so little notice of those things" (28). She is pleased to hear that Henry assists his sister in this way. Consequently, Henry Tilney's sense of fashion is portrayed as a good quality: He helps Miss Tilney pick out her gowns and he actively takes part in conversations about them with ladies. Although it was not essential for polite gentlemen to follow fashion trends, there were many in polite society who did (Carter 61).

Not only does Henry Tilney conduct himself according to the code of politeness, he advocates it. The anti-hero John Thorpe takes the liberty of engaging Catherine in conversation when she is about to dance with Henry Tilney. This intrusion is unacceptable to Henry who humorously describes "a country-dance as an emblem of marriage" and declares, "those men who do not chuse [sic] to dance or marry themselves, have no business with the partners or wives of their neighbours" (74). He jokingly says that dance partners enter "into a contract of mutual agreeableness [...]" (74) and "the agreeableness, the compliance are expected from him [...]" (75). When John Thorpe impudently interrupts this "contract" he prevents Henry Tilney from establishing an exclusive enjoyable dance with Catherine. Carter points out that dancing was a valuable skill to master for the polite gentleman. Conversational talent together with graceful dancing would promote a polite reputation (166-7). Being disturbed in what must be considered as social performance annoys Henry Tilney because he aspires to entertain his partner and in so doing demonstrate his politeness. However, despite John Thorpe's interruption Henry manages to keep Catherine amused with his wit. Moreover, with his comical description, of how a gentleman ought to behave when dancing, Henry Tilney intimates to Catherine that he conforms to the notion of the refined gentleman, compared to John Thorpe who does not.

Indeed, all of John Thorpe's traits conflict with the notion of what a polite gentleman ought to be. The attribute that can be said to characterise him is egotism; John Thorpe cares for nobody but John Thorpe. His constant disregard for other characters' feelings can be seen in the way he treats his family members. As a greeting he rudely tells his mother that her "quiz of a hat" makes her "look like an old witch", and he observes that his sisters look "very ugly" (48). In contrast to Henry Tilney, who willingly spends time with his sister, John

Thorpe is appalled at the idea of bringing a sister on an outing in his gig. No matter how unwilling Catherine is, John Thorpe at all costs intends to have her next to him in his carriage. He shamelessly lies to Catherine, about seeing the Tilney siblings depart, and “only laughed, smacked his whip, encouraged his horse, made odd noises, and drove on [...]”, when she discovers his trick (84). At a different occasion he even takes the liberty of rearranging Catherine’s plans with Miss Tilney in advance, so that he can have the pleasure of her company on another excursion. All this insolent meddling is based on John Thorpe’s incorrect assumption that Catherine is heiress to Mr. Allen, who he believes to be “as rich as a Jew” (62). Evidently, John Thorpe’s disrespectful conduct makes Catherine dislike him, but, ironically, he does not realise it because of his distorted self-image. He boasts about everything, from owning the fastest horse to being able to predict the outcome of a race. Unfortunately, the only one John Thorpe impresses with his falsehoods is himself. Instead, he fails to conform to the code of politeness by making Catherine feel uncomfortable; quite the reverse from Henry Tilney, whose politeness always puts Catherine at ease.

The heroes between ideals in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*

The masculine ideal in *S&S* can be said to be dependent on whose story we consider it to be, Elinor Dashwood’s or Marianne Dashwood’s. There are good reasons for each sister to be called a heroine; the novel is told from Elinor’s point of view, but Marianne is the one who takes up most space in the story. For this reason both sisters are regarded as heroines in this thesis and, hence, Edward Ferrars as well as Colonel Brandon as heroes. In her discussion of Jane Austen’s male characters Sarah R. Morrison points out that critics “have generally seen something lacking in the portrayal of Edward Ferrars and Colonel Brandon” (339). Morrison argues that the heroes’ inferior role in relation to the heroines has caused this criticism (341). This is a valid argument, but an added explanation is that the characterisation of these two heroes is double-edged. Both Edward Ferrars and Colonel Brandon have conflicting characteristics. That is to say, their unattractive qualities threaten to overshadow their attractive ones.

Though Edward Ferrars is well-liked among his acquaintance, he does not stand out as a strong character. Marianne describes him as more or less vapid:

‘Edward is very amiable, and I love him tenderly. But yet – he is not the kind of man – there is a something wanting – his figure is not striking [...] His eyes want all that spirit,

that fire, which at once announce virtue and intelligence. And besides all this, I am afraid, [...] he has no real taste.’ (17)

Edward Ferrars certainly keeps a low profile throughout the novel and is never depicted as having any obvious charm, unlike the playful Henry Tilney. Then again Edward has a great deal that is troubling him; the pressure from his mother and sister “to see him distinguished – as – they hardly knew what” (16); his secret engagement to Lucy Steele that he wishes did not exist; his impossible love for Elinor; the disclosure of his commitment to Lucy and all the resentment that comes with it. These circumstances certainly have an impact on Edward’s spirits. This is apparent in his long overdue visit to the Dashwood ladies at Barton when he is unable to hide his moroseness and sits “silent and dull” (101).

Edward Ferrars’ dullness is really the outcome of hopelessness. He has no aspirations of becoming the great politician that his mother wants him to be, or driving the barouche that his sister wishes him to own. Far from living up to their expectations, all Edward dreams about is “domestic comfort and the quiet of private life” (16). Judith Wilt identifies a desire among Jane Austen’s male characters to be “somebody”. She argues that the traditional hierarchy of being born as a “somebody”, or a “nobody”, depending on class is fading away in Austen’s times: “Being is a ladder now, one is born nobody and makes oneself somebody by doing something” (61). The rushed and thoughtless engagement to Lucy can be seen as an irrational attempt from Edward Ferrars of trying to achieve something. As a young man he was unable to settle on a profession that would suit the genteel demands of his family and as a result desperately sought the domesticity that he longed for. This is clearly a course of events that he later laments:

‘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 any thing like independence. But unfortunately my own nicety, and the nicety of my friends, have made me what I am, an idle, helpless being. [...] I always preferred the church as I still do. But that was not smart enough for my family. [...] [A]t 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 [...]’ (108-9).

The Ferrars evidently believe in the traditional notion that a gentleman’s gentlemanliness will be confirmed by not working. Edward Ferrars’ self-critical and disapproving tone suggests that he thinks that this is an arrogant upper-class attitude. His ambition to become

“somebody” with a profession was abandoned when he was incited to be idle. Initially idleness was perhaps welcome to him, but ultimately he proposed to the first girl that caught his attention out of, what appears to have been, pure restlessness. Consequently, when Edward has failed to enter the professional world and he has, with an ill-advised betrothal, failed to secure the “domestic comfort” that he wished for, he seems to measure himself as worthless, as a “nobody” in his own opinion.

Edward Ferrars does not assume that his genteel birth makes him special and more important than men of inferior class. His low self-esteem is caused by a sense of defeat; he has not proved by his actions that he is worthy of the epithet gentleman. What Edward fails to recognise is that it is not a lack of achievement that tarnishes his gentlemanliness; it is rather his deficient manner of dealing with failure that is harmful. His melancholy is clearly perceptible to the Dashwoods who all endeavour to cheer him up. By not concealing that he is miserable he does not live up to the standard of a polite gentleman, who ought to be the one who pleases the women instead of receiving the pleasing from them. Conscious as Edward is of his sullen reticence he blames it on shyness and what he calls his “natural awkwardness [sic]” (100). A man who additionally feels that “gaiety never was a part of [his] character”, in all probability deems the polite mission, of pleasing others with his own sociability, a daunting obligation (99).

In his depressed state of mind Edward Ferrars does not think that he can please anybody. However, when he becomes acquainted with Elinor both of their families discern a mutual attraction between them. Even Elinor is convinced of his regard for her: “His affection was all her own. She could not be deceived in that” (147). Indeed Elinor has interpreted Edward’s feelings correctly; but he incorrectly assumes that she does not reciprocate his love. In retrospect he says to Elinor, “because my *faith* was plighted to another, there could be no danger in my being with you [...] The danger [was] my own; I [was] doing no injury to anybody but myself” (394). Yet Edward Ferrars’ suppositions lead to an unfortunate situation for Elinor who is hoping for a declaration of love from him, one that Edward cannot give her because he feels obligated to keep his promise to Lucy. That the impropriety of spending time with Elinor would only harm himself is not only an incorrect conjecture, but also a naïve one. His fiancée is made jealous by the interest he shows another woman and Elinor is misled by his attention. If Lucy had not broken off their engagement it would have led to heartbreaking consequences for Elinor. For Johnson, Edward Ferrars’ conduct is comparable to the anti-hero’s, John Willoughby’s, towards Marianne and she describes both of them as “weak, duplicitous, and selfish” (58). These are rather severe charges and in Edwards’ defence he

honourably stands by his betrothal to a woman he no longer loves. This constancy connects with the loyalty prescribed to the chivalric ideal and markedly separates Edward Ferrars from the dishonest Willoughby. Edward's persistence in honouring an engagement he regrets making, which he could easily break, as it is secret, shows that he is unselfish and loyal. It is thus in fact Edward Ferrars' steadfastness that threatens to spoil both his own and Elinor's happiness. Contrastingly, Willoughby not only deserts a woman that he has seduced and impregnated, he also consciously flirts with Marianne, in the first stages of their acquaintance, without having any intentions of marrying her; whereas Edward Ferrars only unintentionally encourages Elinor's affection for him.

An appropriate description of Edward Ferrars' character is that he is flawed. His values are in conflict with those of his family's and he is a troubled young man because of it. He is unable to hide his worries and as a consequence lacks the social agreeableness of the polite ideal. With Elinor's guidance, however, Edward's slight failings can be rectified. Cohen highlights that "the presence of women was pivotal for men to achieve politeness" ("Manliness" 47). In Edward Ferrars' first visit to Barton the Dashwood ladies for one thing ease his depression: "He received the kindest welcome from [Mrs. Dashwood]; and shyness, coldness, reserve could not stand against such a reception" (96). The women curb Edward Ferrars' bad temper with their gentleness. Furthermore, Elinor smoothly guides Edward into making sensible decisions: She makes him realise the prudence of letting go of his bitterness and be reconciled with his mother. The positive influence Elinor and her female family members have on Edward's characteristics draws attention to women's role in the development of a gentleman. As a hero Edward Ferrars is not perfect, but he has the potential of improving with some direction from the heroine, especially since the troubles that weighed on his mind are removed. It is also important to remember Edward Ferrars as a loyal character, although that loyalty at first functioned as a hindrance in the union with the heroine.

In the relationship between Marianne and Colonel Brandon the roles are reversed; the heroine is impetuous, whilst the hero is calm and sensible. Marianne is at first repelled by Colonel Brandon's traits, whereas he is attracted to hers. As a man "on the wrong side of five and thirty" and who is both "silent and grave" he initially has no hope of captivating the young and vivacious Marianne (36). Colonel Brandon literally and figuratively lacks youthfulness and by alluding to his own "present forlorn and cheerless gravity" he shows that he is aware of it (218). What he judges as a deficiency in his own character, he values in a woman's disposition. In a conversation concerning Marianne he declares, "there is something so amiable in the prejudices of a young mind [...]" (59). Unfortunately for Colonel Brandon

Marianne's "prejudices" are against his age and personality. So far Colonel Brandon is an improbable hero; his dullness is, however, counterbalanced by his selfless and benevolent acts.

When Colonel Brandon hears the rumour of Edward Ferrars' misfortunes he not only sympathises with him but also decides to assist him. The schism that Colonel Brandon has suffered in his own family makes him empathise with a gentleman in a similar situation. The Colonel's offer to Edward Ferrars of the rectory of Delaford reveals his compassionate nature. Johnson regards this gesture as conflicting with the conventional rules of the patriarchal structure, where support is only required within the immediate family. Johnson demonstrates this attitude with John Dashwood's treatment of his stepmother and half sisters. After deliberating with his wife, John Dashwood concludes that as he is only related to the Dashwood ladies as stepson and half brother, he cannot be expected to provide for them. Colonel Brandon's generosity towards a distant acquaintance therefore strikes John Dashwood as highly extraordinary (Johnson 52-3, 69-70). Elinor is also surprised at the Colonel's kindness: "There are not many men who would act as he has done. [...] I never was more astonished in my life" (304). The fact that Colonel Brandon's benevolent gesture is unusual makes it significant. Had John Dashwood followed his dying father's request of caring for his female relations, it would probably not have been rated as an exceptional act of kindness, but as an anticipated sharing of the inheritance. Unlike John Dashwood, Colonel Brandon does not resolve where to bestow his aid based on the issue of kinship. The Colonel chooses to help another gentleman because he considers him worthy of the assistance he can provide.

The only obstacle for Colonel Brandon to overcome is how to convey his proposal in a respectable manner, so as not to offend Edward Ferrars. Out of consideration for Edward Ferrars Elinor is asked to communicate the proposition. In spite of the Colonel's discretion, however, Edward Ferrars does not show genuine gratitude. Indeed, the very measure that Colonel Brandon takes to avoid giving offence does the exact opposite. Since Elinor acts as a messenger Edward Ferrars draws the conclusion that Colonel Brandon is courting her, and he therefore becomes jealous and as a result ungrateful. Only when Elinor agrees to marry him does he realise that his jealousy was unfounded. Consequently he wishes "to have an opportunity of convincing [Colonel Brandon] that he no longer resented his giving him the living of Delaford" (394). Edward Ferrars admits to Elinor, "after thanks so ungraciously delivered as mine were on the occasion, he must think I have never forgiven him for offering" (394). Though Edward Ferrars acknowledges that he has not shown proper appreciation, he

does so only when his problems are solved. If his suspicions instead had been correct he might not have regretted his resentment. Fortunately, Colonel Brandon is charitable and Edward Ferrars has not lost his good opinion.

During Marianne's illness Colonel Brandon's goodness proves beneficial for several other characters. Mr. Palmer is grateful that Colonel Brandon stays at Cleveland to support Elinor; Mrs. Jennings is pleased that he can play cards with her during lonely evenings; most importantly, Elinor is thankful for the comfort that he gives her and her mother. Though this episode could conceivably work in Colonel Brandon's favour in terms of gaining Marianne's esteem through acting nobly towards her family, he does not have any such ulterior motives. Rather, his concern for Marianne and her whole family makes him desirous to be of service to them. According to Mrs. Dashwood the Colonel "thinks Marianne's affection too deeply rooted for any change in it under a great length of time, and even supposing her heart again free, is too diffident of himself to believe, that with such a difference of age and disposition, he could ever attach her" (361). Even though Colonel Brandon believes that his chances with Marianne are slim, his actions show that his love is not dependent on her reciprocating his feelings. In other words, his concern for her well-being exceeds his hopes of becoming her husband. It is therefore no surprise that, contrary to what Mrs. Jennings supposes, he becomes "more serious and thoughtful than usual", instead of happy, when he hears that Willoughby has deserted Marianne (212).

Colonel Brandon's good deeds present him as a considerate, honourable, trustworthy and constant character. All of these qualities echo those of the chivalric ideal. Still there is something in Colonel Brandon's character that clashes with this model. His personality and his flannel waistcoat are better suited to play at cards with Mrs. Jennings than to charm Marianne with courageous enterprise. Basically Colonel Brandon is slightly dull and this dampens his attraction as a hero. Both he and Edward Ferrars are portrayed in a manner that does not correspond unequivocally with a specific masculine ideal. They lack the charisma of an ideal knight, while they are imperfect versions of the polite gentleman. It should be noted however, that, similar to how Edward Ferrars can be transformed by Elinor's guidance, Marianne appears to remedy Colonel Brandon's sombreness: "[H]er regard and her society restored his mind to animation, and his spirits to cheerfulness [...]" (406). Thus, the heroines' influence suggests that these heroes are chivalric gentlemen in the making.

Although Colonel Brandon's behaviour is commendable, it is not depicted as typically heroic. Instead the anti-hero's entry in the story has all the bustle of a gallant act. Like a knight in shining armour Willoughby comes to the injured heroine's rescue, and carries her

home in his arms through the pouring rain. At this stage, Willoughby is to all appearances the hero of the novel with “[h]is manly beauty and more than common gracefulness [...]” (46). In addition to this he is energetic and jovial, and in contrast to the true heroes of *S&S*, Willoughby comes across as a charming character, whose presence enlivens any social gathering. The combination of Willoughby’s external appearance and his behaviour together meet the requirements of the polite ideal. In his conversations with Marianne he keeps to topics that she takes pleasure in. Their taste in music, dancing and literature is said to be “strikingly alike”, but, ironically, Willoughby “acquiesce[s] in all her decisions” (50). Willoughby agrees with Marianne’s views because it pleases her and she is attracted to him because of it. Before his deception is confirmed, Mrs. Dashwood rhetorically asks Elinor, “Is he not a man of honour and feeling?” (86). Since Willoughby performs the mission of politeness so well, his deceit is unexpected by most of the other characters. His display of emotions has made Mrs. Dashwood mistake him for a sincere man of feeling, when in actuality he represents the gentleman who uses politeness as a disguise for insincerity. Willoughby lacks the vital attribute that instead makes Colonel Brandon and Edward Ferrars the heroes of *S&S*, namely loyalty.

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Out of all Jane Austen’s heroes Fitzwilliam Darcy in *P&P* is initially introduced as the most disagreeable one. Although the community of Meryton initially approves of Mr. Darcy, due to his attractive appearance and considerable wealth, he quickly loses their approbation:

Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien; and the report which was in general circulation [...] of his having ten thousand a year. [...] [H]e was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased [...]

(12).

Clearly it is not enough to be handsome and rich to retain a good reputation in Meryton. Mr. Darcy’s arrogance causes displeasure, but then again he has no aspirations of becoming popular in the lowly society of a country village. When Mr. Darcy does not have the inclination to dance he chooses not to, even though, as Elizabeth Bennet informs us,

“gentlemen were scarce” (170). Clearly he does not aim to please for the sake of pleasing in the manner of Henry Tilney.

In conversation he shows the same attitude, as he continually ignores other characters’ wishes to engage him in conversation: Sir William Lucas “paused in hopes of an answer; but his companion was not disposed to make any [...]” (26). Also Caroline Bingley’s attempts to make Mr. Darcy converse, when he is not inclined to, prove futile: “[S]he was perpetually either making some inquiry, or looking at his page. She could not win him, however, to any conversation; he merely answered her question, and read on” (54). Mr. Darcy is uncommunicative to say the least and his reluctance to satisfy society’s expectations of him opposes the polite ideal: “Taciturnity was the antithesis of politeness and sociability [...]”, according to Cohen who argues that the English were known for their taciturnity (“Manliness” 48). With the French influences of the eloquent polite ideal during the first half of the eighteenth century, gentlemen were encouraged to overcome that trait. However, in the latter half of the eighteenth century taciturnity began to be appreciated for “strength of mind and manly restraint” (“Manliness” 57) and was then seen as a symbol of English manliness (“Manliness” 48-57). Even though Mr. Darcy’s conduct is not valued in that way he can at least not be accused of having an insincere façade, unlike the smooth-talking anti-hero George Wickham who charms the women in Meryton. Ironically, Mr. Darcy’s reserve essentially enables Wickham to slander his reputation with the heroine. When Mr. Darcy finally learns of the falsehoods Wickham has spread he significantly redeems himself with a letter instead of an oral elucidation.

The enthusiasm that the stationing of a militia regiment in Meryton generates corresponds with Colley’s description of the bustle occasioned by the mobilisation of troops, during the French Wars: “An unprecedented number of uniformed males, marching, parading and engaging in mock battles in every region of Great Britain brought a pleasant *frisson* of excitement into many normally quiet and deeply repetitive female lives” (257). To unmarried young women’s delight, gallant soldiers dressed in handsome red coats suddenly storm the rural village of Meryton. The fact that Wickham wears a uniform is, therefore, an instant attraction to at least the two youngest of the Bennet sisters. As it turns out he is a good conversationalist too; Elizabeth believes, “that the commonest, dullest, most threadbare topic might be rendered interesting by the skill of the speaker” (75). This conversational talent Wickham uses as a tool to gain society’s approval and Elizabeth’s trust. His eagerness to tell her about his connection with Mr. Darcy is deceptive. Wickham knows that Mr. Darcy is generally disliked in Meryton, which means that Elizabeth in all probability will believe an

account to that gentleman's disadvantage. Wickham's concocted tale is convincingly detailed and Elizabeth later says to her sister Jane, "names, facts, every thing mentioned without ceremony.—If it be not so, let Mr. Darcy contradict it. Besides, there was truth in his looks" (85). Yet, Wickham knows that contradiction is unlikely to come from a man as taciturn as Mr. Darcy. Outward appearances allow Wickham to successfully hide his own villainy at the same time as he blackens Mr. Darcy's character. Since Wickham behaves pleasantly, while Mr. Darcy acts pompously, Elizabeth incorrectly believes that Wickham must be the honourable one of the two.

The pride that Mr. Darcy exhibits is objectionable, but what causes most offence for Elizabeth is his interference in the courtship between her sister Jane and Charles Bingley. After Elizabeth has refused Mr. Darcy's proposal of marriage she questions him about his role in Mr. Bingley's sudden distance, to which he replies: "I have no wish of denying that I did every thing in my power to separate my friend from your sister, or that I rejoice in my success. Towards *him* I have been kinder than towards myself" (187). Mr. Darcy evidently feels that he has done Mr. Bingley a favour. According to his cousin, Colonel Fitzwilliam, Mr. Darcy thinks that he has "saved a friend from the inconveniences of a most imprudent marriage [...]" (181). In Mr. Darcy's own opinion he has thus acted loyally; he has prevented a friend from making what he believed to be a mistake. Nevertheless, his imagined loyalty towards his friend is entirely founded on his own set of values. Mr. Darcy is appalled by the Bennets' inferior status and the improper behaviour shown by some of its family members, which he bluntly lets Elizabeth know in connection with his proposal. Consequently, he feels that he demeans himself when he asks her to marry him, which is what he feels that he nobly hindered Mr. Bingley from doing.

Elizabeth's rebuff of Mr. Darcy causes him to reassess his values. He had haughtily assumed that any woman of subordinate status would be thrilled to receive an offer of marriage from him. Elizabeth is not "insensible to the compliment of such a man's affection [...]" (*P&P* 185), but she rejects Mr. Darcy on the basis of his "arrogance, [...] conceit, and [...] selfish disdain of the feelings of others [...]" (*P&P* 188). Contrary to what Mr. Darcy is used to, Elizabeth judges him by his manners and not his standing. As Marilyn Butler points out, the refusal humbles Mr. Darcy's pride. He has to learn "that we have no innate worth, either of social status or abilities. We have to earn our right to consideration by respect for others, and continuous watchfulness of ourselves" (206). What really seems to bother Mr. Darcy about the rejection is that Elizabeth thinks that he has not behaved in a "gentleman-like manner" (*P&P* 188). Since Mr. Darcy is an upper-class man he takes his gentlemanly status

for granted and as a gentleman it should be a matter of course that he behaves as one. Elizabeth's estimation that he does not eventually makes him realise that his conduct does not live up to the standards of gentlemanliness. Mr. Darcy undoubtedly meets the criteria of a gentleman in terms of social rank, but he has yet to learn the requirements of the gentleman of manners.

In the interval between the rejected proposal and the unexpected meeting at Pemberley Mr. Darcy has, to Elizabeth's astonishment, adopted a more sociable behaviour. The unexpected encounter is preceded by the housekeeper's favourable account of her master's character, which implies that Mr. Darcy has always been complaisant towards family, friends and employees. Indeed, his affectionate solicitude for his sister Georgiana undeniably shows that he is a considerate brother. Yet, the representation of Mr. Darcy as thoughtful differs from Elizabeth's impression of him, because as Johnson argues, "Darcy's sense of self-consequence is characterized by a haughty determination to be mortified by everyone outside his small circle" (80). In order to become a suitable husband to Elizabeth he needs to expand his respect to people outside of this circle (Johnson 90). However, Mr. Darcy's defence of his unsociable ways, "I am ill qualified to recommend myself to strangers", might actually be true (171). Yet as Colonel Fitzwilliam aptly comments: "[H]e will not give himself the trouble" (171). Mr. Darcy's hospitable reception of Elizabeth and her aunt and uncle, the Gardiners, at his estate is a result of him actually giving himself the trouble to be convivial. Previously Mr. Darcy disdained these relatives in Elizabeth's family solely because of their belonging to the professional class. Thus, he no longer judges people by their social standing. Mr. Darcy's character is of course further redeemed by his invaluable assistance in arranging a wedding between Lydia Bennet and Wickham. Mr. Darcy takes full responsibility for their elopement, as he could have prevented it by making Wickham's true character known beforehand. By insisting that Mr. Gardiner takes the credit for his own role in the affair Mr. Darcy shows his benevolent side. He spares the Bennet family, Mr. Bennet in particular, from feeling indebted to him. It is a good deed worthy of the description chivalrous. Moreover, Mr. Darcy rectifies his interference in Mr. Bingley's marriage plans and admits that he acted disrespectfully. Thus, Mr. Darcy not only modifies his behaviour, but he recognises his own faults, which shows that he is humble.

In *S&S* it is implied that the heroines will improve Edward Ferrars' and Colonel Brandon's characters by prudence and vivacity, respectively, after the novel's ending. In *P&P* Mr. Darcy adjusts his shortcomings before the book closes. The Mr. Darcy that is presented in the third volume of *P&P* is significantly different from the Mr. Darcy that is described in the

first two volumes. The change is all due to Elizabeth who opens his eyes to his distorted self-importance. Mr. Darcy acknowledges her influence upon his character, to Elizabeth herself: “You taught me a lesson [...] By you, I was properly humbled. [...] You shewed [sic] me how insufficient were all my pretensions to please a woman worthy of being pleased” (349). The effect Elizabeth’s words have on Mr. Darcy’s temperament is thus reminiscent of women’s function in the shaping of the polite gentleman. Elizabeth’s criticism induces Mr. Darcy to be more companionable, to make more of an effort to be pleasant to other people. This is not to say that Mr. Darcy transforms into a polite gentleman; rather, he makes an effort to show the chivalrous qualities that he already possesses. Thus, the rejection from Elizabeth serves as a catalyst for the uncovering of Mr. Darcy’s chivalrous side that initially was hidden behind his impolite manners.

The industrious heroes in *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*

As the first novel composed in Jane Austen’s mature years *MP* has repeatedly been regarded by critics as her “most complex and profound” work (Sutherland, introduction to *MP* xi). It is also the most sombre of her novels and the hero, Edmund Bertram, is unlike the heroes of the earlier more light-hearted novels. What distinguishes Edmund Bertram’s character is to a great extent his choice of profession, namely the Church. Though *NA*’s Henry Tilney is a clergyman and *S&S*’s Edward Ferrars becomes one, their choice of profession does not characterise them as heroes. In contrast, Edmund Bertram’s “strong good sense and uprightness of mind, bid most fairly for utility, honour, and happiness to himself and all his connections. He was to be a clergyman” (21). The opinion that Edmund is fit to be useful chimes with the upper class’ reassessment of its set of values around the turn of the nineteenth century. As a Christian leader of a parish Edmund Bertram will confirm his worthiness as a gentleman through his usefulness in society. Moreover, Edmund is not only becoming a clergyman because a lack of fortune demands it, but for the reason that he is well suited to the task.

Righteousness is a prominent trait in Edmund Bertram’s character and one appropriate for the Church. Edmund takes his forthcoming clerical duties seriously; he says that a clergyman “has the charge of all that is of the first importance to mankind, [...] the guardianship of religion and morals, and consequently of the manners which result from their influence” (86). For Edmund Bertram being a clergyman is not just a label that protects him against accusations of laziness and that provides him with an income. It is the responsibility

that comes with that label that is important to Edmund. He contests the judgement, ventilated by Mary Crawford (ch. 11), that all clergymen are idle. Southam discusses this charge against the clergy and points out that it was not uncommon for a clergyman at the time to serve in more than one parish; in order “to make the best use of his time and money” (“Professions” 370). Trying to earn as much money as possible, with as little exertion as possible, is certainly not in line with Edmund Bertram’s character. He opposes needless extravagance in contrast to the anti-hero Henry Crawford who advocates it. Edmund dismisses Henry Crawford’s insistence on the necessity of radically modernising his future parsonage Thornton Lacey: “I think the house and premises may be made comfortable, and given the air of a gentleman’s residence without any very heavy expense, and that must suffice me [...]” (224). Considering that his older brother’s, Tom Bertram’s, profligate lifestyle has decreased Edmund’s intended income, it is understandable that he promotes thrift.

Morrison points to the fact that Jane Austen’s heroes seldom are “presented as the professed lovers of the heroines” (344). Often the heroine has to witness when the hero “pays court to another woman” (344). This observation is most germane to the circumstances in Edmund Bertram and Fanny Price’s relationship in *MP*, where the hero is expressly attracted to another woman. Whereas other Austen heroines suspect that the hero prefers another lady, Fanny knows that Edmund Bertram is enamoured of Mary Crawford. His feelings for Fanny are on the other hand chiefly brotherly.

Edmund Bertram was the one who made the ten-year-old Fanny feel comfortable in her new home at Mansfield Park. Through his benevolence Edmund becomes Fanny’s friend and protector and he is her voice when she does not to stand up for herself. This can be exemplified with the concern he shows for her feeble health. Edmund persuades her to conquer her fear of horses so that she actually learns to enjoy riding, and in addition the exercise benefits her health. When Fanny’s grey pony passes away Edmund is the one who insists that it needs to be replaced: “‘Fanny must have a horse,’ was the resolute declaration with which he opposed whatever could be urged by the supineness of his mother, or the economy of his aunt, to make it appear unimportant” (35).

The attention Edmund Bertram gives Mary Crawford, however, makes him neglect his solicitude for Fanny. As Butler puts it: “Edmund, who has always been considerate of Fanny, is now seduced by his physical delight in Mary into forgetting her” (223). Edmund quickly falls for Miss Crawford who is “remarkably pretty” and has “lively and pleasant” manners (40). Her vigour and outspokenness easily outshine Fanny’s timid character. Prior to the Crawford siblings’ arrival to Mansfield Park Edmund prioritises Fanny’s needs, but Miss

Crawford's presence changes this. The issue of Fanny's riding is, for instance, not as important to Edmund when Miss Crawford takes pleasure in the use of the mare. Edmund's shift of priority is perceptible to Fanny: "Edmund and Miss Crawford both on horseback, riding side by side, [...] cheerful beyond a doubt, for the sound of merriment ascended even to her. It was a sound which did not make *her* cheerful; she wondered that Edmund should forget her, and felt a pang" (64). Although Edmund asks Fanny if she minds sharing the horse with Miss Crawford, the request in itself is a diminution of his former consideration. It was he who insisted on the necessity for Fanny to have a horse at her exclusive disposal, but that is forgotten when Miss Crawford sparkles on the horse's back. Similarly, in the visit to Sotherton Edmund leaves Fanny fatigued on a bench, promising to be back within a few minutes, but instead he and Miss Crawford are gone for an entire hour pleasantly exploring the park.

Edmund Bertram's infatuation with Mary Crawford also draws attention to his moral principles, and her influence makes them waver. His mind is torn "between Miss Crawford's claims and his own conduct" (*MP* 150). The episode with the play demonstrates how his initial strong moral standpoint gradually relaxes in the company of Miss Crawford. In Sir Thomas Bertram's absence Edmund is presented as the more principled of the two Bertram brothers, by assuming the responsibility for upholding his father's rules. Although Edmund is unable to convince his elder brother of the imprudence of staging a play, he shows his disapproval by declaring that he will not be involved in it. As a temptress Miss Crawford indirectly encourages Edmund to join the ensemble as the lover to her own part. This does not persuade Edmund, but when the lady expresses concern that she might have to act with a stranger he reconsiders. It is a moral dilemma for Edmund; he does not want to promote a scheme he dislikes, but partly because he is desirous to keep the acting within the smallest possible circle and partly because he wants to spare Miss Crawford from unease, Edmund resolves to take a part. This decision is certainly not agreeable to Edmund, yet practising scenes with Miss Crawford exhilarates him: "Edmund was in spirits from the morning's rehearsal, and little vexations seemed every where smoothed away" (158). Besides enjoying the preparation for his own performance, Edmund also tries to persuade Fanny to act even though he is well aware that she does not want to. Thus, when Edmund joins the play Miss Crawford succeeds in making him enjoy it and he seems to forget his prior censure.

For Edmund Bertram, Mary Crawford's joyful nature and general desirability serve to compensate for her loose morals. Although her behaviour repeatedly strikes him as reprehensible, he convinces himself that it is only her conduct that is deficient and not her

mind. Only when Miss Crawford fails to express proper disgust, at her brother and Maria Bertram's illicit love affair, does Edmund choose to resist her charms: "My eyes are opened," he tells Fanny (423). In the end Edmund decides that instead Fanny's "warm and sisterly regard for him would be foundation enough for wedded love" (436). Edmund thus finally values high morals above physical attraction, which presents him as a man of morals who stands by his beliefs. Even though a modern reader might not regard righteousness as an exceptionally attractive quality in a hero, in *MP* Edmund Bertram's sense of morality is represented as a highly desirable trait since he manages to make two young women fall in love with him. Furthermore, Edmund's actions show that he is morally equipped to become the leader of a congregation. This can be linked to the revival of chivalry, which was an attempt to demonstrate that, "Gentlemen were to run the country because they were morally superior" (Girouard 261). Consequently, the importance Edmund Bertram attaches to moral standards characterises him as a chivalric hero.

The anti-hero Henry Crawford conversely disregards ethics in favour of enjoyment. His sister exclaims, "He is the most horrible flirt that can be imagined" (41). Her comment proves justified when Henry Crawford consciously begins to charm the Bertram sisters simultaneously. He does not scruple to flirt with a betrothed woman and entices Maria Bertram to disregard her fiancé's feelings. Henry Crawford appears to consider an engagement as the ideal circumstance for flirtation: "An engaged woman is always more agreeable than a disengaged. She is satisfied with herself. Her cares are over, and she feels that she may exert all her powers of pleasing without suspicion. All is safe with a lady engaged; no harm can be done" (43). What presumably is far more important to Henry Crawford than the fact that a betrothal protects a flirtatious woman, is the possibility for him to flirt without having to worry about the consequences of such conduct. With a single woman he is in danger of exciting anticipations of a proposal, which is why he regards Julia Bertram's jealousy of her sister as "a lucky occurrence" (148). It thrills Henry Crawford to make women fall in love with him and initially his ambition to make "a small hole in Fanny Price's heart" is simply an exciting pastime for him (212). However, Fanny's modesty and gentleness make her impervious to his blandishments, and this makes him realise that she would be the perfect spouse. To attract a woman of Fanny's moral fibre Henry Crawford must demonstrate genuine goodness. His resolution to make himself worthy of Fanny's regard is sincere, but ultimately, "the temptation of immediate pleasure was too strong for a mind unused to make any sacrifice to right [...]" (*MP* 434). It is a lack of perseverance that makes Henry Crawford elope with Maria; he does not have the patience to stay constant to Fanny.

Although he seems attached to Fanny, he cannot resist the excitement of making a married woman his next conquest. It is a choice between pleasure and propriety and Henry Crawford chooses the first, whereas Edmund Bertram chooses the second.

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As was mentioned in the introduction Cohen's example of a chivalric gentleman in literature is George Knightley in *E*. His very name is linked to the chivalric ideal; he is called Mr. Knightley because he possesses characteristics that are reminiscent of those connected with the ideal knight. Cohen even argues that "Mr. Knightley's most outstanding trait is that he is never concerned to please" ("Manners" 326). Mr. Knightley is always sincere and accordingly he does not form his manners to satisfy others in order to gain their esteem. For other characters his honesty can occasionally be unpleasant, particularly for the heroine Emma Woodhouse. He aptly points out to Emma that she dislikes Jane Fairfax, "because she saw in her the really accomplished young woman, which she wanted to be thought herself [...]" (156). Moreover, throughout the novel Mr. Knightley rebukes Emma when he disapproves of her behaviour. He does not mince his words when she has indirectly persuaded her friend, Harriet Smith, to reject a proposal of marriage: "Till you chose to turn her into a friend, her mind had no distaste for her own set, nor any ambition beyond it. [...] If she has it now, you have given it. You have been no friend to Harriet Smith, Emma" (61). Mr. Knightley's remarks can be disagreeable to hear, nevertheless they are apposite and he does not pass judgement to be hurtful. Quite the reverse, Emma knows he reproves her "with an endeavour to improve her, and an anxiety for her doing right [...]" (389). Mr. Knightley is candid with Emma because he believes that she needs to hear those uncomfortable truths from someone, even though, as Cohen puts it, "he risks losing her" ("Manners" 326) with his relentless frankness.

Exaggerated gallantry must come at the price of sincerity and for this reason Mr. Knightley is no advocate of flattery: "Emma knows I never flatter her" (12). However, Emma receives plenty of adulation from other male characters, who do not value candour as highly as Mr. Knightley. The clergyman Mr. Elton and the anti-hero Frank Churchill always have a compliment in store for Emma. Whereas Emma perceives that Mr. Elton's manners towards her can be "unnecessarily gallant", she does not see through Frank Churchill's polite façade (127). When Frank Churchill finally visits his father in Highbury he is aware that the visit is long overdue. The manner in which he remedies this neglect seems to be artfully

premeditated: He calls his visit “coming *home*” and is delighted by everything that the village has to offer and claims that he has had “the greatest curiosity to visit it” (179). It occurs to Emma that this is inconsistent with his prior negligence, but she concludes, “if it were a falsehood, it was a pleasant one, and pleasantly handled” (180). Emma realises that Frank Churchill consciously behaves in a certain way to be pleasant, but she does not mind it since he does it so well. While this instance of excessive politeness is not harmful, it is still an intimation of how Frank Churchill continuously ignores honesty in favour of politeness.

Although Mr. Knightley does not aim to please, he still manages to please. However, his way of pleasing others has nothing to do with artificial manners, like those used by Frank Churchill, rather, Mr. Knightley pleases with his sincere benevolence. Girouard says that the chivalric gentleman “was invariably gentle to the weak; above all he was always tender, respectful and courteous to women, regardless of their rank” (260). This description wholly corresponds with Mr. Knightley’s character. He shows great consideration for Mrs. and Miss Bates, whose humble situation in life makes generous gestures from friends precious. The thoughtful Mr. Knightley gives them gifts from his farm and lets his carriage convey them back and forth from social gatherings. Most importantly he shows them this attention in a tactful manner so as not to embarrass them; he claims that he has an abundance of apples left, when really he gives them the very last, and he does not make it known that he only uses his carriage for their benefit. Moreover, failure to treat the Bateses with proper respect is not tolerated by Mr. Knightley. He sternly reprimands Emma when she slights Miss Bates during the outing to Box Hill. Mr. Knightley is in fact constantly at the ready to take action when someone is ill-treated. At the ball (ch. 38) he is content with only watching the proceedings on the dance floor until he observes that Mr. Elton intentionally humiliates Harriet Smith, when to save her from mortification Mr. Knightley asks her to dance. His readiness to come to the rescue when he detects that someone is in need can be seen as a modern interpretation of the characteristics connected with the medieval knight-errant, “who wandered in search of adventures and opportunities for deeds of bravery and chivalry” (“Knight-errant,” def. 1). Mr. Knightley watches over vulnerable characters and serves as a metaphorical knight in Highbury. In fact Mr. Woodhouse is finally reconciled to the idea of Mr. Knightley and Emma’s nuptials because he feels that the future son-in-law will be able to protect Hartfield against potential intruders. The sense of protection that Mr. Knightley exudes distinguishes him as useful to the community of Highbury.

Another area where Mr. Knightley’s usefulness is demonstrated is in the management of his estate, Donwell Abbey. Even though we as readers never get to follow Mr. Knightley

when he tends to his property, we learn of it through discussions with other characters. With his visiting brother he discusses, “The plan of a drain, the change of a fence, the felling of a tree, and the destination of every acre for wheat, turnips, or spring corn [...]” (96). Interpositions of this nature indicate that Mr. Knightley takes an active interest in the running of his estate. He also shows great respect for those who work for him; his steward William Larkins is described as his friend, and he holds the farmer Robert Martin in the same high regard. Furthermore, Mr. Knightley is a magistrate and makes sure to ask for guidance from his brother who is a lawyer. Mr. Knightley’s positive attitude towards work suggests that he is a modern gentleman, who shows an ambition to be useful to his community and, therefore, his country.

E has repeatedly been described as a patriotic novel because of its sudden “outbursts about English verdure, English reticence, and English social structure” (Johnson 125). To a great extent this patriotism is presented through the character of Mr. Knightley. He is the leader in Highbury who takes care of its inhabitants; he is devoted to his village and thus patriotic towards England. Butler sees Mr. Knightley as an omnipresent character, who is seen more often than he is heard: “In the middle distance he is everywhere—conferring with Mr. Elton about parish affairs, or with Robert Martin about farming [...]” and “Highbury gatherings are not complete without him [...]” (272). Indeed, Mr. Knightley is an indispensable member of the community although he is not loquacious. His actions speak for him and what he does say is therefore all the more important since he does not intermingle it with redundant chit-chat. This can be linked to the revised view of taciturnity around the turn of the nineteenth century, when it was praised as a sign of sincere Englishness, while French talkativeness was declining in popularity (Cohen, “Manliness” 56-7). Mr. Knightley’s “plain, unaffected, gentlemanlike English” is presented as a good, patriotic quality (*E* 419). Like the characteristics of Mr. Knightley himself, the description of his land also oozes nationalism: “It was a sweet view—sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort [...]” (338).

In contrast to Mr. Knightley, Frank Churchill is not presented as a character who is dedicated to his country and he expresses a wish to go abroad more than once in the novel. He tells Emma, “I am sick of England—and would leave it to-morrow [sic], if I could” (342). During the eighteenth century it was common for young gentlemen to go on a so-called Grand Tour of Europe, where they would be educated in the rules of politeness (Cohen, “Manners” 322). Though Frank Churchill has not yet travelled through Europe, he has already adopted

the manners of the Continent according to Mr. Knightley, who thinks that Frank Churchill “can be amiable only in French, not in English” (141). Frank Churchill has the appearance of amiability, but as Mr. Knightley suspects, his French-inspired manners turn out to be deceptive. The disparity between Mr. Knightley and Frank Churchill is, thus, represented as the opposition between patriotic sincerity and foreign insincerity.

From his very name to the manner in which he treats his neighbours the character Mr. Knightley can be seen to correspond to the chivalric ideal. His assertion to Emma, “You hear nothing but truth from me”, is significant (403). Like the conception of a knight Mr. Knightley is persistently sincere, thoughtful and dependable. Moreover, the active management of his estate and his involvement in the village community demonstrate Mr. Knightley’s usefulness, an attribute that corresponds with the reshaped values of the upper class after the wars with France. Mr. Knightley is depicted as a patriotic character who embraces the revived traditional English values in the form of chivalry.

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The union between Captain Frederick Wentworth and Anne Elliot in *P* is a result of what can be described as revived love. Anne was persuaded to break off her first engagement to Captain Wentworth, because he had “nothing but himself to recommend him” (*P* 31). Anne’s relations consider it a “degrading alliance” (30), though Captain Wentworth is confident that he *will* advance in the navy and that this *will* bring him fortune. In other words, he expects that his career will enable him to climb socially, which is a perfectly reasonable assumption considering the situation in England at the time: “Advancement in a profession enabled those who were not born of the gentry to enter its ranks, a process reinforced by the idea that since the gentry entrusted [...] the kingdom itself to commanders in the army and navy, so these professionals should themselves be men of standing in society” (Southam, “Professions” 367). Captain Wentworth is, thus, rejected because he has not at the time distinguished himself in his profession and he is still a “nobody” in comparison with the Elliots. Moreover, Sir Walter Elliot disapproves of the navy because it is “the means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of [...]” (23). Reactionary thinkers, like Sir Walter, obviously do not welcome the social mobility that the navy offers. Consequently, even when Captain Wentworth has attained distinction he is not automatically an appreciated addition to noble circles.

During the approximately eight years that Captain Wentworth is absent from Anne's life, he does advance in the navy and make a fortune. Unlike Jane Austen's other heroes, Captain Wentworth thus has to exert himself to make other characters regard him as a gentleman of rank. Although Captain Wentworth's days at sea are summarised in convivial contexts, such as at the Musgroves' dining table, it must be remembered that the navy was, as Southam makes clear, a demanding choice of profession that required long training and much skill. Although promotion could either be based on connections, or on merit ("Professions" 374-5). Captain Wentworth's preferment must be the result of his capability in view of the fact that he has "no connexions to secure even his farther rise in that profession [...]" (P 31). Wilt argues that the years in the navy have made Captain Wentworth feel like a "somebody", but it has been a struggle for him to achieve that: "To be a successful sailor is constantly to seek the battle, to give or receive death, even in a leaky ship if necessary" (Wilt 63). Indeed, Captain Wentworth must have faced hardships in the navy, nonetheless he was eager to enlist: "It was a great object with me, at that time, to be at sea, – a very great object. I wanted to be doing something" (77). Captain Wentworth's desire to be employed with something makes him both useful and loyal to his nation. In line with the chivalric ideal he willingly serves as a protector and defender of his country and is rewarded with social climb.

Captain Wentworth's improved social standing makes him eligible on the marriage market; Charles Musgrove, who belongs to the established country gentry, thinks that Captain Wentworth "would be a capital match for either of his sisters" (89). Thus, Captain Wentworth's present situation must likewise increase his chances of being received by Anne's closest family as an acceptable suitor. But he has no intention of commencing a second courtship because he feels that Anne has "used him ill; deserted and disappointed him", and he has not forgiven her for it (72). Butler argues that since Captain Wentworth had faith in his own success, Anne's refusal of his proposal has persuaded him that she did not (275). This inference and the rebuff itself seem to have wounded Captain Wentworth's pride, and as a result he convinces himself that his feelings for Anne are gone. In the manner of a chivalric gentleman Captain Wentworth values his honour highly. Unfortunately, the blow to his confidence makes him jeopardise his own, as well as Anne's, happiness. When he returns from his travels it is "his object to marry" and he is willing to propose to "any pleasing young woman who [comes] in his way, excepting Anne Elliot" (72). That "pleasing young woman" happens to be Louisa Musgrove, who like her sister, finds Captain Wentworth both agreeable and handsome. The Miss Musgroves' admiration flatters Captain Wentworth's self-image, and as a consequence he does not discourage their regard, even though he eventually realises

that he can love neither of them. It is certainly a weakness in Captain Wentworth's character that he cannot resist adulation because of his "angry pride" (P 285). However, when he too late discovers that it has appeared as if he was seriously courting Louisa, he demonstrates his chivalrousness: "I was hers in honour if she wished it" (286). It was a mistake to risk leading Louisa on, but he rectifies it with his readiness to wed her if she so desires.

Seeing that Captain Wentworth still feels bitter about Anne rejecting him nearly a decade before, he makes an effort to treat her with reserve. With other characters he is talkative and he gladly entertains them with stories from his seafaring life, while Anne, to her dismay, receives "studied politeness" and "ceremonious grace" from her former suitor (85). Captain Wentworth deliberately excludes Anne from his cheerful company and treats her like a stranger. Despite these endeavours to display his resentment, Captain Wentworth is instinctively considerate of Anne. Without saying a word he removes a bothersome child from her back, though his body language tells her that he does not want her to acknowledge the kindness of the act. Similarly, he subtly arranges for her to be conveyed home in the Crofts' gig when he perceives that walking has tired her: "Captain Wentworth, without saying a word, turned to her, and quietly obliged her to be assisted into the carriage" (107). In both of these events Captain Wentworth's silence is palpable, yet his actions show that he still cares for Anne. He can deny her the pleasure of his conversation, but he cannot stand idly by while she is suffering. Although he tries to behave indifferently towards Anne, he does not fully succeed, partly because he is not able to suppress his considerate personality and partly because he, involuntarily, never stopped loving her. In spite of his attempts to the contrary, "he had been constant unconsciously, nay unintentionally [...]" (P 285). Nonetheless, Captain Wentworth needs some competition from the anti-hero William Walter Elliot to realise that his affection for Anne is very much alive.

The attention Mr. Elliot gives Anne functions as a catalyst for the resurgence of Captain Wentworth's emotions for her. Butler argues that Mr. Elliot's "entry into the novel at Lyme, which *serves no function*, is unusually clumsy stage-management" (280, emphasis added). It is surprising that Butler judges Mr. Elliot's first entrance in the novel as pointless, since it really is a pivotal moment when Captain Wentworth's eyes are opened to Anne's desirability:

It was evident that the gentleman, (completely a gentleman in manner) admired her exceedingly. Captain Wentworth looked round at her instantly in a way which shewed [sic] his noticing of it. He gave her a momentary glance, – a glance of brightness, which

seemed to say, 'That man is struck with you, – and even I, at this moment, see something like Anne Elliot again.' (122-3)

Prior to this incident Captain Wentworth has regarded Anne as a mere shadow of her former self. Mr. Elliot's admiration of her makes Captain Wentworth realise that she is still the attractive Anne Elliot that he fell in love with all those years ago.

There is no doubt that Mr. Elliot is an astute character who knows how to take advantage of people and situations. With apologies and flattery he easily re-establishes his acquaintance with Sir Walter and Elizabeth Elliot and even Anne is at first fooled by his polished conduct. The restored friendship with the Elliot family enables Mr. Elliot to pursue another objective, namely to make Anne his wife. As one course of action in this design he shrewdly praises Anne in the presence of Lady Russell, whom he probably regards as Anne's closest friend and who will be able to influence her choice of a husband. At the concert Mr. Elliot artfully tries to give others the impression that there is a mutual attachment between himself and Anne, by sitting next to her and showering her with attention. When he perceives that Captain Wentworth is a contender for Anne's heart he smoothly interrupts their tête-à-tête: Captain Wentworth "looked down towards the bench, as if he saw a place on it well worth occupying; when, at that moment, a touch on her shoulder obliged Anne to turn round. – It came from Mr Elliot. He begged her pardon, but she must be applied to, to explain Italian again" (225). Mr. Elliot is an observant man and when he senses rivalry from Captain Wentworth he acts instantaneously. Despite all his efforts, however, Mr. Elliot never really comes close to making Anne fall in love with him. For her, his good manners have almost been too good to be true and she is hardly surprised when his duplicity is disclosed. Everything Mr. Elliot does is an act and by sly manoeuvres he continuously manages to distort the truth to his own advantage.

In one crucial way Mr. Elliot's action at the concert proves successful; Captain Wentworth becomes jealous and doubts that Anne reciprocates his feelings. Only when Captain Wentworth is almost positive that Anne still loves him does he venture to propose to her a second time. In the note that he hastily scribbles after overhearing her enlightening conversation with Captain Harville, he writes, "*Dare not say that man forgets sooner than woman, that his love has an earlier death. I have loved none but you. Unjust I may have been, weak and resentful I have been, but never inconstant*" (280). Considering that another rejection would entail another blow to his pride, Captain Wentworth has not had the courage to admit his constancy to Anne before he was certain of hers. The fact that he acknowledges

that he has erred shows that he is truthful and humble. In spite of his previous bitter feelings, he has always treated Anne with respect, albeit sometimes with reserved respect. Throughout the novel Captain Wentworth is presented as a compassionate character, the only thing that changes is others' opinion of him. Sir Walter even inserts Anne's marriage into his precious book of Baronetage; after all, "Captain Wentworth, with five-and-twenty thousand pounds, and as high in his profession as merit and activity could place him, was no longer nobody" (293). Evidently, Captain Wentworth's good personal qualities are far more important than his father-in-law's estimation of his social status. However, Sir Walter's approval of his daughter's husband indicates that Captain Wentworth's hard work in the navy really has promoted him to a gentleman of rank. The characterisation of Captain Wentworth therefore demonstrates that also men of low birth can possess chivalrous traits.

Discussion

Although the masculine ideal represented in the personalities of Jane Austen's heroes does not follow an unequivocal development from politeness to chivalry, it is evident that chivalrous traits are more prominent in the heroes of the three last novels. Undeniably Henry Tilney in *NA* is the hero who corresponds to the conception of the polite gentleman most distinctly. His actions show that he is aware of the rules set to the polite ideal and he follows them in a humorous manner. Most importantly, Henry Tilney makes an effort to please women with entertaining conversation and dancing. By comparison, in *P&P* Mr. Darcy's reluctance to dance for the sake of civility displeases the population of Meryton. Thus, politeness is an issue in both of these novels, but it is only in *NA* that the hero is depicted as fully endeavouring to conform to its rules. Furthermore, Henry Tilney's knowledge of clothes denotes a fashion sense that is compatible with the eighteenth-century polite code. In later Austen novels such fashionable traits are instead connected with less agreeable male characters. In *S&S* the care Robert Ferrars puts into the selection of a toothpick-case is demonstrated as rude and in *E* Frank Churchill's pretext to go to London merely to have his hair cut is perceived as ludicrous by other characters. These dissimilar portrayals of the fashion-conscious man can be connected to the fear that politeness could produce effeminate gentlemen: "It was a commonly expressed concern that standards of modern living made foppery a likely outcome for sober-minded men exposed to fashion and triviality" (Carter 212). In *NA* the polite code as a whole is shown in a favourable light and, thus, Henry Tilney's interest in fashion does not suggest effeminacy.

In *MP* Edmund Bertram says, “A clergyman cannot be high in state or fashion. He must not head mobs, or set the ton in dress” (86). This opinion of the Church’s leaders is not in agreement with Henry Tilney who is a fashionable clergyman. Edmund Bertram’s view of the clergy is obviously different from Henry Tilney’s. Whereas Edmund Bertram regards the Church as a vocation, Henry Tilney’s choice of profession is never presented as especially important to him.

What characterises Henry Tilney is his polite tendency to please, in particular women. This is a recurring trait in the anti-heroes of the later novels: in *S&S* Marianne falls in love with Willoughby’s charming personality; in *P&P* Wickham’s conversation impresses Elizabeth; in *MP* the Bertram sisters are attracted to the flirtatious Henry Crawford; in *E* Frank Churchill’s polished manners are appreciated by Emma; and in *P* Mr. Elliot’s flattery reinstates him in the Elliot family. All of these anti-heroes are, to different extents, untrustworthy, but with masks of politeness they are able to gain society’s approbation. The anti-heroes’ use of politeness is reminiscent of the cause for the ideal’s decline, namely the distrust of its sincerity. *NA*’s John Thorpe is the only anti-hero who does not fit this pattern, because he is repulsive in an obvious way. Since the hero is a polite gentleman in *NA*, it would disturb the balance between the two male characters to have an anti-hero who abided by the same ideal. Unlike the anti-heroes of the later novels, Henry Tilney does not exploit politeness to conceal deceitful motives. His manners correspond with the positive purpose of the polite code: “[R]elaxed outer polish with inner moral values to produce a force for superior sociability” (Carter 23). As politeness and its aim of pleasing is portrayed as a commendable pursuit in *NA* and as a dishonourable one in the later novels, it is reasonable to draw the conclusion that this alteration is due to the novels’ chronology. It is understandable that *NA*, regarded as the oldest of Jane Austen’s novels, has a polite hero, considering that the masculine ideal was based on politeness at the time of the novel’s composition. In the later novels the polite ideal is instead utilised as an outdated and insincere social code that is suitable for less agreeable characters like anti-heroes.

In *S&S* and *P&P* the characterisation of the heroes does not decidedly accord with one of the masculine ideals discussed. In these two novels politeness is not completely abandoned, but neither is chivalry fully embraced. Their lack of charm and gaiety reduces the attraction of the heroes in *S&S*. Both Edward Ferrars and Colonel Brandon are depicted as grave heroes and their presence occasionally threatens to dampen the spirits of other characters. While this is a drawback in both of the heroes’ personalities, put in comparison with the joyful Willoughby’s deceit their solemnity is to be preferred. Edward Ferrars’ and Colonel

Brandon's sincerity prevent them from acting cheerful when they are not. Both of them are loyal and true, which certainly is an attractive quality. Nevertheless, their constancy is tinged with dullness, which makes them appear somewhat insipid. It should be noted, however, that it is indicated in the final stages of *S&S* that the heroes' flaws will be remedied by the influence of the heroines, which can be associated with women's assumed role in the forming of the polite gentleman.

In *P&P* Mr. Darcy's disinclination to act according to social conventions causes offence in Meryton. His behaviour is the direct opposite of the polite ideal; instead of making an effort to be sociable, he is wilfully rude and reserved. Both Mr. Darcy and Mr. Knightley are landowners, but they handle the status and power that come with the ownership of an estate in different ways. Whereas Mr. Darcy scorns, Mr. Knightley respects and helps, characters of inferior status. Both of them are gentleman of rank, but only Mr. Knightley is a gentleman of manners. It is only when Elizabeth rejects Mr. Darcy's proposal of marriage that he begins to realise that his social standing is not enough to prove his gentlemanliness. Similar to the indication of the heroines' forthcoming positive impact on the heroes in *S&S*, Elizabeth's influence on Mr. Darcy's manners can be linked to the assumption that women could enhance a gentleman's politeness. However, Mr. Darcy's altered conduct is not a polite performance. Rather, he strives to expand his consideration for others by not judging people based on their class belonging. Although Mr. Darcy's initial refusal to comply with the polite code is presented as a defect, he still cannot be labelled as a polite gentleman after he is humbled. Instead, his chivalrous traits, of honesty, thoughtfulness and constancy, are brought to the fore. While Mr. Darcy's chivalrous attributes are initially obscured by his unsociability, in *S&S* the heroes' chivalrous qualities make them solemn. Although the heroes in *P&P* and *S&S* to some extent conform to the chivalric ideal, they are judged by the rules of politeness. It might be said that the ideal of chivalry has not yet reached its height in *S&S* and *P&P*; as a masculine ideal it is still under construction.

MP is the first of the novels that has a hero depicted as truly endeavouring to be useful in society. Edmund Bertram emphasises that it is *his* choice to become a clergyman, a choice that is wholly supported by his family. In *S&S* Edward Ferrars' relations, conversely, dissuade him from working for the Church. As the heir of the family fortune Edward Ferrars does not need an income, but it is significant that his family considers that employment would lessen his status as a gentleman. Contrarily, in *MP* Edmund Bertram's choice of profession is a contribution to his gentlemanliness. Together with his ambition to be a valuable member of society, his moral principles make him a chivalric hero. The characterisation of Edmund

Bertram thus fulfils the aim of the revived chivalry; that is to say, Edmund Bertram is a worthy member of the privileged class because he has a function in society and because he is righteous.

Like Edmund Bertram, Mr. Knightley can also be described as a hero who strives to be useful; he actively runs his estate. By contrast, as *P&P*'s Mr. Darcy is often seen absent from Pemberley he presumably does not take an equally active role at his estate. Even though Mr. Knightley is not an especially talkative character, this is not presented as a weakness since what he does say is always sincere and to the point. Besides, his acts speak volumes in favour of his benevolence. Mr. Darcy's aversion to making small talk is, on the contrary, presented as a harmful quality. These two differing portrayals of the same trait are comparable to the eighteenth-century polite demands for eloquence and the nineteenth-century appreciation of taciturnity as an English attribute. Thus, Mr. Knightley possesses characteristics that can be considered as patriotic and hence chivalrous. Another is the care he shows the community of Highbury, in which he is a key member. The creation of Mr. Knightley certainly demonstrates chivalry at its best. Like the heroes of *S&S*, Mr. Knightley is also truthful and loyal, but without the slightest trace of dullness.

Lastly, the characterisation of Captain Wentworth in *P* expands the representation of the chivalric ideal to men of humble birth. He is the only one of Jane Austen's heroes who really toils to achieve gentlemanly status. Similar to how Edmund Bertram's choice of the clergy, in *MP*, distinguishes him as an exemplary gentleman, Captain Wentworth's career in the navy shows that he is worthy of the epithet gentleman. The navy offers Captain Wentworth the opportunity to prove his loyalty to his country and in return for his services he receives wealth and social recognition. The few glimpses that describe his adventures at sea present him as courageous and patriotic. In *S&S* the profession of arms produces no such connotations, since the only information revealed about Colonel Brandon's experiences in the army is that he has served abroad. In addition to his achievements in the navy, Captain Wentworth also demonstrates chivalrous qualities in his private life. Above all he is an honourable man; he is prepared to marry a woman he has flirted with and he shows consideration for Anne despite the grudge he bears against her. Moreover, like Mr. Darcy in *P&P*, Captain Wentworth admits that his pride has made him err. Most importantly, the depiction of Captain Wentworth demonstrates a man who of his own accord attains the rank of a gentleman in society.

The two masculine ideals of politeness and chivalry are certainly detectable in Jane Austen's novels. In accordance with research into eighteenth- and nineteenth-century

masculine ideals, a gradual shift can be discerned from the first ideal to the second in the representation of Austen's heroes: By aiming to please women *NA's* Henry Tilney demonstrates the positive side of the polite code; in *S&S* the heroes lack the charm of politeness, but both possess the chivalrous attribute loyalty; in *P&P* Mr. Darcy's disregard of the polite rules causes offence, but ultimately his chivalrous acts triumph over prior impoliteness; in *MP* Edmund Bertram's firm moral principles are reminiscent of the aim of the revived chivalric ideal; in *E* the display of chivalrous qualities reaches its peak with the creation of a hero who truly lives up to his name, Mr. Knightley; in *P* Captain Wentworth's social climb adds a new dimension to chivalry with a hero who ambitiously strives to be recognised as the gentleman that he really is. Consequently, as the importance of politeness lessens by degrees, chivalrous characteristics become increasingly dominant in the heroes' personalities. Coupled with this development, the declining polite ideal is made use of in the creation of the unreliable anti-heroes.

Conclusion

Jane Austen's creation of suitable husbands to her heroines is likely to have been influenced by the society in which she lived. The fact that she composed and edited her novels during at least two decades, in the turbulent period around 1800, aroused curiosity to explore whether this could have affected the portrayal of her heroes. This thesis has focused on how the characterisation of Jane Austen's heroes corresponds with the argument of a shifting masculine ideal around the turn of the nineteenth century. The shift in the masculine ideal which Michèle Cohen describes, from sociable politeness to revived chivalry has functioned as the basis for the comparison with Austen's heroes.

In accordance with the composition of Austen's novels, the hero who conforms to the polite ideal most patently is Henry Tilney in *NA*. The gregarious Henry Tilney fulfils the aim of politeness by humorously parodying the standard conventions for conversation with ladies. By making the polite code entertaining he continuously strives to please women. In opposition to the polite Henry Tilney, the anti-hero of *NA* is portrayed as an unsophisticated boor. By contrast, all the succeeding anti-heroes display polite behaviour. However, these anti-heroes misuse politeness as a disguise for insincerity, whereas Henry Tilney advocates the respectable purpose of the polite ideal without any devious designs.

The heroes in *S&S* and *P&P* do not adhere to the polite ideal, but the influence of it is to some extent still prevailing in the two novels. Neither Edward Ferrars, nor Colonel

Brandon, possesses the liveliness that *NA*'s hero exhibits, and Mr. Darcy is disdained because he refuses to act according to the polite standard. Despite this, they are portrayed as attractive gentlemen because of their chivalrous merits and honourable acts: Edward Ferrars honours a betrothal he regrets making; Colonel Brandon is continuously attentive to the Dashwood ladies; Mr. Darcy helps restore honour to the Bennet family with the arrangement of a marriage between Wickham and Lydia Bennet. Thus, in both *S&S* and *P&P* the heroes' lack of politeness is presented as an imperfection in their characters, yet this is outweighed by the fact that they are loyal, trustworthy and thoughtful.

In the three last novels a shift from a polite to a chivalric hero has taken place. The three last heroes all share the characteristic of industry, although the depictions of them display different aspects of the chivalric ideal. In *MP* Edmund Bertram's ambition to be useful in society as a clergyman is a sign of a new ideal. Furthermore, his moral fibre is suited to this task, which makes him a chivalric gentleman. However, the hero who demonstrates most chivalrous qualities is Mr. Knightley in *E*. His concern for the local community shows that he is useful, dependable and patriotic. In *P* Jane Austen introduces a hero who needs to strive to be acknowledged as a gentleman of rank. In the navy Captain Wentworth proves his loyalty to his country and manages to turn his usefulness into social recognition.

This thesis has strived to establish if the characteristics of Jane Austen's heroes develop in accordance with the current masculine ideals of politeness and chivalry that historians of masculinity describe. The exploration of this question has revealed that there indeed is such a development in Austen's heroes. In agreement with the composition of the novels the heroes can be divided into three kinds of heroes: The first hero, *NA*'s Henry Tilney, represents the eighteenth-century polite ideal in its prime. As the creations of the early but reworked novels the heroes in *S&S* and *P&P* are caught in the shift between politeness and chivalry. These heroes want the charm of politeness, yet they do possess chivalrous traits that compensate for this minor deficiency. In the three last novels, *MP*, *E* and *P*, all of the heroes, in their individual way, fit the picture of a nineteenth-century chivalric gentleman. Consequently, Austen's heroes change from adhering to the polite code in *NA*, to gradually conforming to the chivalric ideal in the three final novels. Furthermore, in connection with the heroes' diminishing polite qualities, the anti-heroes make use of the old-fashioned polite ideal to conceal their dishonesty. The outcome of this study is therefore that shifts in society did influence Jane Austen's writing in that the characteristics of her heroes alter in conformity with the prevailing masculine ideal.

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