The Male Suitor in the 19th Century British Novel

The Gentlemanly Behavior of the Suitor and his Pursuit for the one True Love

B.A. Essay

Elísabet S.K. Ágústdóttir

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Kt.: 281081-3499

Supervisor: Anna Heiða Pálsdóttir

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Summary

The subject of this thesis is the male suitor from the 19th century novel and his gentlemanly behavior. I review three male suitors from three different novels. The suitors are Mr. Edward Ferrars in Sense and Sensibility (1811) by Jane Austen, Mr. Edward Fairfax Rochester in Jane Eyre (1847) by Charlotte Brontë and Angel Clare in Tess of the d’Urbervilles (1891) by Thomas Hardy. Those three men’s personalities are scrutinized, I analyze their character and also their behavior towards their lady. They belong to different eras of the 19th century but they all come from the same traditional background when it comes to marriages and the family status in the society. They have to follow certain rules but ultimately they go their own ways each with their heart set on marrying the woman he loves. I consider the secrecy around them and how they prove themselves worthy of their lady’s love after concealing their secrets from the past. I look into the aspect of being a gentleman and how the three suitors are comparable to being the genuine gentlemen: the definition of a gentleman and which one best fits to that classification. The conclusion is that Mr. Ferrars and Mr. Rochester are gentlemen and are defined as such. Even though their behavior is not at all times perfect they do rise to the occasion and are true gentlemen. However, Angel Clare cannot be considered a gentleman because of his behavior towards his lady. He has his own secrets and problems from his past but he is not able to see past his lady’s secrets and turns her away. His behavior is far from being gentlemanly and thus is not considered a gentleman like Mr. Ferrars and Mr. Rochester.
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Introduction

In the 19th century, family and financial status were highly important when it came to marriages between two individuals. Marriages were an important factor to the social institution and it depended on the family status who should marry whom and how the marriage would reflect on the remaining family members. As a result the men, which will be referred to here as suitors, from the higher class families had to choose their wives from a group of elite women. In the same way, not all women were suited for them according to their status in the society. Sometimes the suitors’ parents had already made a bargain with another wealthy family so they had an arranged marriage. Therefore, if the suitors failed to choose a wife accordingly, they sometimes were cut off from their families and disinherited. Nevertheless, for some of those suitors, neither lack of money nor their family had anything to do with their choice of a wife. They either had no immediate family to be concerned with or they were fortunate enough to have a considerable amount of money of their own. Consequently, those men really had nothing to lose and were able to follow their hearts. As a result, the ones who did possess some fortunes sometimes became conceited and did not care what the lady wanted, they chose whomever they desired. For that reason, they did whatever they pleased when it came to courtship and women. A male suitor always has a choice to either follow his heart or follow his family’s wishes, but his actions are what count in order to get the woman he loves.

This essay focuses on the pursuit of three male suitors portrayed in three 19th century novels, *Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austen (1811), *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë (1847) and *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy (1891). The suitors all come from a different background and from a different time era. However, they are in a way similar in their pursuit and are interesting to follow throughout the novels. Their traits provide opportunities for comparison and contrast. In *Sense and Sensibility*, the main male character is Mr. Edward Ferrars. He will be analyzed by his personality and the manner in which he pursues his lady friend, Elinor Dashwood. In *Jane Eyre*, the character of Mr. Rochester is scrutinized as the male suitor, considering how he shows Jane Eyre his affections and the outcome of his pursuit. Finally, the third novel is *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, which portrays two male suitors, Angel Clare and Alec d’Urberville but only the first one will be analyzed here. Angel falls in love with Tess Durbeyfield, the protagonist of the novel. Her beauty and sense
of purity are her strongest features and Angel becomes smitten. He desires her and shows his affections, but that love will be analyzed on his true feelings towards her and if he perhaps thinks of her as a possession.

Subsequently these male suitors, from all three novels, are compared to each other. They will be psychologically examined on the basis of their personality, how they treat their ladies and which one could fit the “genuine” type of a gentleman, if indeed such a man exists. A few points will be examined in order to show how the suitors are alike and how they are different from each other, also how they go about pursuing their ladies. All three suitors have secrets from their past which are taken into consideration. And thus, one may ask, are these secrets worth keeping from the women? And should these secrets have been kept instead of revealed in the beginning? As a result their psychological behavior will be looked at regarding the secrets and the suitors’ past. However, they seem to go above and beyond to get their lady’s love and the nice ones do what they can to show their true heart. In addition to this, the ladies are taken into consideration in order to show their reactions to the men’s attention.
Chapter 1. The three Suitors and their background

A brief introduction into the suitors’ background lays the foundation for the discussion of their comparison and the contrasts between them in the next chapter. They vary in their ways of pursuit and it will be identified how they show their affections for their ladies. To start with the novel *Sense and Sensibility*, the author opens the novel at Norland where the Dashwood family resides. Elinor Dashwood is one of three daughters of Mrs. Dashwood. Elinor’s brother in law comes for a visit and soon the character of Edward Ferrars is introduced. Edward is a “gentlemanlike and pleasing young man” (Austen 15). And yet his personality seems almost repellent. On one hand he can be read as a boring person and almost pretentious. Austen states that, “Edward Ferrars was not recommended to their good opinion by any peculiar graces of person or address” (15). Furthermore, “his manners required intimacy to make them pleasing” (15). Edward does not seem to have any deep interest in anything and shows no considerable ambition to have a career of his own. He is, as Adams, Buchanan and Gesch point out, “currently a gentleman of no profession”, but he “harbors some desire to become a clergyman” (26). Which is “a nice, but certainly not extravagant sort of living” (Adams, Buchanan & Gesch 26). He is very shy and does not willingly nor openly share his opinion on things such as paintings or literature and as Marianne, Elinor’s younger sister, puts it so delicately, “he has no real taste” (Austen 16). He never shows any immediate interest in things and seems rather dull at times. Edward comes about as an awkward individual and he has difficulty in being straightforward with Elinor. He is also, up to a certain point, being dishonest with Elinor. Although he is dishonest, that can be viewed as an unfortunate necessity in the novel. On the other hand, “when his shyness was overcome, his behavior gave every indication of an open, affectionate heart” (15). For this reason he can be seen as a gentleman, in addition to the fact that he does not want to mislead Elinor. He is engaged to another woman, Miss Lucy Steele, but his feelings for Elinor are more than just friendly. Unfortunately he thinks that Elinor only considers him a good friend simultaneously Elinor knows that “because of his own ethical propriety . . . Edward is committed to marrying Lucy even though he now loves Elinor” (Warnke 397). He is genuine in his feelings but because he is engaged, he is not able to show Elinor how he really feels about her. As they are introduced early in the novel they get to know each other and develop a good friendship between them. They seem to enjoy each other’s company and before long they develop more meaningful feelings.
Edward is in fact falling in love with Elinor but unfortunately he is not entirely willing or capable of showing his affection for her because he is engaged and has given his promise to another woman. Elinor has fallen in love with Edward and “it is in part because of his ethical propriety that Elinor loves him” (Warnke 397). He is a kind hearted young man who can easily be misunderstood because of his dilemma.

Edward belongs to the higher society and he has “the position of eldest son in a wealthy family” which “provides him with a pre-established social role” (Kaplan 545). His mother, Mrs. Ferrars, looks very highly upon herself and has already decided whom her son should marry because “Edward is supposed to inherit a large estate, marry an heiress” and “make important and powerful friends” (Kaplan 545). She has high expectations for her son, as she “wished to interest him in political concerns, to get him into parliament, or to see him connected with some of the great men of the day” (16). And she expected him to “spend his days riding around London in a barouche” (Kaplan 545) Consequently, although he wants to make his mother proud, her choice in a profession for him does not influence his interest in pursuing a career and take the path that she wants to see him take because he becomes, “by his own choice and by his mother’s decision to disinherit him, a clergyman with a modest living” (Kaplan 546). Consequently, his mother’s wish draws him back for he does not like too much of public affairs. He knows that he is not able to go about his own business the way he pleases because whatever he does, which is not in his mother’s or his family’s best interest, may reflect badly on them. As a result, Edward is a shy gentleman who has a controlling mother who’s authority and patrilineages is “shown to have as much right to govern the next generation’s marital partners, careers, or fortunes” (Kaplan 549). There it shows that he has very little to say about his own life decisions. For this reason he cannot come out in the open and tell Elinor his true feelings for her because of his situation with his fiancé and his family.

Another English gentleman is illustrated in the great novel, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. He is the charming Mr. Edward Fairfax Rochester who lives at Thornfield Hall with his servants and a young ward, Adéle. According to his servant Mrs. Fairfax, “he has a gentleman’s tastes and habits, and he expects to have things managed in conformity to them” (Brontë 104). He is somewhat mysterious and there is a certain enigma that follows his name because he has not yet arrived in the opening scene. Mr. Rochester is very self contained and does not bother with things that do not concern him. His character is somewhat rude and he also has a bit sarcastic attitude.
Mr. Rochester’s character is a mystery until Jane Eyre goes to Thornfield Hall to be Adéle’s governess. Their first acquaintance, Mr. Rochester and Jane’s, is not a very pleasant one: Jane decides to go for a walk and on her way from Thornfield Hall she accidentally frightens his horse off the road. His first vision of her makes him think she is a witch, as he later says to her “I thought unaccountably of fairy tales, and had half a mind to demand whether you had bewitched my horse: I am not sure yet” (122). On Jane’s first account of Mr. Rochester, she looks at him and notices that he is “of middle height, and considerable breadth of chest” (113). His facial features are dark, “with stern features and a heavy brow; his eyes and gathered eyebrows looked ireful and thwarted” (113). After Jane has been at Thornfield Hall for awhile he sends for her as he wants to have tea with her and Adéle. He gives her no regard when she enters the room with Adéle and Mrs. Fairfax. He does not show her any attention and because of his brute nature he does everything to make her feel embarrassed and uncomfortable. He does succeed in making her feel uncomfortable but she does not show him her emotions in any way. As the novel progresses they become curious about one another but Jane remembers Mrs. Fairfax’s words about Mr. Rochester being “unimpeachable” and “rather peculiar” (105). Therefore as they talk and get to know each other better she thinks he is indeed peculiar and, “very changeful and abrupt” (127). Mr. Rochester’s personality is very mysterious at first and he is not at all willing to let Jane know his true self. He wants her company but has difficult time in showing her any kind of affection or any friendly gestures for that matter. He shows himself as a hard headed and bitter man but in reality he has a soft and gentle personality. Furthermore, Jane “begins to fall in love with him not because he is her master but in spite of the fact that he is, not because he is princely in manner, but because, being in some sense her equal, he is the only qualified critic of her art and soul” (Gilbert 352). He makes the people around him think he is unrefined and somewhat rude. Concurrently he taunts Jane and does not reveal his true feelings for her until later in the novel but “his need for her strength and parity is made clearer soon enough”(353). Although he even makes her believe that he is going to marry another woman, Miss Blanche Ingram he does confess that “he has deceived her about Blanche” (Gilbert 354). Indeed it is easy to misunderstand his character for he has no difficulty in making people think he is in love with Miss Ingram. As a result, he is very secretive and his appearance is not always straightforward and thus makes him more mysterious.
Mr. Rochester comes from a wealthy family “but rather a violent than quiet race in their time” (106). However, he was shunned of his inheritance when he was a young man. His father and older brother concocted a plan against him to get him away from England and their estate at Thornfield Hall. He has been badly burnt by his family and does not find it easy to trust again. They are able to trick him into marriage for money, and the outcome is dreadful for Mr. Rochester. He is made to believe he is going on a business trip to Jamaica but there he finds out that he is to be married to Bertha Mason, a beautiful woman from Jamaica, a Creole. That arrangement is for financial purposes only and as Jane experiences it Rochester “had married Bertha Mason for status, for sex, for money, for everything but love and equality” (Gilbert 356) although that is not how Rochester sees it because he feels that he was tricked. Bertha is, although he does not know it, in fact mad. He does not realize how much this arrangement will hurt him and soon he finds out that Bertha is mad and he becomes very unhappy. Mr. Rochester has fallen deeply in love with Jane but he knows that he cannot marry her because he is still married to Bertha. He wants to tell Jane the truth about his marriage but does not have the heart to do so. But Mr. Rochester does consider “his first marriage nullified and wishes to marry Jane, whom he loves, but his remarriage is illegal and considered highly immoral” (Rose). This big secret becomes a black spot on their relationship before long but Mr. Rochester is so deeply enamored with Jane that he is willing to do anything to marry her and decides to keep his secret for himself. He is not considered to be an ordinary man and his unorthodox love and affections for a woman like Jane makes her feel somewhat unsecure. The fact that he loves a woman of such intelligence and who is not considered a beautiful woman but a very plain one shows that he has more to him than what meets the eye. Subsequently it becomes obvious that dear Mr. Rochester is an affectionate man although he comes about as a very mysterious and somewhat rude person. He starts to show his true self around Jane and the reader is able to get a better insight into his complex and yet fascinating character.

Mr. Ferrars and Mr. Rochester are men of considerable wealth and belong to the higher classes. However, Angel Clare, the suitor in the third novel discussed here, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, does not come from a family of great fortune. He is a young man who is in pursuit of a life career as a gentleman farmer and has found work on the dairy farm Talbothays Dairy. He is described as “not altogether as a distinct figure, but as an appreciative voice, a long regard of fixed, abstract eyes” (Hardy
Furthermore there is “something nebulous, preoccupied, vague, in his bearing and regard, marked as one who probably had no very definite aim or concern about his material future” (147). He is a very affectionate man who loves nature and all creatures on earth. James Hazen states “Angel Clare is put before us as a young man of liberal and independent spirit who is in revolt against many of the prevailing values, standards, and assumptions of his time and class” (Hazen 129). He never thinks badly about anyone and always does his work as well as he can. Angel is well liked by everyone around him and he seems to have a way of enchanting women because all the milk maidens at the farm are in love with him. That in fact includes Tess because she loves him for his handsome looks and kind and gentle personality. Angel comes to love Tess dearly and shows her his affections in various ways and thinks of her as a pure flower of nature. However, Angel is not all too perfect. According to James Hazen, there are some critics who “have always been extremely harsh on Angel Clare” (Hazen 129). He is referred to by Albert J. Guerard as being “insufferable” and plain “nasty” (qtd. in Hazen 129). His treatment of Tess can be seen as immature and mean and he does have his own secrets which he conceals from her. At times he seems like a spoiled brat who likes nothing that does not follow his book of rules. After his long pursuit to get Tess to marry him she reluctantly says yes. She is reluctant only because she has her own secrets to bear which she knows in her heart that Angel cannot look past. They do get married and he tells her his secret but as she tells him about her child and Alec d’Urberville, his true feelings are revealed. He is not able to comprehend the fact that she has been with another man, forced or not. The fact that Tess tells him her secret after their marriage and not before bothers him immensely and there is a hint of jealousy in him. Because he is used to get what he wants, he cannot handle the fact that he will not be her first lover. He loves only the idea of her and her pure image but not herself as a person and that ruins his perfect vision of her. Subsequently he can be considered to be too young and immature to understand the true meaning of love and how fortunate he is to have the love of such a person as Tess.

In the same ways as Mr. Ferrars and Mr. Rochester, Angel Clare has his own family to consider when looking for a bride. Angel is the son of “a poor parson” (Hardy 147), who wants his son to follow in his footsteps as Angel’s two older brothers have done. But Angel has no immediate interest in becoming like the rest of his family. He believes in God and as he claims himself, “I love the church as one
loves a parent” (148). In those words he declines his father’s wishes but lives by the rules of his father’s Bible. Ultimately “he grew away from old associations, and saw something new in life and humanity” (152).

Although all three suitors come from different backgrounds, they all have the same thing in common, they are in search of something else in life than what is considered traditional for a young gentleman. They are willing to go against their family’s wishes in order to be with the one they love. Although Mr. Rochester has no immediate family to think of he has his reputation to withhold, but he does not care what his friends think or what society thinks of him. Mr. Ferrars and Angel are in love with their ladies but not for the same reasons. Mr. Ferrars loves Elinor for who she is, Angel loves Tess for what he wants her to be. They all have their secrets to bear which do come between them and their ladies but Mr. Ferrars and Mr. Rochester are able, by good fortune, to correct their mishaps. Mr. Edward Ferrars and Mr. Edward Fairfax Rochester start their new lives with the woman of their dreams, but because of his immature selfish nature, Angel Clare is not as fortunate and loses his wife to misfortune.
Chapter 2. The Suitors personal problems and the secrets they keep

As the suitors have been introduced in the previous chapter, they will now be compared on the basis of their personality and behavior. Their secrets are discussed and how those secrets affected the men’s relationships with their women. On one hand there is Mr. Ferrars who has a controlling mother which he does not seem to be able to get away from and a sister who also tries to have a considerable influence on his life and the decisions he makes. Perhaps he is afraid of his mother or maybe afraid of women in general, although his shyness may be the cause. Mr. Ferrars is what can be called an introvert “because introverts tend to be shy” they are people who “prefer their internal world of thoughts, feelings and fantasies” according to Carl Jung (Boeree). Mr. Ferrars does not dare to show Elinor his true affections because of his mother and because of the Ferrars’ family values. On the other hand there is Mr. Rochester who is burnt by his father and brother when he is a young man and that possibly has some traumatic effect on him. They take control of his life and he has to pay for that for a long time. He may have felt trapped by them and that is the reason for his traveling and later treatment of Jane. Mr. Rochester marries Bertha because his father and brother tell him that is the right thing to do. But as his marriage is a disaster from the beginning he rightfully blames his father and brother for his misfortune. He has been badly burnt by his family and as a result he has become bitter and hardheaded. Therefore he does not show Jane his affections and plays with her emotions instead. The psychological effect of his most immediate family’s betrayal has a lot to do with his treatment of Jane and Bertha too. Although that is not a conscious act on Jane’s behalf, she does get Mr. Rochester to open up to her and tell her what the reasons were for him taking Adéle as his charge. And as he starts opening up to her he starts to trust her and his inner self is revealed. She gets him to talk and open up his heart and unconscious mind. That in fact is one of the methods used by psychoanalysts, that is to get the person to “talk freely, in such a way that the repressed fears and conflicts . . . are brought into the conscious mind and openly faced” (Barry 92). As a result, Mr. Rochester is able to see past his anger and starts to see the good things in life and he can appreciate Jane more for who she is. He is able to set aside what his father and brother did to him and focus on his new life with Jane.

Both Mr. Ferrars and Mr. Rochester are in a certain dilemma when it comes to their choice of a life companion and that is for similar reasons, their family’s interference. Although they have been affected by their families their experience has
not been the same. Mr. Ferrars has more problems with his family, because both Mrs. Ferrars, his mother, and her daughter want to control him and his actions. Also his fiancée Lucy has a certain control over him because he gives her his promise to marry her. Elinor, however, does not try to control him or manipulate him in any way. She is effectuated by his good manners and quiet presence. There is the question of why is he under the heel of the women in his family and is he trying to break away because he finally realizes that he wants to be his own master and does not want to be thought for, he wants to do his own thinking? As a result he falls in love with Elinor because she does not try to control him and she likes him for who he is, not for what is expected of him to be. While Mr. Ferrars and Mr. Rochester battle with their families Angel has a similar problem. He knows that his family will not approve of Tess because of her family background. "She is not what in common parlance is called a lady" (Hardy 210). But he does not care about her family or what his parents think, for he is already going his own ways. He loves his parents and wants to make them proud but he is not willing to set his own pride aside only to please them. He is deeply in love with Tess and intends to marry her and then bring her home to his parents. He has no difficulty in showing Tess his true affections and is very open about his love for her.

Ultimately, the three suitors, Mr. Ferrars, Mr. Rochester and Angel Clare are all determined to be with the woman of their dreams but they have a different emphasis on how to go about showing their love. Mr. Ferrars is very shy and not at all open about his love for Elinor. There are mere gestures and speculations whether he is really in love with her or not and Elinor for one, is not at all certain of his affections for her. They become very close friends while they are at Norland together. But when they are apart, Mr. Ferrars does not send her love letters or any other letters for that matter. Elinor cannot be certain that he loves her but she has developed very strong feelings for him. As for Mr. Rochester, he is very mysterious in his pursuit of Jane and makes everyone around him, including Jane, think that he is indeed going to ask for Miss Ingram’s hand in marriage. Jane is starting to have strong feelings and as she states “the ease of his manner freed me from painful restraint” she feels that “the friendly frankness, as correct as cordial, with which he treated me, drew me to him” (Brontë 146). However, he does not show her anything she can grasp as a certainty of love. He is aware of their age difference, her being only eighteen years old, and also that it is not common for a man of his stature to marry a common, poor governess like
her. Conversely, our young suitor Angel Clare is very open about his feelings and not at all mysterious in his pursuit of Tess. He obviously loves her and wants to have her for himself. They spend some time together and go out for walks to be alone. As he looks at her, his admiration for her is imminent, “he little thought that the Magdalen might be at his side”, and “it was then that she impressed him most deeply” (Hardy 167). He does not care about what others may think and he does not care how Tess feels about his openness towards her. He can be considered as being selfish because he never gives her any regard as to why she feels uncomfortable with his growing affections for her. His treatment of Tess can be seen as the need to be in control because he has never been in control of his own life. Or it can be seen as “parapraxis”, whereby “repressed material in the unconscious finds an outlet through such everyday phenomena as slips of the tongue, slips of the pen, or unintended actions ” (Barry 94), and in Angel’s case the “unintended actions” are that although he loves Tess his unconscious mind controls him and he turns against Tess. However, he always does what his parents expect of him but finally he tries to break away from their control and influence because he resents their control over him. That is the reason why he tries to control Tess and puts his feeling of entrapment on her. He wants to keep her like a bird in a cage, make her feel the same way as he has felt all his life, being caged by his parents. He of course does not realize what he is doing and that is a case of “projection” which Peter Barry defines as “when aspects of ourselves (usually negative ones) are not recognized as part of ourselves but are perceived in or attributed to another” (93), and that another is Tess. Therefore our three suitors are very different from each other in their showing of affections. While dear Mr. Ferrars is exceptionally shy, the mysterious Mr. Rochester gives nothing up about his feelings towards Jane. And while both Mr. Ferrars and Mr. Rochester keep their feelings for themselves, the nature child Angel Clare is like an open book about his feelings and conceals nothing.

No person can be considered as being perfect and our three suitors, Mr. Ferrars, Mr. Rochester and Angel, although very nice and respectable gentlemen, are also not perfect. Each person or character has his or her flaw and so do they. With that being said, conversely all three of our suitors have their big secrets they carry with them. They all feel the need to conceal their secrets from the woman they love and perhaps they are frightened of the possible rejections if they decide to reveal them.
Mr. Ferrars’ secret is that he is in fact engaged to another woman. Furthermore, that young woman he is engaged to, Miss Lucy Steel, is not a woman his family will approve of because his mother has yet another lady which she intends as his future wife. As a result, he is in fact keeping his secret from others and not only from Elinor, for his family does not know about his engagement. On that note, he falls in love with Elinor after spending several weeks with her and their families at Norland, but when he is called off to London unexpectedly he tries to tell her the truth but is not able to. Though he does try to tell Elinor the truth he is too shy and awkward to finish his conversation after being interrupted by his sister and so he leaves Elinor with absolute uncertainty of their future together. But as Mr. Ferrars struggles with his emotions and his secret, Mr. Rochester seems to have no difficulty in concealing his.

The mysterious Mr. Rochester likes Jane for her wits and enjoys having her around. He finds her challenging and exceptionally wise and perhaps hard headed compared to a eighteen year old. As the time passes and they spend more time together, he starts to develop warm feelings towards Jane and she has no control over her emotions regarding Mr. Rochester. Despite the warm feelings, he is not at all ready to reveal his emotions and affections for her and holds the mystery alive. Mr. Rochester has, like Mr. Ferrars, a big secret. Although Rochester’s secret “is revealed together with the existence of Bertha” (Gilbert and Gubar 355), he does not attempt to tell Jane his dark secret about his wife Bertha Mason and how his marriage to her came to be. Unlike Mr. Ferrars who does try to tell Elinor about his engagement to Lucy Steele, Mr. Rochester has decided to keep it to himself and hopes that he will be able to get away with keeping it from her. He does not want his secret to come out but is forced to tell Jane when Bertha’s brother comes to stop him from marrying Jane.

As a result, the two suitors are alike up to a certain point as they withhold their secrets from the ladies but Mr. Ferrars is set on amending his problems and revealing his secrets. However Mr. Rochester sees no other choice but to conceal his secret and wants to keep it hidden from Jane and the rest of the world as well. In the same way Angel Clare has his own secret, but his secret is not as munificent as for the other two. He is not a virgin and that is his main concern, or as Hardy states, “he plunged into eight-and-forty hours’ dissipation with a stranger” (286). Long before he met Tess, when he was very young and immature, he bedded with a girl but was not willing to stay with her, he “would not have any more to say to her, and [he] came home” (286).
Furthermore, Angel has resolved to tell Tess his secret on the night of their wedding day but he has in fact kept it from her only because he is certain that she would not want to marry him if she knew. There he shows a kind of dominance over Tess and acts as though he needs her to be a part of his possessions before he tells her his secret. The fact is that she cannot leave him if they are married because women were frowned upon for leaving their husbands. Consequently unmarried women do not have the same rights as married women do, although those rights are little to begin with. According to Wojtczak “everything they owned, inherited and earned automatically belonged to their husband” (Wojtczak), and so there is very little that Tess can do. What Angel does not think of is that Tess has her own secret to bear which she has tried to tell him ever since he confessed his love to her. Therefore our three suitors conceal their secrets and handle the weight of them in different ways. Mr. Ferrars is set on revealing all his secrets right away, whichever the outcome may be and Angel is going to reveal his, but feels the need to consider the right time to do so. Unlike Mr. Rochester who wants to keep his secret hidden, no matter the cost.

On that note, there is a certain pattern in the concealment of the secrets. All of the suitors keep them for the sake of their loved ones but also for their own selfish reasons: that they do not want to get in trouble with either their families or friends. Also there are certain laws to be considered when it comes to marriages, such as bigamy. Simultaneously, they do not want to jeopardize their chances of a future with the woman they love. However, they all have their own way of thinking what may be right and what may be wrong in keeping the secrets. True, Mr. Ferrars seems to have no choice at first but there is the amount of time to be considered. He keeps his secret far too long and keeps Elinor and her family in agony not knowing his true feelings towards her. Concurrently Mr. Rochester has no immediate need to keep his secret from Jane. After he is certain of her love, there is nothing standing in the way of him revealing his secret to her and that certainly is the best solution for Mr. Rochester, as to reveal his past to Jane. As for Angel, he too should have told Tess the truth right away in order for her to reveal her big black secret at the same time. She does try to reveal it numerous times but he never gives her the chance to finish. There is a big chance that Angel will not marry Tess if he knows about her baby and about the man responsible for her pregnancy. But, that being said, Angel will be free of Tess and does not have to be responsible for her wellbeing if he decides not to marry her after all.
There is one way out for our suitors, they can tell the ladies about their secrets right away and thus try and build their relationship without hiding anything. Secrets can ruin the trust and credibility of the person keeping them and therefore the suitors perhaps could have revealed them as they felt that they had their ladies love, not withhold the truth until too late.
Chapter 3. What it really takes to be a gentleman.

A gentleman in the 19th century had a considerable and stable income which was esteemed as being of the higher class. Society expected a gentleman to marry a lady from the same class and preferably from a wealthy family to secure good income and a stable future for the new couple. Love was not considered of any importance and was thought of as an emotion that the newlyweds would develop in time, although in the Victorian Era, love was becoming a more important aspect of the relationship. But what exactly is a “gentleman”? The Venerable John Henry Cardinal Newman, born in 1801 was a very respectable figure in the 19th century. At his death in 1980, “he was praised for his unworldliness, humility, and prayerful contact with the invisible world” (Catholic Education Resource Center). Newman wrote the article “The Definition of a Gentleman” in The Idea of a University (1854) and there he states that a gentleman’s “benefits may be considered as parallel to what are called comforts or conveniences in arrangements of a personal nature” (Newman). That is, a gentleman tries to do all he can in order to make his company feel at ease and comfortable in his presence. According to Webster’s Daily use Dictionary, the word gentleman is defined on one hand as, “a well-bred honorable man” and on the other hand a gentleman is defined as, “a person of independent income” (319). Therefore, both Mr. Ferrars and Mr. Rochester are gentlemen according to these definitions. They are considered to be well-bred and they both come from well to do families and are both thought of as being honorable men. They are both considered to be a very good match for the right lady from the right family. Mr. Ferrars gets his income from his family, an “independent income” that is, but he has no occupation yet. Mr. Rochester inherited his wealth after his father and brother past away. He was the sole heir to the family estate and fortune, and that is his income. But what about Angel? He does not come from a wealthy family and his income is what he earns from working at the farms. Can he then not be considered a gentleman? His personality and character are truly gentlemanlike as he has good manners and treats everyone with respect. He fits the description from Newman’s article as he “has his eyes on all his company; he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant, and merciful towards the absurd” (Newman). And Angel is indeed such a fine specimen of a gentleman because he fits that description well. But there is yet another definition of what it is to be a gentleman in an article by McBurney and there he states that according to Dafoe, “a born gentleman will become a ‘valuable man, if bred up as a gentleman ought to be,
that is, educated in learning and manners suitable to his birth” (McBurney 325). Therefore Angel can also be considered a gentleman according to McBurney because he comes from a respectable family and has been educated in respectable schools. He has good manners that are suitable for a gentleman. But, from a personal point of view, all three suitors also have to be valued by their personality and character in general: in how they treat their loved ones and the ladies they are in love with. On the one hand, Angel does come about as the perfect young gentleman. He treats Tess with respect when he is pursuing her, and he also treats others around him with respectable approach. He is well educated and has exceptionally good manners. On the other hand, he can also be seen as an immature young man who knows nothing of worldly matters. He is new to the world outside his parents’ and brother’s provision. He knows the Bible and lives by it to a certain point. As he looks at Tess, he sees her in a somewhat spiritual way: sees her as the pure virgin Magdalen and that is the true image he loves in Tess, but not Tess herself. He does act as a young gentleman towards her in his pursuit but as soon as he has married her and hears her secret, his image of her crumbles and she is nothing to him. Therefore he treats her like a person who does not deserve his attention. He leaves her with nothing except his parents’ home address and tells her he will provide her with money if needed but that she should not try to contact him or try to find him in any way. There he proves to be a rude, selfish bastard who does not see what beauty lies within.

As for Mr. Ferrars, he has all the qualities of a gentleman. He is well-bred, has a stable income and comes from a wealthy family. He also acts like a well refined gentleman, has good manners and treats everyone with the utmost respect. Another definition for the meaning of a gentleman is that “the true gentleman in like manner carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds with whom he is cast” (Newman). Therefore his silence towards Elinor can be better understood because he does not want to make anyone angry or disappointed. It is also because of his shyness and uncertainty of his future regarding his engagement and what his mother has in store for him. He in fact does come forth as soon as he is free from his obligations regarding Miss Steel and his mother, Mrs. Ferrars, and tells Elinor everything: his true feelings and the truth about his silence. Also why he was not able to communicate with her sooner. As a result, Mr. Ferrars can certainly be considered to be a gentleman.
Concurrently, Mr. Rochester is a gentleman, but only by name. He has the fortune and family so that he is indeed defined as a gentleman but his manners show otherwise. He is rude and conceited, does not care for anyone’s company and only treats those with respect who show him respect and whom he can consider to be his friends. At first he comes about as such, but as the novel progresses he does show Jane that there is more to be found within and that he indeed is a gentle person. As he tells Jane the story of how Adéle became his charge, Jane is able to see past his rough exterior and knows that deep down is a man who has been hurt and is yearning to be loved. Mr. Rochester is a gentleman but certainly does not prove himself to be one until he starts to open up to Jane. Because a gentleman “has too much good sense to be affronted at insults, he is too well employed to remember injuries, and too indolent to bear malice” (Newman). For this reason Mr. Rochester is truly not a gentleman because he has no good sense when it comes to insults. When he asks Jane “do you think me handsome?” she answers him abruptly and says “No, sir” (Brontë 130-131). He is insulted by her remark and scolds her for it. Also he remembers injuries and bears extensive malice towards his father and brother for their trickery into marrying Bertha. True, he conceals his marriage from Jane and asks her to marry him but when the time comes, he tells her everything. Despite the fact that Mr. Rochester is an unrefined and somewhat graceless brute, he is able to charm Jane and she falls deeply in love with him.

A gentleman is certainly allowed to do mistakes in life, and cannot be defined only by his immediate actions when it comes to taking decisions. The suitors’ decision to withhold their secrets will not take away their title of being gentlemen, it is what they do afterwards that has to be scrutinized. As for Mr. Ferrars, coming to Elinor and telling her everything about his past with Miss Steel and their engagement takes courage. He could have just left her in agony and forgotten about her but his love is too strong and he is a gentleman and thus he cannot leave things as broken as they are. Also Mr. Rochester, he has been burnt and has difficulty in trusting again and perhaps had no intentions to try but as Jane comes into his life he finds that perhaps there is more to life. He opens up his heart to her and becomes a better man. He is a gentleman by treating her like an equal. Thus Mr. Ferrars and Mr. Rochester do live up the title of being gentlemen but Angel has to do more to prove himself. Not only does he marry Tess and then leave her: he does not provide her with any future security and shows no concern about what may become of her after he is gone. As he
is traveling around in Brazil, he meets his fellow countryman and they travel together for some time. Angel tells his friend the story about his marriage to Tess and what he did after she confides in him and tells him the truth about her past. His friend sees the matter in a different light from Angel and, “thought that what Tess had been was of no importance beside what she would be, and plainly told Clare that he was wrong in coming away from her” (Hardy 433). For Angel it takes another man to finally make him see how wrong he was to leave her although he has been having regrets. As a result, Angel has to amend for his behavior towards Tess in order to become a gentleman again, but by doing so he shows that he has a heart and that he is only too young to realize how wrong he was in treating her so.

A gentleman goes by certain rules and traditions, there are certain ways to feel and appear and there are the family traditions and values to be considered too. As for Mr. Ferrars and Mr. Rochester, they are indeed gentlemen both from the traditional viewpoint and also in how their personality is. Although Mr. Rochester started on the wrong side he was able to changes his ways and become the gentleman he was always meant to be. Angel is a young gentleman with the emphasis on young because he is too immature to realize how wrong he is in treating Tess the way his does, but he is old and mature enough to love her and so that makes it difficult to define him as a gentleman. As far as traditions and old definition go, all three suitors are gentlemen, but from my personal point of view, Mr. Ferrars and Mr. Rochester are able to prove that they are indeed worthy of the title.
Conclusion
The three suitors all come from the 19th century but from a different time era. The traditions are mostly the same for each one because what they do in life reflects on their families and as they come from respectable families they are not at all at liberty to do what they choose or go their own ways because that is not in their family’s tradition. In those days, marriage was a big part of a man’s life and although he is able to choose nowadays, he was not at liberty to choose whomever he felt worthy in those days, because his family has a say in whom he chooses and if that woman is not a part of their high class society, the family is bound to say no to the match and choose for him a wife whom would better suit him and the family. Although Mr. Ferrars has problems with his family and is not at all free to choose for himself, he does go by his own heart in the end and chooses Elinor as his wife and life companion. Furthermore, Mr. Ferrars’ actions show that he is a gentleman and indeed a genuine one. He has such good manners and tries to make everyone comfortable around him. He never intentionally wants to hurt Elinor’s feelings and as he is able to come clean and open his heart to her he is true to his character and is a perfect candidate for the noble race of gentlemen.

As for our second suitor, Mr. Rochester, he does come from a respectable family and should, according to tradition, choose a wife from his own society but indeed he does not. He has been able to leave his family values out of his decision to pursue Jane because he was burnt by them. Although he has his rough exterior he has his good sides too but Mr. Rochester is not as good a specimen of a gentleman like Mr. Ferrars because he is rude and conceited and at first he does not show any hint of gentlemanly manners towards those who deserve it. However, as he gets to know Jane and lets her into his heart, he opens up and reveals a fascinating personality and a vulnerable man who’s heart has been trudged upon by his own family. As Jane gets him to open up, the mysterious Mr. Rochester is not so mysterious anymore and appears as a true gentleman. As a result we have two gentleman, true and genuine who both live up to the expectations.

Now to our third suitor, the son of the parson, Angel Clare. Although his family may not be rich they do live by their own standards. They are a respectable family in their society and have their reputation to uphold. Angel is indeed not at liberty to choose a wife who is not from a good and respectable family but he does not have as much pressure on him as Mr. Ferrars and Mr. Rochester do. Angel knows that
he cannot bring whomever he wants home to his parents but he falls in love with Tess and is determined to have her as his wife. But is he a gentleman like the other two suitors? Perhaps he can be considered to be a gentleman when it comes to his education and manners but in his heart he is not. Maybe Angel is able to redeem himself after leaving Tess heartbroken because he does feel remorse and realizes that he was wrong in turning her away, but he needs help from a fellow traveler to see his own failure. He never tries to contact her or find out how she is doing: instead he thinks about himself and goes on with his travels. It is true that he does feel bad about leaving her but he values his own selfish ways more and so he falls from being a gentleman to being a selfish immature young man who does not see the true values in life.

Therefore, the conclusion is that, Mr. Ferrars and Mr. Rochester are both able to live up to the expectations and live by the name of being gentlemen. Although they did have their own personal problems and were secretive they are able to find the woman of their dreams and in their pursuit, show them how much they were willing to sacrifices to be with them. Mr. Ferrars sacrifices his family and fortune to be able to be with Elinor, and Mr. Rochester sacrifices his reputation and friends to be with Jane. And on that note, Angel does not sacrifice anything and thinks only off himself and not about what is right. He chooses Tess to be his wife and gets her to marry him, but as she does not turn out to be the one he thought, he merely throws her away and shows no feeling of love towards her. As a result, he is not a gentleman like our other two suitors.

Whatever our suitors, Mr. Ferrars and Mr. Rochester, did in life, they lived by their heart and that is what a true and genuine gentleman does: he follows his heart and he is willing to give his lady the whole world and more.
Works Cited


