
The Making of a Gentleman

Inheritance, Beauty and Class in Henry James's *The Princess Casamassima*,
George Gissing's *Demos* and Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy*

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Introduction

In this thesis, I shall analyse Henry James's *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), George Gissing's *Demos* (1886) and Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886) to show how texts in the Britain of the mid-1880s complexly negotiate social anxieties and how prose fiction operated as a site where discourses of class and identity could be examined. I shall particularly argue that these works express their interest in class through a dramatization of the meanings of inheritance. The immediate historical context, so fraught with social strife and class war, connects to past and future by means of the transmission framed in inheritance. More importantly, all three novels unite this sequential, intergenerational relationship of inheritance of property with the idea of the 'gentleman', a moral and gendered figure viewed as essentially above history, by virtue of his virtue. In other words, by means of ideas of inheritance and the gentleman all three books, though rooted in a specific historical moment, reach for a position supposedly outside of history.

At this time, the impact of industrialisation powerfully determined class issues and hierarchies. The industrial revolution not only played an important role within society but it affected literature as well. In *The English Novel in History 1840-1895* (1997), Elisabeth Deeds Ermarth explains that before 1840 novels usually focus on the natural and providential aspects of life: "Before 1850, Nature with a capital 'N' appears in narrative as a divinely formed setting for human affairs" (Ermarth 3). Therefore, novels of that time customarily describe some sort of personal journey in which the main character has to survive some sort of moral testing in order to be rewarded. She also claims that personal identity is more important than social context within the early nineteenth-century novel: "Identity is established and maintained outside social boundaries, though sometimes tested in them" (Ermarth 9-10). As a result of this, the main intention of characters is to resist change or

development as these were considered to be negative processes, detrimental to individual identity.

After 1840 the main focus no longer lies on the personal journey. Authors begin to reflect on society by showing that lives are not just a series of personal events ruled by providence: “everything belongs to a single system of relationship and measurement” (Ermarth 71). This connection has several results, character development becomes increasingly important within stories, differences between people, classes or groups become more obvious and these differences create a sense of inequality between the different social classes.

The concept of ‘the gentleman’ played an important role within Victorian literature, in large part because this imagined figure is so closely related to class differences and class. There are several reasons why the gentleman occupied a special position within society. The one key reason depends upon an understanding of the gentleman’s privileged origin. In his book *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel* (1981), Robin Gilmour claims that “The origins of the gentleman lie deep in feudal society and the qualification of birth” (Gilmour 4). If birth determines whether you are a gentleman or not one can conclude that the ‘title’ gentleman is hereditary. However, birth alone is in fact not sufficient to determine whether somebody is a gentleman or not.

The gentleman proves difficult to place within society because, despite the class affiliations mentioned above, the concept nevertheless depends neither on rank nor on social class. Instead it denotes a certain kind of moral excellence involving integrity, consideration, and decency; in ideal circumstances these qualities would be united with *politesse* and effortless urbanity. The ‘gentleman’ as such falls in between these two categories decided on character and on birth; a gentleman is not necessarily someone of aristocratic descent. As

Gilmour claims: “All aristocrats are gentleman, but not all gentlemen are aristocrats” (Gilmour 5).

The Victorians themselves struggled with the question what exactly defines a gentleman. This was mainly because the concept of ‘gentleman’ changed constantly during the Victorian period. Though ambiguity is written into the concept, nonetheless to clarify some of the ambiguities this thesis will historicize the concept of ‘the gentleman’. The argument within this thesis will be based on the ideas formulated by Robin Gilmour in his book *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel* (1981). After giving a definition of ‘the gentleman’ in Victorian literature, Gilmour states that questions about the influence of breeding and heredity “were perplexing to the early Victorians” (Gilmour 33). As they are so central to the novels themselves, these questions will be the building blocks of the successive chapters in this thesis.

The first chapter in this thesis consists of three parts and starts with an overview on the reception of *The Princess Casamassima*, *Demos* and *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. This section briefly discusses what readers and critics thought of the novel and this critical reception will help to create the historical framework of this thesis. The second section provides a short introduction to the concept of inheritance, since this concept plays an important role in the three novels. In this chapter, the philosophy and views of Edmund Burke will be used to illustrate the importance of inheritance within society. Given his continuing centrality to the nineteenth-century intellectual discourse, it is entirely right that Burke should be the political theorist of choice in this regard. His understanding of tradition, inheritance and the relationship between the generations was highly influential throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. It was then, and perhaps even now remains, the most important example of a conservative political philosophy. Burke’s ideas were refracted through Coleridge’s later political writings, and in this form exerted even further influence on the understanding of a peculiarly British social

contract. Above all, in the later nineteenth century, Burke exerted influence on Liberals as much as on Tories, and was praised both by Disraeli and Gladstone. The final section in this chapter will further explore the concept of the gentleman. What makes a true gentleman? The term gentleman is a very ambiguous term. It is therefore impossible to give a clear definition of 'the Gentleman'. However, this chapter will take into consideration which qualities a gentleman needs to possess and how he can be recognised.

The second chapter will deal with the importance of concepts of 'breeding'. It will explore the importance of breeding in the making of a gentleman and consider what the effects are of somebody's upbringing on his manners and social status. To be able to draw a conclusion on this subject I will first make a comparison between the different upbringings of the three main characters: Hyacinth Robinson in *The Princess Casamassima*, Richard Mutimer in *Demos* and Cedric Errol in *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. After the comparison the definition of 'the gentleman' given in chapter one will help to determine whether breeding is the most influential factor in the making of a gentleman.

The third chapter will concern itself with the concept of beauty. It will describe how the concept of beauty is linked to the image of class and it will show how appearances are used by the characters as a means to ensure their social mobility and in an attempt to overcome stigmas and stereotypes.

Chapter four will examine in more detail the various different ways in which it was possible to move up the social ladder. More prominently this chapter will consider the struggles which are associated with social mobility and it will also show that not all attempts to rise to the upper-middle class are successful.

The central focus of this thesis will be the struggle of Henry James's Hyacinth, Gissing's Richard and Hodgson Burnett's Cedric with their own positions within society.

They are confronted with class limits and strive to overcome them in order to change society and to create more equality. Are their attempts eventually successful or do they fail and do they become a victim of their own battle against society? It is difficult to give a conclusive answer to these questions because in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* one gets to see a romanticised version of society, a society in which anything is possible, while realist novels like *The Princess Casamassima* and *Demos* show that it is nearly impossible to improve your social status unless you have the right ancestors. Therefore I shall argue in this thesis that in *The Princess Casamassima*, *Demos* and *Little Lord Fauntleroy* attempts to move up to a higher social class turn out to be unsuccessful, because these novels all adhere to an essentially conservative view of society, in which social mobility proves impossible, except through genuine inheritance.

Chapter 1 Critical Reception and Historical Context

This chapter consists of three parts. First of all, the three novels discussed in this thesis all give an impression of nineteenth-century English society. It is a society with one of the most complex social structures in which status, birth right and inheritance all play a major role. To increase an understanding of the novels it is helpful to take a closer look at how the novels were received by literary critics and readers when the novels were first published. Furthermore, it is important to investigate the concept of inheritance since this theme plays an important role in all three novels. A starting point for this investigation will be provided by the philosopher Edmund Burke, whose conservative philosophy remains the clearest and most influential statement of such views of society. The final section of this chapter will examine the concept of the gentleman, another theme which plays a major role in *The Princess Casamassima*, *Demos* and *Little Lord Fauntleroy*.

Henry James always struggled with criticism and around the time that *The Princess Casamassima* appeared, he was struggling with his career; according to Roger Gard in *Henry James The Critical Heritage* (1968) the reading public thought that James's novels were not very innovative: "But the main new feature of these years was a growing feeling among reviewers and others that James was repeating himself, that he had little new to offer" (Gard 10). Because of this criticism James paid excessive attention to his new novels in order to try to make them successful. However, the two novels he published in 1886, *The Bostonians* and the *The Princess Casamassima*, were not well received by the reading public and this left James dejected as he wrote in a letter to William Dean Howells in 1888:

I am still staggering a good deal under the mysterious and (to me) inexplicable injury wrought – apparently – upon my situation by my last two novels, *The Bostonians* and *The Princess*, from which I expected so much and derived so little. They have reduced my desire, and demand, for my productions to zero. (Edel 209,1980)

After the failure of *Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima* Henry James temporarily focused on writing plays.

Tony Tanner claims in *Writers and Their Work* that Henry James made a conscious decision to write a social novel. With *The Princess Casamassima* James's attention "shifted from a reform movement to a revolutionary one" (Tanner 13) and by doing so James portrayed a "menacing threat to society coming from the lower classes" (Tanner 14). This realistic portrayal of society and its threats is one of the reasons why the novel was not received very well, as Leon Edel claims in *Henry James The Middle Years 1884-1894*. During the Victorian period, readers "tended to look to fiction for comfort and amusement, not for the anxieties of their daily lives" (Edel 117, 1963). This claim is supported by a review written by Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, who seems to write a very positive review on *The Princess Casamassima*, but uses terms that are often applied to melodramatic romance:

Here is a genuine romance, with conspirators, and harlots, and stabbings, and jails, and low-lived men and women who drop their h's and real incidents, and strong emotions, and everything "in a concatenation accordingly." (Gard 179)

By using these terms Bulwer-Lytton only shows that he, belonging himself to the upper class, misses the point of the novel completely because his review shows he is unaware of the fact that James tries to portray the inequality between the working class and the upper class. Where James tries to address class conflicts within society, Sir Edward sees the novel as entertainment instead of a representation of social reality. Furthermore, Bulwer-Lytton's review shows that he cannot truly empathize with the struggle of the working classes. He acknowledges that there are social problems, but he himself does not seem affected by them. He does not comment on the fact that he could use his position as an aristocrat to improve the living and working conditions of the working class. Therefore, one can conclude that he does not regard the novel as a statement on society.

The second reason why the reading audience did not feel connected to the novel was that they could not truly understand the fact that the protagonist of the novel, Hyacinth Robinson, moves between two worlds. The contrast between the dark and drab world of the working classes and

Hyacinth's invitation to the country house of the Princess is too stark (Edel 117-118, 1963). This contrast between the working classes and the middle class is symbolized in Hyacinth's character and this connection is caused by Hyacinth's descent. According to Leon Edel, ancestry is important in the novel: "Hyacinth is endowed with an elaborate and over-powering heredity, after the manner of Zola" (Edel 120, 1963). Hyacinth's connection to both the aristocracy and to his mother's rebelliousness is the reason why he feels such a duality in his nature and why he struggles with his class identity. According to an anonymous review, Hyacinth "is intended to represent the struggle between the inherited feelings of an aristocratic father with all kinds of refined tastes and insights, and the light rebellious nature of his French mother" (Gard 176). By describing Hyacinth as a character who is adrift, Henry James emphasizes the difficulty of the social struggle. There is the need for social reform on the one hand, but on the other hand this reformation is doomed to fail as Hyacinth comes to the conclusion that the revolutionists have no replacement for when a class-based society is taken down: "it is only because he feels more and more deeply that there is nothing proposed by the revolutionists which could be set up in its place" (Gard 176). Hyacinth struggles with his own nature and with the workings of society. Therefore, the only conclusion Hyacinth can draw is that he cannot restore the order within society.

In *A Companion to the Victorian Novel* (2002) Clare Loughlin-Chow calls George Gissing "a radical spirit of social reform" (Loughlin-Chow 77). This description links Gissing to the views Henry James had when writing *The Princess Casamassima* and suggests that Gissing strove for social reform. Gissing himself experienced the tough living conditions of the working class when he dissociated himself from the middle class by marrying a former prostitute (Loughlin-Chow 77). According to Loughlin-Chow, *Demos* portrays Gissing's inner conflict between pitying the working-class and loathing them. Therefore, the novel starts out with proclaiming the need for social reform, but eventually shows that the attempt to reform society will fail. Loughlin-Chow argues that, though Richard Mutimer tries to rise above his class, eventually his nature has already been determined by his heredity and milieu (Loughlin-Chow 78). This thesis will discuss this aspect, together with the effect of Richard Mutimer's appearance in a later chapter.

According to George Gissing himself he wrote *Demos* as a satire about the working class: “I shall call it *Demos* and it will be a rather savage satire on working-class aims and capacities” (Gissing 172, 1927). The topical element in *Demos* is class struggle and by describing the inequality within society Gissing shows the need for social reform. At the same time he shows that human folly prevents social reform. Richard Mutimer is so affected by his upbringing and his milieu that he is unable to bring about the social changes to which he aspires. Edith Sichel even claims in a review that *Demos* “is written to prove the errors of Socialism and the impracticability of equality” (Coustillas 120). Gissing indeed makes sure that the characters from the middle class turn out to be victorious at the end of the novel, as Hubert Eldon gets his inheritance and Adela Waltham can marry Hubert.

In her article “Tradition and the Individual Talent of Frances Hodgson Burnett: A Generic Analysis of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *A Little Princess*, and *The Secret Garden*,” Phyllis Bixler Koppes claims that Burnett uses the literary form of the exemplum within *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. The novel is used to emphasize a moral point. The protagonist of the novel, Cedric Errol, shows that moral nature is an inherited gift. Either you have a moral nature or you do not and since Cedric is of aristocratic descent and because he is a child, goodness should be in his blood. Cedric not only shows that he has inherited his moral nature, he also symbolizes virtues such as compassion, love and honesty. These are all aspects which play an important role within the literary convention of the exemplum and by using them Burnett tries to convince the readers to live virtuously like Cedric.

In contrast with Cedric himself, his grandfather the Earl lacks moral integrity, but Cedric’s gentle nature is beneficial to the Earl. Therefore, Cedric can be seen as a child paragon: “Cedric effects this marvellous change in his irascible, misanthropic grandfather” (Bixler 192). Cedric influences how the Earl responds to the people who live on his estate and he is more willing to listen to the villagers’ requests to improve their living conditions. The fact that the Earl is willing to listen to his grandson is explained by Bixler, who claims that Cedric is what Burnett calls “the innocent friend of the whole world.” Due to his innocence Cedric is unable to perceive “any barrier between his own heart and any other” (Bixler 193). Cedric loves his grandfather dearly and to him it is impossible to conceive that his grandfather might not like him.

The exemplum is not the only form Burnett uses in her stories. She often falls back on the form of the fairy tale as well. Bixler argues that character revelation is Burnett's main concern. In order to reveal the true natures of her characters Burnett uses a technique which can be found in exempla as well as in fairy tales: "she presents Cedric and Sara with a series of tests. These tests are designed to demonstrate whether the children's conspicuous beauty is a reliable sign of their nature, whether they are as inwardly noble and virtuous as their outward appearance would suggest" (Bixler 193). Cedric is tried in several different ways. First of all he is tested by his grandfather who is very suspicious about his grandson and his behaviour. To the reader the Earl is almost described as a monster, but Cedric is unaware of this. Another important test for Cedric is the move from America to England. In order to start a different life with his grandfather Cedric has to leave behind his home and friends in America. The next test, and perhaps the most difficult one, is whether Cedric can live separated from his mother, who is not allowed to live in the same house as her son. Cedric bears the tests without complaints and more importantly he does not change his behaviour or nature. Cedric has shown that he is worthy enough to inherit his grandfather's title and even more importantly, he has shown to be an Earl by nature. As a result of this one can conclude that order is eventually restored because Cedric shows his good nature and can therefore claim his inheritance.

The concept of inheritance plays an important role in all three novels and I will use the views of Edmund Burke to analyse this theme. According to Burke, virtue is the most important principle within society. He describes virtue mainly in the religious sense, but also grounds it in the traditional and long-standing forms that have arisen over time in society. Without such socially-sanctioned virtue, society will eventually fall apart. As he argues in his work *A Vindication of Natural History* (1999): "These relations, which are truth itself, the foundation of virtue and consequently the only measures of happiness, should likewise be the only measures by which we should direct our reasoning" (Burke 34). This means that if we do not live virtuously and according to long-standing social conventions and moral values, we might easily become a victim of folly and make the wrong choices in life.

If you live virtuously you create a strong society, but this is only the first step towards doing so. When a group of people have created a stable society, it is important to preserve this stability. In Burke's view the correct way to do this is through inheritance. He sets out several reasons for the importance of inheritance. First, an inheritance keeps you connected to your forefathers and earlier generations. This means that you are not only connected to ancestors by blood but also by the property or the estate that you inherit. Owning this property enables you to honour and respect your forefathers by taking good care of what has been given to you. So inheriting property is a privilege but at the same time it is a burden or duty because you are forever connected to your past. Burke, however, sees this burden as something positive. He argues in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* that the influence of your ancestors can be used to guide you towards the right decisions: "Always acting as if in the presence of canonized forefathers, the spirit of freedom, leading in itself to misrule and excess, is tempered with an awful gravity" (Burke 429). Burke claims that thinking for yourself leads to wrong decisions unless you try to think in the same way as your ancestors did. Autonomy is of less value than loyalty to the forms and spirit of the past.

This does not mean that Burke suggests that all improvement is wrong. Rather he suggests that it is good to look further than your forefathers. It is a positive thing to strive for improvement because this will help to preserve society. Inheritance is not only taking over something already present, it also involves its nurturance and passing on: "Besides, the people of England well know that the idea of inheritance furnishes a sure principle of conservation, and a sure principle of transmission, without excluding a principle of improvement" (Burke 428). However, striving for improvement can only be good when it is done the right way. This means that you must not make any rash decisions and you should not act in the heat of the moment. You should always bear in mind that your family, property and society profit from stability.

Burke so strongly believes in the stability of society that he claims that people do not envy each other for their property or belongings. He even claims that people in a stable society instinctively know to what they are entitled. Everyone knows their place, and is – in Burke's view – contented to remain in it. Therefore, they can experience and enjoy wealth as a common good:

It is the public ornament. It is the public consolation. It nourishes the public hope. The poorest man finds his own importance and dignity in it, whilst the wealth and pride of individuals at every moment makes the man of humble rank and fortune sensible of his inferiority [...] when he will be equal by nature and, may be more than equal by virtue, that this portion of the general wealth of his country is employed and sanctified... (Burke 459)

This claim shows Burke's illusory view of society; in reality, things were quite otherwise in England during the nineteenth century. There were great divisions between the different classes in England and in 1886 the sources of conflict between the rich and the poor only seemed to increase. The call for a more equal and fairer society became stronger, which made it difficult to defend this principle any longer.

The concept that often functions as a bridge between the different social classes is the concept of the gentleman, as it is seen as a means to enter the higher ranks of society. Social mobility and thus the concept of the gentleman play a crucial role in *The Princess Casamassima*, *Demos* and *Little Lord Fauntleroy*.

The concept of the gentleman within Victorian society and particularly within Victorian literature was a complex one. The main reason for this complexity was that society itself was intricate, diverse, and subject to enormous changes at that point in time. In previous centuries England's society had been based on strictly defined classes. Society had long been

dominated by the land-owning aristocracy and this continued to be the case for most of the nineteenth century (Gilmour 1). However, after the industrial revolution, the middle class expanded. Not only the aristocratic landowners could call themselves wealthy anymore. According to Robin Gilmour, this shift proved to be problematic: “The very social forces which were bringing new groups knocking on the door of gentility were rendering problematic the qualifications on which they could be admitted” (Gilmour 6). In other words, more people claimed a rank because they became wealthier: “in a rapidly changing society more and more people were becoming wealthy enough to sense the attainability of a rank that had always, in theory, been open to penetration from below” (Gilmour 3). Even though society was open to social mobility it was mostly the case that people moved up only one step to the adjoining class. It hardly ever happened that people skipped classes. As Richard Altick claims in his book *Victorian People and Ideas* (1973): “Theoretically there was nothing to prevent a man fired by praiseworthy ambition from rising as high as his talents and exercise of the appropriate prudential virtues allowed. In practice the odds were against it” (Altick 19). In other words, Altick claims that it was still nearly impossible to move up to the ranks of the aristocracy or the gentry. Nonetheless the rank of gentleman became the goal for men trying to move up the social ladder.

The boundaries which defined this rank had to be stretched so that more people from the middle class were able to enter it without the rank losing its social esteem: “They wanted to widen the basis of qualification to include themselves, without sacrificing the exclusiveness which gave the rank its social esteem” (Gilmour 4).

While the qualifications for entering the rank of gentleman changed and were open for debate it remained rather unclear which specific trades or professions gave access to the rank and why they did so. Since the established order did not want to lose any prestige it was often emphasised that certain groups of people did not belong to the gentlemanly rank and in effect

people were excluded. The grounds on which a person was allowed to enter the rank of gentleman seemed arbitrary. There appeared to be no rules why an army officer could enter the middle class, but a surgeon could not. According to Gilmour, this system of exclusion was mainly aimed at “ensuring the prestige of those occupations which reinforced the stability of a social hierarchy based on the ownership of land” (Gilmour 7). Those professions which contributed to the stability of the established order were allowed to enter the middle class. In effect this necessarily excluded many other people. This is the starting point of the special role the rank of gentleman fulfilled within the Victorian period, because in theory the rank was open to anybody, but it “was put effectively out of reach by the abiding separation of work and income on which the traditional exclusiveness of the traditional gentleman was based” (Gilmour 7). However, there was one other barrier to becoming a gentleman, one formed through discourses of gender. After all, the term gentleman asserts that it is a rank which is only open to the male population and an identity which is exclusively centred around men.

The social prestige of the rank was not the only aspect which appealed to people. ‘The Gentleman’ also represents “a cultural goal, a mirror of desirable moral and social values” (Gilmour 1). The word gentleman itself still heavily relies on the fact that it has to do with a person’s origin: “The origins of the gentleman lie deep in feudal society and the qualification of birth” (Gilmour 4), yet in the Victorian period birth alone was no longer the only requirement. Birth was still important because it often gave people the opportunity of a good education: “Birth was significant in so far as the man of family and liberal education would have greater opportunity for acquiring gentle manners and practising gentle behaviour, but every courtesy writer agreed that birth alone could not make the complete gentleman” (Gilmour 4). This is why moral attributes play an important role in the appeal of ‘the gentleman’. To the Victorians the gentleman represented the ultimate balance between social

and moral attributes. As Gilmour argues, “it was the subtle and shifting balance between the social and moral attributes that gave gentlemanliness its fascination [...]. [I]n the perfect gentleman a habitual moral considerateness has been translated into such a grace of manner” (Gilmour 4). Thus, in conclusion one can say that the concept of ‘The Gentleman’ entails the conjunction of birth, moral character and social position. All these different aspects can be seen apart, but when they come together within a character one will definitely recognize such a person as a ‘gentleman’. The aspects mentioned above will be applied to the main characters Hyacinth Robinson, Richard Mutimer and Cedric Errol in order to show the ambiguity of ‘The Gentleman’.

Having established a clear framework for both the concept of inheritance as for the concept of the gentleman, I will apply them to the novels, where, as we shall see, things are complex and contentious.

Chapter 2 The Importance of Breeding in Making a Gentleman

The notion of class plays an important role within British society during the Victorian period. Traditionally class was inheritable, just like property. This means that you automatically belonged to the same class as your parents. However, it was possible to move between classes. Obtaining the status of gentleman was one way to increase your prestige; other ways to move to a higher class were inheriting money or property, marrying someone from a higher class or by working hard.

The fact that society was so class-oriented puts the main character in *The Princess Casamassima*, Hyacinth Robinson, in an uncertain position. Hyacinth's father is a lord, which should have placed Hyacinth as a member of the aristocracy and would have proven that birth indeed goes before breeding. However, Hyacinth is born out of wedlock and therefore he has no rights or claims to titles or social inheritance at all. Hyacinth is 'illegitimate' and is therefore seen as socially inferior. Hyacinth is raised by Miss Pynsent, who always valued Hyacinth's descent and tried to keep him connected to his aristocratic background. Miss Pynsent is a seamstress and therefore belongs to the working class. She does not earn enough money to give Hyacinth, for example, the proper education that he would have received if he had been a legitimate son of a lord.

One way in which she tried to accomplish her goal of keeping him connected to his origin was by making sure that Hyacinth was always dressed properly. Simon James argues that clothing can be used to "proclaim wealth, poverty or mere respectability, but also movement between these states" (S. James 32). Simon James uses this idea as a way to examine Gissing's work, but one can also apply his thought to Miss Pynsent, who tries to make Hyacinth look as if he is from the upper class by dressing him as smartly as she can: "Her eyes descended to the details of his dress: the careful mending of his short breeches and

his long coloured stockings, which she was in a position to appreciate, as well as the knot of bright ribbon which the dressmaker has passed onto his collar. . .” (James 13). The second way in which Miss Pynsent tries to keep Hyacinth connected to his aristocratic background becomes clear after her death. When ‘Pinnie’ dies Hyacinth inherits a small sum of money. Hyacinth never had expected to inherit any money from Miss Pynsent. As Simon James points out, in novels, perhaps as in life, if they are to maintain their moral integrity characters should never expect to obtain a legacy or inheritance beforehand: “Such an ending . . . , must never be anticipated nor expected” (S. James 21). As happens to Richard Carstone in Dickens’ *Bleak House* (1852-3), expecting an inheritance can lead to undesirable conduct such as living excessively and spending a lot of money, or detrimental changes in behaviour. According to Burke’s principles it is important simply to get on with living a virtuous life. By living virtuously, you show that you are worthy enough to obtain an inheritance, especially since getting an inheritance is a matter of honour, according to Burke. The result of receiving a legacy is that you are forever connected to your forefathers, and you can honour your forefathers by taking good care of their heritage. Miss Pynsent can be seen as Hyacinth’s ancestor. She honours Hyacinth by bequeathing her money to him and in return Hyacinth honours Miss Pynsent by making his grand tour through France and Italy. In that sense Hyacinth follows Burke’s principle of honouring one’s ancestors, because he honours Miss Pynsent’s last request by making the grand tour she had envisioned for him.

Miss Pynsent’s intention was that Hyacinth would use the inheritance to travel: “She hoped you’d go abroad and see the world.” The fiddler watched his young friend and then added: “She had a particular wish you should go to Paris” (James 316-317). This wish is a rather significant one, because during the Victorian age it was customary that upper-class boys would go on a Grand Tour through Europe, mainly through Italy and France. This Tour was part of their upbringing and was meant to prepare the boys for adulthood by bringing

them into contact with art, architecture and other beautiful things. Taking a Grand Tour was seen as a turning point in one's life and was part of becoming a gentleman. The fact that Hyacinth is enabled to go abroad signifies that this is Hyacinth's Grand Tour and thus it symbolically links him to his aristocratic background. In Hyacinth's case the Grand Tour is successful; Paris impresses him: "It seemed to him the place expressed herself, and did it in grand style, while London remained vague and blurred, inarticulate, blunt and dim. Splendid Paris, Charming Paris indeed!" (James 321). The experiences he gains during his trip contribute to the fact that Hyacinth's view of the world and society starts to change.

Miss Pynsent is not the only influencing factor within Hyacinth's upbringing. The fact that he is a bookbinder also plays an important role in determining whether he can be accepted into the rank of 'the gentleman' or not. His training as a bookbinder has influenced Hyacinth and has given him the opportunity to climb up the social ladder.

According to Mark Falcoff in his article "Revolution for the Rich" (2006), Hyacinth's ability to appreciate art and literature emerges from the fact that Hyacinth is a bookbinder: "The real key to the novel is the single fact of Hyacinth's profession" (25). His education as a bookbinder improves his eye for detail, because in his work Hyacinth has to pay close attention to fine bindings and beautiful finishes. Hyacinth uses this knowledge when he looks at the world as well.

Hyacinth's eye for detail not only helps him to appreciate the books and art which surrounds him; he is also able to value other people's belongings. This becomes clear when he visits the Princess and Lady Aurora at their homes. The Princess Casamassima was a young woman from the middle class who entered into an arranged marriage with an Italian prince and as a result entered the higher ranks of society. She now lives separated from her husband, however, and decides that she wants to help the poor and therefore she is attracted to the socialist movement. Lady Aurora is born into the aristocracy but despises it. She sees the inequality within society and if she had the chance she would give up her wealth to help the poor and to create a more equal society. When

Hyacinth visits Lady Aurora he wonders how it is possible that Lady Aurora seems unimpressed by her own possessions and would renounce them if she could. During this visit, Hyacinth's love for beautiful objects becomes clear: "Well, how can you leave all those beautiful things to come and breathe this beastly air, surround yourself with hideous images and associate with people whose smallest fault is that they are ignorant, brutal and dirty?" (James 175). His visit to Lady Aurora seems to open Hyacinth's eyes and he begins to realise that he feels connected to the beautiful things in life. While he always thought that he felt sympathy for the poor and believed that he wanted equality for everyone, he slowly starts to realize that you need a form of inequality to be able to see and appreciate the beautiful things in life.

In Victorian England the concept of "deference" – willing acknowledgement that the people in the classes above one's own were justly entitled to their superiority – was so strong that it was proof against all the subversive and disintegrating forces which were brought on to bear against it (Altick 19).

However, despite the old-fashioned concept of deference, this novel exposes the weight of social differences, and shows that inequality leads to envy. The difference between the living conditions of the aristocracy and the harsh conditions of the working-class people were reason enough for discontent. Working-class people expect help from the upper class to improve their conditions and when this does not happen the cry for social change gets louder. Hyacinth has always supported the desire for equality, but he comes to the conclusion that if everything is equally divided differences are being washed out and you will never be able to discern them. This means that you also cannot see the difference between a true work of art and an ordinary drawing or painting.

His visit to the Princess in the country only strengthens Hyacinth's belief that inequality within society is unavoidable. During this visit Hyacinth is confronted with

aristocratic life and he sees that it is different from life in London, but that it is not necessarily the corrupt way of living he had always thought it to be. One consequence of his visit to the country is that Hyacinth begins to feel even more connected to the higher classes to which he belongs by birth-right. He feels less and less affection for the poor and at the same time he realises he is embracing the aristocratic part of his nature.

Hyacinth's strong reaction to art is striking because, as Richard Altick explains, during the Victorian period art was seen as a means to redeem society: "Important though the didactic function of art was, in the view of Ruskin, William Morris, and their followers there was still a greater one: in art lay the only means by which modern society could be redeemed and the world made a decent place for man to work and live" (Altick 281). Hyacinth needs art to find peace for himself. What he does not realise is that art can be used to cure society itself: "Public beauty, as embodied in buildings, gardens, and landscaping, the totality of any man-made scene, was a function of social health" (Altick 282). Hyacinth fears that art ends up damaged and destroyed in the chaotic and fragmented world he lives in. However, Hyacinth fails to see that if art is shared and enjoyed by the whole society, it can cure the social malaise Hyacinth experiences every day: Reintegration would come only if men could universally share the beauties of nature and art (Altick 282). Hyacinth uses art in an attempt to cure the social malaise he experiences all around him, but he is unable to solve it. Hyacinth's opinion is that art cannot be equally divided among the people. The more Hyacinth comes into contact with the beautiful aspects of society the more his senses are stimulated to look at the world in a different, more gentle or subdued way. His education has taught Hyacinth how to look at the world like a gentleman.

Richard Mutimer, the main character in *Demos*, has a completely different background. Richard unexpectedly inherits his uncle's money and his estate. Richard uses this inheritance to invest in society in order to reduce the economic and social differences between

the different classes. By doing so he shows that he is worthy of his legacy. He comes up with the notion of building an industrial compound in the valley where his great uncle lived: “‘My idea is,’ he said, ‘to make the mines at Wanley the basis of great industrial undertakings, just as any capitalist might, but to conduct these undertakings in a way consistent with our views. I would begin by building furnaces, and in time add engineering works on a large scale’” (Gissing 56). This novel emphasises the need for social reform. By starting his compound, Mutimer Junior can increase employment and he wants to give his employees fair wages, improve their working conditions and make sure they have small but proper houses. In short, he sees it as his duty to improve society and wants to use his inheritance to give the people what they lack. Mutimer’s highly idealistic scheme comes from the fact that he worked in a factory himself, so he has personal experience of poor working conditions and low wages. Furthermore, Mutimer has connections within the trade union who want to support his plan. Mutimer has the idea that the inheritance is a positive turning point for himself and by building the compound he hopes to give something back to society.

The fact that Richard is being described as a mechanic suggests that he is a manual labourer but it also suggests that he has had some form of education, just like Hyacinth, but obviously both their forms of education are not the kind of education privileged children from the upper class get to follow. So Richard’s education is not sufficient to qualify him as a gentleman. Indeed the novel argues the opposite. It gives the reader several examples of why Richard Mutimer is unsuited to enter the gentlemanly rank.

The first moment in the text which shows that Richard Mutimer cannot belong to the gentlemanly class is when Adela discovers a document which reveals that Richard has unlawfully inherited his uncle’s estate: “It was parchment. She unfolded it, and saw that it was covered with writing in a clerkly hand. How strange! ‘This is the last will and testament of me, Richard Mutimer’ [...] The date was some six months prior to old Richard Mutimer's

death. This could be nothing but the will which everyone believed him to have destroyed' (Gissing 307). When Adela finds the will, Richard shows how much the access to money has influenced him, for he is even prepared to destroy it: "'Would you then,' Adela asked gravely, 'destroy this will?' 'Yes.' The monosyllable was all he cared to reply" (Gissing 319). This event supports Simon James's suggestion that "Money is simultaneously attractive and repulsive; money's illimitable translatability into power or commodities make it a powerful force for good or evil" (S. James 3). Destroying the will and pretending it never existed would be a wicked act and according to Burke would make Richard Mutimer unworthy of the inheritance altogether. A true gentleman would never perform such an unvirtuous act.

Richard's way of speaking is another thing which shows that he is not suited to the gentlemanly class. At first Richard seems to have his looks in favour of him. They suggest that he possesses gentle manners, but he is still aware that he must adjust certain parts of his personality in order to fit into the rank of the gentleman completely. In particular, he has to adjust his speech: "He was conscious of the necessity of subduing his voice, and had a certain pleasure in the ease with which he achieved this feat. It would not have been so easy a day or two ago" (Gissing 55). Nevertheless, later on in the novel, when Richard thinks he has found the perfect way to fit in with the upper-class society, the reader finds another example in which Richard's speech betrays his working-class background: "Richard felt strongly that this was speaking in a generous way. He was not aware that his tone hinted as much, but it unmistakably did. The vulgarity of a man who tries hard not to be vulgar is always particularly distressing" (Gissing 183). The previous examples show that Mutimer lacks the gentle manners that would complete the image of 'the gentleman'. It does not matter how hard he tries to fit into the concept, for his old manners sometimes slip into his carefully constructed image and then people seem to sense that he is not truly a gentleman. One can therefore conclude that Richard Mutimer is struggling to fit in with the upper-class society.

His looks are one of the traits that work in favour of him, but the way he speaks seems to betray his descent.

Richard Mutimer wants to transcend history by trying to fit into the gentlemanly ranks but his nature has always shown that he was unfit for this rank. Besides his flawed nature, he also lacked a proper form of education which could have cultivated the requisite gentleness in his manners, but this form of education was only open to the privileged few who could afford such an education.

Richard almost seems to be the complete opposite of Cedric Errol in Burnett's novel, who proves to have exactly the perfect nature for gentlemanly behaviour. Little Cedric Errol lives with his mother, Mrs. Errol, in America. Cedric's father was the third son of the British Earl of Dorincourt, but he died when Cedric was only a baby. As seen above, the rules prescribe that the title of Earl will be inherited by the eldest son of the Earl, who gets the title Little Lord Fauntleroy until he becomes the Earl of Dorincourt.

The fact that Cedric's father was the youngest of three brothers shows that he is the third in line to inherit the title: "It was very bitter, the old Earl thought, that the son who was only third and would have only a very small fortune, should be the one who had all the gifts, and all the charms and all the strength and beauty" (Burnett 5). If Cedric's father is third in line it means that Cedric, as only child of the youngest brother, is the last in line to inherit the title.

Nevertheless, fate decides differently for Cedric: In the first place, the story his mamma told him was a very curious one. He was obliged to hear it two or three times before he could understand it. He could not imagine what Mr. Hobbs would think of it. It began with Earls; his grandpapa whom he had never see, was an earl; and his eldest uncle, if he had not been killed by a fall from his horse, would have been an Earl, too,

in time; after his death, his other uncle would have been an earl, if he had not died suddenly, in Rome, of a fever. After that, his own papa, if he had lived, would have been an earl; but since they all had died and only Cedric was left it appeared that *he* was to be an earl after his grandpapa's death— and for the present he was Lord Fauntleroy (Burnett20-21).

It is striking that Cedric's grandfather is still alive when Cedric hears about the fact that he will inherit a title. This gives Burke's principle of honouring the forefather a new dimension because Cedric can start honouring his grandfather while he is still alive. By doing so Cedric can prove that he is virtuous and worthy enough to inherit his grandfather's title and estate someday. Cedric of course does honour his grandfather in any way possible, and since his grandfather is still alive Cedric does not have to worry about maintaining a connection with a haunting past. On the other hand, his grandfather is not a haunting presence in the story because he is still around. The warm feelings Cedric has for his grandfather further strengthen the importance of family ties whether with the dead or the living.

Of the three characters that have been discussed in this chapter, Cedric has the best chance of truly becoming a gentleman. Not only does he have the right to an aristocratic title by birth, he also receives the best possible education. At first his mother teaches him the value of love, which is the basis of Cedric's gentle nature. His grandfather also teaches him how to handle the estate in the best way possible.

As Gilmour claims, high birth gives a better chance of a proper education as we have seen in the case of Cedric. However, Hyacinth is a good example of how education can influence one's nature as well. Cedric and Hyacinth both have in common that they are of noble birth but this fact does not play a role in Hyacinth's life. Hyacinth, however, does have a gentle manner which would have given him the possibility to enter the gentlemanly rank. In both these cases one finds that education and birth are both important, for Richard, who has

neither a good descent nor a good education, clearly cannot completely fit into the gentlemanly rank.

Chapter 3 The Influence of Physical Appearance and Beauty

The aspect of beauty plays an important role within society because beauty is seen as a sign of virtue, as Burke claimed: “From what has been said in the foregoing section, we may easily see how far the application of beauty to virtue may be made with propriety” (Burke 77). The link between beauty and virtue is a striking one for the determination of ‘the gentleman’ because virtue is the most important trait a gentleman can have, but beauty is more often a term which is applied to women rather than men. Since we have seen earlier that the gentleman is a purely male concept it is striking to see the idea of beauty being applied to men.

Hyacinth’s own physical beauty is not clearly discussed within the novel other than the fact that Miss Pynsent pays a lot of attention to the way Hyacinth is dressed. However, the novel does link beauty to social class by describing Hyacinth’s fascination with lives other people live. He is fascinated by their calm and orderly way of living and struck by the beauty, elegance and propriety of their homes and properties.

In *The Princess Casamassima* beauty is used as means to claim a certain social position. Millicent Henning tries to use her appearance to move out of the working class and into the middle class. At first Miss Pynsent describes Milly as a pretty child, but at the same time Miss Pynsent attenuates her remark, “which made her feel that the child’s perversity was as great as the beauty, somewhat soiled and dimmed, of her insolent little face” (James 25). When Milly and Ms. Pynsent meet each other again years later, Milly’s physical appearance is being discussed again:

She was certainly handsome, with a shining, bold, good-natured eye, a fine, free, physiognomic oval, an abundance of brown hair and a smile that flaunted the whiteness of her teeth. Her head was set on a fair strong neck and her robust young figure was rich in feminine curves [. . .] She was not graceful, and even the little

dressmaker, whose preference for distinguished forms never deserted her, indulged in the observation that she was common, despite her magnificence; but there was something about her indescribably fresh, successful and satisfying. (James 59)

Here it becomes clear that Miss Pynsent considers Milly's class while judging her appearance. She calls her pretty but at the same time recognises that Milly does not have the same grace as the women from the middle and upper classes. Miss Pynsent calls her common. This suggests that Milly's attempt to transcend her class boundaries is not successful. She makes the effort to look nice and dressed up, but her sense of style betrays that she does not possess natural grace and beauty. With her eye for fashion, Milly reveals the fact that she is trying to show people that her place is within the middle class, although her attempt to truly convince them fails.

However, Milly has the ambition to move up the social ladder and she knows that marriage is her best opportunity to achieve this goal. Milly's expectation is that men use her looks to determine whether she is a suitable candidate for marriage, but because she puts so much effort into her appearance people are distracted: "She could see this artist was looking at her hat, a wonderful composition of flowers and ribbons; her eyes had travelled up and down Millicent's whole person, but they rested in fascination on that grandest ornament" (James 57). Men look at her as if she is a mannequin who shows clothing and as a result they forget to value her as a person: "the dressing of her hair behind and the long grand lines of her figure draped in the new last thing. She was showing off this treasure to the Captain, who was lost in contemplation" (James 506). Clothing or accessories, such as Milly's hat, are often used to influence how people look at you.

It is also interesting to take into consideration Burke's claim that beauty and virtue are connected and then to apply this to Milly. Throughout the novel she is described as pretty, albeit common, but Milly is never described as typically virtuous. A reasonable conclusion

regarding this omission is that it reflects the fact that Milly is not naturally beautiful. She pretends to be beautiful by trying to be a person she is not, and she tries to acquire a position within society that she does not own. In other words, Milly's attempt to improve her position within society fails because the pretty clothes and the make-up cannot erase or change her nature and in the end she has to accept who she is and what her class is.

Miss Pynsent is not the only one who underestimates the power of Milly's appearance: Hyacinth does so as well. When Hyacinth and Milly meet each other again after several years of absence, he misjudges her appearance completely: "“And what establishment is that now?” The young man asked, gaining confidence and perceiving in detail how handsome she was. He hadn't roamed about London for nothing, and he knew that when a girl had such looks, a jocular tone of address, a pleasing freedom was *de rigueur*; so he added 'Is it the Bull and Gate or the Elephant and Castle?’" (James 68). According to Rebecca Strauss in her article "Henry James's Social Fabric" (2013), social reformers, such as Hyacinth, often worried that shop girls like Milly would eventually end up in prostitution. Milly proactively shows that she hopes to attain a better position within society. Her attempts to achieve her goals could be called emancipated because she takes the matters of her life in her own hands. During the Victorian period emancipated behaviour was frowned upon and authors usually placed emancipated women in a negative light, as Patricia Stubbs points out in *Women and Fiction* (1979): "They depict the would-be emancipated women as a compendium of all the moral and intellectual vice" (142) However, Hyacinth does not seem to realise that he is insulting to Milly. Hyacinth shows here that he is not truly a gentleman because he insults Milly. Yet his insult once again emphasises that Milly's outward appearance negatively influences the view people have of her.

Lady Aurora Langrish acts as a foil to Millicent Henning. As is the case with Millicent, Lady Aurora's appearance does not seem to match her descent. However, the

difference between Milly and Lady Aurora is that Milly tries to use her appearance to look as though she has improved her social status, while in Hyacinth's opinion Lady Aurora does not look like a Lady at all:

the occasion was interesting in spite of the lady's appearing to have so few of the qualities of her caste. She was about thirty years of age; her nose was large and, in spite of the sudden retreat of her chin, her face long and lean. She had the manner of extreme near-sightedness; her front teeth projected from her upper gums, which she revealed when she smiled, and her fair hair, in tangled silky skeins [...] drooped over her pink cheeks" (James 99).

A possible explanation could be that Lady Aurora dresses down because she is embarrassed about her class privilege. She is often among poor people and feels the great sense of inequality that separates the poor and herself. This inequality is the main reason why Lady Aurora wants to help the poor: "Already when I was fifteen years old I wanted to sell all I had and give to the poor. And ever since I've wanted to do something: it has seemed as if my heart would break if I shouldn't be able!" (James 175) This is a Christian example of a virtuous act, which would fit perfectly into Burke's view of a virtuous society.

Lastly, we come to Christina, better known as the Princess Casamassima herself. James describes her as a perfect beauty: "Her beauty had an air of perfection; it astonished and lifted one up, the sight of it seemed a privilege, a reward" (James 147). Christina has an arranged marriage and used her marriage to move up the social ladder. However, she ends up being disappointed by her marriage and as a result of this she sees class mobility as a failure as well. Therefore, she decides to commit herself to the revolutionary movement. Her looks reflect the virtuous life she is trying to lead by fighting for social equality.

The similarity between the princess and Milly is that they both longed to rise socially. Christina has been successful, because she has been married off to a prince: "She had been

married by her people, in a mercenary way, for the sake of a fortune and a title, and it had turned out as badly as her worst enemy could wish” (James 202). Her marriage has brought her the status she desired, but it has not made her happy and therefore the Princess lives separated from her husband.

The Princess Casamassima plays with and explores the idea of beauty. We find here a lower-class girl who tries to look pretty but never seems to be convincing in her attempt. Then there is a lady who is embarrassed about her wealth and tries to dress down, and the princess who is naturally pretty but when it comes to class has married up on the social ladder. In *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, Nancy Armstrong claims that the relationships between women in novels are “hardly ever arbitrary” (Armstrong 112). This suggests that the three women are connected to each other. They act as contrasts, as well as mirrors of each other by not dressing the way their class expects them to do.

The description of Richard Mutimer in *Demos* is rather clear. His looks favour him and yet his appearance cannot hide his descent. Richard Mutimer Junior is first described as follows: “His physique was admirable; little short of six feet in stature, he had shapely shoulders, an erect well-formed head, clean strong limbs, and a bearing which in natural ease and dignity matched that of the picked men of the upper class” (Gissing 33). At first sight, and judged only by his outward appearance, then, Richard seems to belong in his newly obtained class position. Moreover, he also seems to feel comfortable within his new-found position. This becomes clear when he visits a socialist ally: “A few days ago he would, in spite of himself, have been somewhat awed by the man-servant at the door, the furniture of the hall, the air of refinement in the room he entered. At present he smiled on everything. Could he not command the same as soon as he chose?” (Gissing 54)

The other characters in the novel are deceived by Richard’s appearance. Mrs Waltham, Adela’s mother, for example says: ““I can't help thinking, Adela, that in all

essentials I never knew a more gentlemanly man than Mr. Mutimer. There must be something superior in his family; no doubt we were altogether mistaken in speaking of him as a mechanic'" (Gissing 129). But Adela herself, as she tries to overcome the differences between her and Richard, comes to the conclusion that looks can be misleading and even show one's true nature: "It was the face of a man by birth and breeding altogether beneath her" (Gissing 350). Adela's statement is striking because it once again emphasises the fact that appearance cannot hide your true origin. Just like Millicent Henning, Richard Mutimer has tried to adjust his appearance in order to fit into middle-class society, but his attempt has failed.

While I have shown that beauty is often used in an attempt to strengthen one's class position, both *The Princess Casamassima* and *Demos* show that this attempt often fails. Beauty also plays a role in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* but this novel shows the positive aspects and stresses that beauty can indeed signify one's class position and show one's virtue. Because Cedric's perception of beauty is different than Hyacinth's and Richard's, I will investigate Cedric's perception of the concept of beauty and take a closer look at the effect of Cedric's own beauty.

First of all, it is important for the reader to realise Cedric is a child and therefore his view of the world is different from the view that adults have of the world. Humphrey Carpenter argues that this other world-view is essential to childhood. In his book *Secret Gardens* (1985), Carpenter defines childhood as a state of perception: "childhood is a state of being set apart, a time of special perceptions" (Carpenter 105). This description explains that Cedric is inclined to see only the positive facets of the world and society because he is a child. If Cedric is only able to see the positive things in life then Carpenter's description of childhood will also explain why there is such a huge contrast between the society portrayed in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and the societies portrayed in *The Princess Casamassima* and *Demos*. In the latter two novels, the reader gets to see the world through the eyes of adults, and

therefore the main characters in these novels no longer possess the ability to perceive the world in the special way that Cedric does. Cedric's ability to see the positive aspects of society arises from the fact that he has never been confronted with harshness or the negative aspects of society, as Hyacinth and Richard have. If he sees any negative aspects of society, such as poverty, Cedric tries to find a solution for it. In a way that is his contribution to creating a better world.

Since Cedric never experienced suffering he always sees the best in people. This mainly becomes clear when one looks at the relationship between Cedric and his grandfather. The relationship between Cedric and his grandfather appears special, because it is a relationship between a child and an adult. This takes Carpenter's claim about perception to another level. As we have seen, according to Carpenter childhood can be seen as a separate state in which children have their own way of perceiving things. Adults lose this special state as they grow up and therefore they lose this perception as well. As a result, one can claim that a friendship between a child and an adult is difficult to maintain because they both have different views of the world. The fact that Cedric and the Earl are able to establish a friendship in which they understand each other can be considered special, because the Earl takes on Cedric's perceptions. Carpenter basically argues that the relationship between Cedric and his grandfather is a complicated one because their views differ from each other. While it is true that their views are different, Cedric does not seem to realise this. Even before he has met his grandfather Cedric is convinced that he is going to like him: "When a person does so many things for you and wants you to have everything you wish for, of course you'd like him if he wasn't your relation; but when he's your relation and does that, why you're very fond of him" (Burnett 77). Moreover, Cedric expects that his grandfather will be fond of him as well: "I think he will, because you see, I'm his relation too, and I'm his boy's little boy . . ." (Burnett 77). In Cedric's naïve and childlike view, it simply does not occur to him that his

grandfather might not like him. Carpenter furthermore describes adults in children's fiction as a "hostile race, who are by no means certain how to treat children" (Carpenter 104). This description certainly fits the surly Earl of Dorincourt, who was never very successful with children, not even with his own boys. However, the relationship with his grandson is the beginning of a process of change. The Earl has clearly lost the child's view of the world and, according to Carpenter, has therefore lost the child within himself. Carpenter's argument furthermore suggests that once your childhood vision is lost it is lost forever, but this is not the case for the Earl. Slowly but surely, he is getting used to his grandson's world view and finds that he himself is affected by it as well. Even other people start to notice that the Earl has changed since his grandson has come into his life: "I have heard it said that the child has worked miracles, and I begin to believe it. They say my brother adores the boy and can scarcely endure to have him out of sight" (Burnett 224). The process of losing one's childhood seems to be reversed in the Earl's case. By spending time with his grandson, the Earl seems to recover his vision of childhood and is able to regain the child within himself. This shows the importance of Cedric's nature. In fact Cedric is the true gentleman within the novel and with his gentle nature is he is able to influence his grandfather. Eventually Cedric's influence is so strong that he is able to redeem the social order within the estate. Cedric is able to convince his grandfather that it is important to improve the living conditions of the poor. The Earl's willingness to listen to his grandson is beneficial to the Earl himself and his image.

Cedric always sees the beauty in people and in society, but also knows how to value the beauty of buildings and nature. This mainly becomes clear when he arrives at Dorincourt Castle for the first time. He is touched by all the things he sees and all the experiences he gets: "Cedric had never seen such trees, they were so grand and stately, and their branches grew so low down on their huge trunks. He did not then know that Dorincourt Castle was one of the most beautiful in all England; that its park was one of the broadest and finest, and its trees and

avenue almost without rivals. But he did know it was all very beautiful” (Burnett 97). Once again this is a result of the fact that Cedric is still only a child and therefore he is, in all his naivety, struck by all the new impressions he gets when he arrives in England. Cedric appreciates the beauty of the country. To the adult reader, the beauty of the country has a redemptive force, as Altick claims, as set out earlier in this thesis. A possible explanation for his appreciation is of course the special world-view he has because he is still a child, but even for a child it is a large transition to move from an American city in which he is surrounded by the bustle of the masses to the quiet British countryside.

Just as in *Demos* and *The Princess Casamassima*, physical appearance and beauty play an important role in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* as well. Cedric’s parents as well as Cedric himself are described as beautiful people. Their physical beauty is linked to inner beauty. All three characters are good-looking as well as loving, well-mannered and kind-hearted. This suggests that looks reflect virtue and thus character.

Because of his untimely death, Cedric’s father is only present in the first chapter of the novel. Yet he is described as beautiful in comparison to his two brothers: “He had a beautiful face and a fine, strong, graceful figure, he had a bright smile and a sweet, gay voice; he was brave and generous and had the kindest heart in the world...” (Burnett 4). This quotation shows the link between the Captain’s appearance and his good and kindly nature. This is the first of several occasions on which the reader receives the impression that moral goodness is reflected in good looks, especially when one looks at how the Captain’s brothers, who are neither good-looking nor friendly, are being characterised: “But it was not so with his elder brothers; neither of them was handsome, or very kind or clever” (Burnett 5).

A second example of the link between looks and character is the description of Cedric’s mother, Mrs. Errol. Burnett portrays her in a strikingly similar manner as she does the Captain: “She was very pretty (...) and she looked so sweet and innocent and sorrowful

that the captain could not forget her” (Burnett 3-4). Burnett not only gives an account of her physical beauty, but she describes her inner beauty as well. At first Burnett describes her appearance and then interprets her temperament, which in this case also suggests that her good inner qualities find expression on the outside. Even the Earl notices the effects of Mrs. Errol’s acts of charity on his tenants: “It was not long before he learned that the poor people knew her very well indeed. When there was sickness or sorrow or poverty in any house, the little brougham often stood before the door” (Burnett 203). The Earl has to admit that even he has noticed Mrs. Errol’s beauty: “It had not displeased the Earl to find that the mother of his heir has a beautiful young face and looked as much like a lady as if she had been a duchess...” (Burnett 204). Here her beauty is clearly used to suggest that she belongs to the aristocracy.

The last example which shows there is a link between physical beauty and moral goodness is Cedric himself. Cedric can be seen as an idealised version of childhood. Beverly Lyon Clark argues that nineteenth-century fiction was supposed to create role models for readers, providing examples to imitate:

This was, furthermore, a time when genteel readers expected all fiction to provide models for emulation. To be considered suitable for children, a work might be held to such a standard with some stringency, but all literature was expected to nourish our aspirations for the ideal (Clark 22).

Cedric certainly lives up to the idea of the perfect child and therefore Burnett characterises him as an exceptional boy:

In the first place, he was always well, and so he never gave any trouble; in the second place, he had so sweet a temper and ways so charming that he was a pleasure to every one; and third he was so beautiful to look at that he was quite a picture (Burnett 7).

Clark claims that Cedric's character is constructed out of several different values to make him the perfect role model. His character contains aspects of the Christian gentleman, the self-made man, the masculine primitive and the social- economic elite (Clark 23-24). The first aspect of Cedric's nature that Clark mentions is that of the Christian gentleman. Self-control, courtesy, sincerity and service to others characterise this type. Cedric lives up to all aspects of this ideal. He was brought up to be friendly and sincere, and there are several moments that show Cedric's service to other people. To take one example, we may consider the scene when he wants to help Mary when Mr. Havisham asks Cedric what he would do with money; he says, "but first I'd give Mary some money for Bridget—that's her sister, with twelve children, and a husband out of work" (Burnett 50). The fact that Cedric thinks of other people first instead of wanting to buy things for himself shows that he truly is a Christian gentleman.

The self-made man embodies qualities of industry, frugality, initiative and getting ahead. Although these might seem rather low qualities for a nobleman, as Clark points out, gentility often uses industry and initiative in the service of goodness, for example to improve the living conditions of the poor. Cedric lives up to this ideal when he takes the initiative and persuades his grandfather to rebuild the poor cottages or when he advises his grandfather to let Mr Higgins keep his tenancy: "I should let him stay, and give him the things for his children" (Burnett 153).

The ideal of the masculine primitive that Clark discusses might not be the first ideal which comes to mind when one thinks of Cedric, but this ideal is mainly based on physical strength and personal force or determination. These are qualities Cedric certainly possesses. One finds these qualities within Cedric's character for example when he learns to ride his horse: "He was out of breath and his face grew red, but he held on with all his might and sat as straight as he could" (Burnett 185).

The final ideal Clark mentions is that of the social-economic elite which mostly presents itself through material display, fashion and conspicuous consumption. As described earlier, Cedric is not a character who thinks only about himself, nor he is somebody who uses a lot of money for himself, yet nonetheless he has always been nicely dressed by his mother: “When he was old enough to walk out with his nurse, dragging a small wagon and wearing a short white kilt skirt and a big white hat set back on his curly yellow hair” (Burnett 8). Here Burnett uses his clothing to symbolise his aristocratic descent.

The combination of Cedric’s looks and personality emphasises that we are meant to take him as a role model. His character is built on different ideals and the combination of these ideals gives him all the traits he needs to be the best possible heir the Earl can wish for.

Cedric Errol clearly differs greatly from the protagonists of the other two novels, Hyacinth Robinson and Richard Mutimer. Cedric’s transition into the upper class is successful. Of course this is partly because as a child he is still flexible when it comes to accepting changes. However, this is not the only reason. From the beginning of the novel it becomes clear that Cedric has the best chances of the three to make his life in a different class successful. He is privileged enough to have aristocratic genes, the proper upbringing, the correct appearance and the necessary virtue. Therefore, he can be called a ‘true Gentleman’.

Chapter 4 Class Mobility: The Struggle for a Better Position

It has been pointed out earlier that becoming a gentleman is not the only possible way to enter the middle class. All three novels deal with class struggle and the novels reveal that this struggle is paired with questions of how to overcome class boundaries. The novels give several examples of ways in which characters have tried to overcome class boundaries. Some of these attempts are more successful than others. This chapter will discuss how *The Princess Casamassima*, *Demos* and *Little Lord Fauntleroy* deal with the different situations in which social mobility was possible. Above all, revolution was the first and most feared way to create change within society. Both *The Princess Casamassima* and *Demos* describe an imminent revolution. *The Princess Casamassima* pays attention to class differences, because, as suggested in Mark Selzer's article "*The Princess Casamassima: Realism and the Fantasy of Surveillance*" (1987), James tries to give a realistic view of society: "*The Princess Casamassima* has been regarded as James's primary excursion into the realistic or naturalistic mode" (Selzer 296). By using a realistic style of writing James draws attention to the bad living conditions of the poor and the working class.

English society has been a class-based society for centuries and class divisions have always been controversial. This was especially the case at the end of the nineteenth century when there was a great desire for social and economic change. By writing a novel which focuses on the different classes and the inequality they lead to within English society James invites people to think about the political side of class divisions. As Christine DeVine points out in her article "Revolution and Democracy in the London *Times* and *The Princess Casamassima*' (2002),

While *The Princess Casamassima* has been called James's most political novel because it overtly concerns a political theme, it is not a political analysis or manifesto. James addresses the class-based rhetoric promoting the fear of revolution and

democracy promulgated in such public discourse as that of the *Times*, not the events themselves. (DeVine 57)

This means that, even though James's novel deals with political issues, as an author he keeps his own voice or opinions out of his text. However, the realistic portrayal of society challenges the reader to form his or her own opinion about the social conditions during the Victorian period.

When one takes a closer look at the characters in *The Princess Casamassima* one sees that all these characters play their own part within the class struggle. Yet the characters meet each other during their struggles and in the process of finding their place within a changing society.

Hyacinth is the character who is experiencing the most difficulties with social divisions. His social status is mainly determined on the basis of his job as bookbinder. As an apprentice in a bookbindery he can be placed at the top of the working class because bookbinding was considered a craft: "Then while they waited he remarked to his companion [Millicent] that he didn't believe she had an idea of what his work was and how charming it could be. [...] 'But the art of the binder's an exquisite art,'" he assures her (James 76). After establishing Hyacinth's initial place within society it is interesting to look at what influences and changes his view on society and his place in it. Hyacinth is an example of deference, as defined by Altick. Hyacinth accepts his own place within society and accepts the fact that other people have the superiority to be ranked above him on the social scale. When Hyacinth starts to doubt society, it is because he is influenced by other characters. Hyacinth's friends and the people he meets all bring him into contact with several different aspects of society and politics and these experiences change his view on social and class divisions.

When Hyacinth starts working in the bindery, it is Monsieur Eustache Poupin who first influences him by introducing him to socialism. To Eustache Poupin, the social question

is of great importance and he often talks about ‘the people’ and how in the end they will overcome the oppression of the upper class: “I mean a force that will make the bourgeois go down into their cellars and hide, pale with fear, behind their barrels of wine and their heaps of gold!” (James 89). Poupin speaks about “a force”; this is a rather abstract term. As DeVine points out, these abstract terms were often used in newspapers at the end of the nineteenth century to make people aware of revolutionists and revolutionary activities. One of the effects was that most people became more afraid of revolutionists than of revolutions themselves: “It is my contention that, in the 1880s, the *Times* not only helped to construct a social reality but helped to spread a fear of democracy, characterizing the political reform movement as dangerous by associating it with terrorism and anarchy” (DeVine 55). A second effect of using this kind of language often in the newspapers was that even revolutionists themselves started to take them over, only increasing the fear and the disorder.

Eustache Poupin introduces Hyacinth to Paul Muniment who turns out to be another important influence on Hyacinth. Paul can draw Hyacinth into the revolutionary movement because he shows Hyacinth a less bitter side of revolution: “In his own imagination he associated bitterness with the revolutionary passion; but the young chemical expert, at the same time that he was planning far ahead, seemed capable of turning revolutionists themselves into ridicule even for the entertainment of the revolutionised” (James 102).

Paul eventually introduces Hyacinth to a secret club of socialists: “Well, I see you’re a good ‘un. Just meet me some night.” “Where, where?” asked Hyacinth eagerly. “Oh, I’ll tell you when we get away from *her*” (James 114). This secretive behaviour is another example in support of DeVine’s claim that secrecy was used to increase a sense of fear for revolutionists. The novel even affirms that “frightening” society is one of the revolutionists’ goals: “None the less he had been as plain as possible on the point that their game must be now to frighten society, and frighten it effectively; to make it believe that the swindled classes were at last

fairly in league—had really grasped the idea that, closely combined, they would be irresistible (James 241-242).

Inspired by his friend and by what Hyacinth hears in the clubroom called “The Sun and Moon” he is drawn further into the socialist and revolutionist movement. He even takes an oath to fulfil his own revolutionary act:

there was something in her light fine pressure [...] that seemed to tell him his liberty was going – the liberty he had managed to keep (till the other day when he gave Hoffendahl a mortgage on it) and the possession of which had in some degree consoled him for other forms of penury (James 259).

This quote shows that Hyacinth is completely devoted to the socialist movement; he is even prepared to kill for the people. However, at some point he starts to doubt whether choosing the side of the socialist movement has been a good decision and he is not the only character who shows that the class struggle is a difficult one. Even Paul, who is a true socialist and wants to abolish class differences, is still able to understand why people who belong to the upper class hang on to their traditions and status: “A fine, stiff conservative’s a thing I perfectly understand,” said Paul Muniment. “If I were on the top I’d stick” (James 387).

Lady Aurora Langrish is important for the development of Hyacinth’s view on society, because she brings him into contact with the higher class for the first time, while wanting to reject class differences herself. Until he meets with Lady Aurora, Hyacinth has only been in contact with the lower class or the top layer of the lower class. However, because he is descended from a Lord, he has always felt drawn to the upper classes:

By the nature of his mind he was perpetually, almost morbidly conscious that the circle in which he lived was an infinitesimally small shallow eddy in the roaring vortex of London, and his imagination plunged again and again into the flood that whirled past it and round it, in the hope of being carried to some brighter, happier

vision—the vision of societies where, in splendid rooms, with smiles and soft voices, distinguished men, with women who were both proud and gentle, talked of art, literature and history. (James 107)

To Hyacinth, Lady Aurora symbolises the society he has always wanted to be a part of and therefore he finds it difficult to understand that Lady Aurora rejects her ancestry. As an aristocrat, she has access to wealth and status, yet she rather wants to reject her status and give all her money to the poor people in order to create a sense of equality.

She was so ashamed of being rich that she wondered the lower classes didn't break into Inglefield and take possession of all the treasures in the Italian room. She was a tremendous socialist; she was worse than any one—she was worse even than Paul (James 100).

Another character who shows Hyacinth a different side of society is Christina, the Princess Casamassima. She invites Hyacinth to spend some time with her in the country and this is a turning point for Hyacinth: “He had never in his life been in the country – the real country, as he called it, the country which was not the mere ravelled fringe of London” (James 247). The country mesmerizes Hyacinth and it is as if a whole new world has opened itself to Hyacinth: “There was a world to be revealed to him: it lay waiting with the dew on it under his windows, and he must go down and take of it such possession as he might” (James 247). The princess contacted Hyacinth in the hopes that he would introduce her to a life in the lower class and guide her through it. Initially Hyacinth still stands behind the socialist movement, but the more she shows him of upper-class life the less Hyacinth feels connected to the socialist movement until he loses the connection completely: ““Nevertheless I'm not wholly pretending it's all your fault if I've lost sight of the sacred cause almost altogether in my recent adventures”” (James 334). The fact that Hyacinth loses his passion for the socialist movement is a sign that the revolution Hyacinth had hoped to be a part of has turned into a

failure. It appears that Hyacinth is too closely connected to the class definitions he had hoped to break.

In *Demos* the desire for revolution has a socialist basis instead of a violent one. There are two important moments which bring about change within society. The first one is when Richard Mutimer inherits the estate from his great uncle. From that moment onwards Mutimer's ideal is to change society. He wants to create more equality between the working class and the upper class. More importantly, as a member of the Union, he wants to create better and fairer conditions for the labourers and factory workers. In order to make his idea successful Mutimer uses capitalist enterprise as a means, but instead of wanting to make profit for himself he wants to use the profit to invest in Socialism and in the people who work for him:

“I would build houses for the men, and in fact make that valley an industrial settlement conducted on Socialist principles. [...] Practically I can devote the whole of my income; my personal expenses will not be worth taking into account. The men must be paid on a just scheme, and the margin of profit that remains, all that we can spare from the extension of the works, shall be devoted to the Socialist propaganda” (Gissing 56).

However, Mutimer's ideals get him into trouble. He is not after profit with his undertaking, but he had hoped that the mine would at least pay for itself:

It was not to be expected that the profits of that undertaking would be worth speaking of for some little time to come, but it was extremely desirable that it should pay its own expenses, and it began to be doubtful whether even this moderate success was being achieved (Gissing 228).

Unfortunately Mutimer finds it extremely difficult to achieve this and therefore struggles to cover the expenses of his compound.

The second moment of social change is when Richard loses the estate to Hubert Eldon. Simon James argues that Mutimer loses the estate because he misused the money from the inheritance to his own benefit: “Like Pip, Richard acts the part of a gentleman, and indulges in needless consumption; he even goes one better than Pip by succeeding in the aim of marrying a lady” (79). Losing the estate can be seen as Richard’s punishment because he used the money to pretend he belonged to a higher class. By not using the money wisely Richard proved himself to be unworthy of the inheritance and therefore he loses it and the estate.

The fact that Richard loses to Hubert proves to the labourers how unfair society is: “‘Here's an example of how the law does justice in a capitalist society. The man who makes a grand use of money has it all taken away from him by the man who makes no use of it at all, except to satisfy his own malice and his own selfishness’” (Gissing 342). They feel that capitalist society has won once again and that the upper class will always have power over them. The labourers are angry when Hubert furthermore decides to shut down the mines and to take down the compound, because the labourers will lose their jobs and their houses: “Just as he had thrown aside his book the silence of the night was riven by a terrific yell, a savage cry of many voices, which came from the garden in the front of the house, and at the same instant there sounded a great crashing of glass” (Gissing 378). The fact that Richard’s plan has failed shows that it is impossible to break the established class distinctions. Wealth remains unequally divided and from the labourer’s point of view this only confirms that revolution is useless and that society remains unequal.

The most common way for people to rise on the social ladder was by marriage. In order to protect estates or class status people often chose strategic marriage partners, just like Richard Mutimer. Richard is still uncertain whether people from the middle class will take him seriously in his new role as a factory director. He decides to use marriage to strengthen his social position. Richard chooses Adela Waltham as his bride and to his surprise he finds

himself supported by Adela's mother. The striking thing is that Mrs. Waltham did not seem to like Richard much when he first got to Wanley. However, as Raymond Williams suggests in *The Country and the City* (1973), marriage was often used to protect or to enlarge estates: "An estate passed from being regarded as an inheritance, carrying such and such income, to being calculated as an opportunity for investment, carrying greatly increased returns" (Williams 61). When one takes this practice into account it becomes clear why Mrs. Waltham has a change of heart about Richard: "I can't help thinking, Adela, that in all essentials I never knew a more gentlemanly man than Mr. Mutimer. There must be something superior in his family; no doubt we were altogether mistaken in speaking of him as a mechanic" (Gissing 129). Mrs. Waltham's choice of Richard as her son-in-law makes even more sense when one takes into consideration that Adela was to marry Hubert Eldon in the first place. This means that Mrs. Waltham was already thinking about the link between her daughter and the estate. A marriage between the heir of the estate and her daughter would improve Mrs. Waltham's own status as well. When Mrs. Waltham hears Hubert Eldon will not inherit the estate, she breaks the promise that Adela will be Hubert's wife someday. According to Williams, it often happened that social relations were broken off when it turned out that they complicated the protection of the estate: "Social relations which stood in the way of this kind of modernisation were then steadily and at times ruthlessly broken down" (Williams 61).

The industrial revolution, and especially the discovery of the steam engine, was an important development. Heavy work which up until then was done by labourers was now done by machines. As a result of this the unemployment rates increased. With these new machines small businesses were able to grow into factories and as a result of this growth factory owners obtained more wealth. These were people who often started as labourers themselves and by working hard had earned a lot of money and were able to improve their social status. In order to say that social mobility is successful a person has to feel himself

settled in his newfound social status, and at the same time this person has to be accepted into the new society by the people who belong to this society. *Demos* gives an example of somebody who tries to move successfully into a new class, namely old Richard Mutimer.

When old Richard came to Wanley he was a self-made man due to investments in industry but he started out as a labourer himself: “Mr. Mutimer was quite a self-made man, quite. I understand he has relations in London of the very poorest class—labouring people” (Gissing 7). The people of Wanley found it difficult to accept that Mutimer had worked himself up from the lower class to the upper class. Judging by comments made by some of the villagers one can claim that he was never fully accepted within the upper class society by some people because he was from the working class: “‘If I had not known his origin, I should certainly have taken him for a county gentleman’” (Gissing 7). Even though Mutimer was a capitalist he did many generous and noble things for the village of Wanley, which ensured that he was eventually respected by the villagers. The fact that old Mutimer did not fail and was indeed able to successfully climb up the social ladder shows that social mobility is definitely possible.

Social mobility, however, is not always a success. *Demos* also shows us that attempts to move up the social scale do not always have the desired effect. The example of Mrs. Mutimer shows us that act of moving to another class itself can turn out to be a failure. Mrs. Mutimer was reluctant to accept her new social status and she suffers from it because she finds it to be a curse: “‘It's my belief as money's the curse o' this world; I never knew a trouble yet as didn't somehow come of it, either 'cause there was too little or else too much’” (Gissing 207). Mrs. Mutimer's greatest difficulty is getting used to a new life style and more importantly surrendering herself to it. She is used to doing everything in the house herself and she finds it ridiculous that she now she has to move to a new house and let servants do all the work for her. After a long struggle, she eventually agrees to go back to her old house:

“I don't know whether you've been told that Mrs. Chattaway's been living in the house since the others went away. The furniture's just as you left it; I dare say you'd feel it like going home again.” [...] Mrs. Mutimer did not soften, but, after many words, Richard understood her to agree to what he proposed (Gissing 233).

By deciding to go back to her old home, Mrs. Mutimer decides to end her struggle to find her place in a new and unfamiliar place and she chooses to return to the lower classes of society. With this decision she shows it is not only important that other people accept you into their social group, but you also have to find acceptance within yourself to fit into another class. Mrs. Mutimer is unable to find this acceptance, but does that mean that her transition into a higher class of society was unsuccessful? One is tempted to say yes, but there are other ways of looking at it. Mrs Mutimer is one of the few characters whose behaviour does not seem to be changed by the inheritance. In fact, she even grows more determined not to change her principles. As C. J. Francis claims in his essay “Gissing’s Characterization: Heredity and environment” (1962), “It is not that the new circumstances have no effect upon her; they have the effect of making her cling more strongly to her principles” (Francis 88). The fact that Mrs. Mutimer does not change her behaviour or principles shows that she has a virtuous character and as a result of this she indeed deserves to move up the social ladder. Yet she is the one who chooses not to accept a life within the middle class.

Cedric’s transition on the social scale is the most remarkable of them all. His move to a better class position is symbolised quite literally by moving to another country. The move to England is an important turning point in the story, because it symbolises Cedric’s physical entry into the aristocracy. By leaving his home in America Cedric physically leaves his past and at the same time enters a completely new life in an unknown society. As American society is not as class-oriented as British society, Cedric does not know what class or class difference is. Because he is not familiar with the phenomenon Cedric does not judge people

on their jobs or incomes; he simply looks at the people themselves and their characters. Before Cedric moves to England he does not know much about the British aristocracy. The things he knows about aristocracy are the things he has learned from his friend Mr. Hobbs: “Mr. Hobbs had a very bad opinion of ‘the British’ and he told the whole story of the Revolution, relating very wonderful and patriotic stories about villainy of the enemy and the bravery of the Revolutionary heroes...” (Burnett 13). The result of Mr. Hobbs’s negative opinion on the aristocracy is that Cedric is reluctant to accept that he belongs to the aristocracy himself: “He said, “I should rather not be an earl. None of the boys are earls. Can’t I *not* be one?” (Burnett 21). However, influenced by his good nature Cedric decides that if he has to be an Earl he is going to try to be a good one: “But if I have to be an earl, there’s one thing I can do: I can try to be a good one. I’m not going to be a tyrant” (Burnett 28). Once again Cedric’s good nature takes over and guides him to do what is necessary to become a good aristocrat.

Conclusion

Social struggle and strife mark the Victorian period. As a result of the industrial revolution the gap between different classes only increased. The middle class expanded as factory owners became wealthier and some thus migrated from the working class into the middle class. At the same time the work and living conditions for people in the working class deteriorated. The unemployment rates were high, people were starving and discontent about the inequality within society was growing.

Victorian authors began to write about the harsh conditions of the poor. By doing so they hoped to draw attention to the unequal social situation. During this time the general way of thinking

shifted: people no longer believed that life is an individual journey, but they came to realise that all events are connected to one another. The upper class became wealthier while the living conditions for the poor became worse. The feeling that the upper class profited from the poor increased and as a result of this the anger of the working class likewise intensified. They held the upper class responsible for their misery, as the call for a more equal society arises.

Before the industrial revolution class boundaries were fixed. There was hardly any social mobility possible. The country was ruled by a small and select group of wealthy people, the aristocracy. They owned large estates and titles, which both were only passed on by inheritance. Their fine and virtuous appearance would eventually become the role model for the figure of 'the Gentleman'.

Burke asserts that stability is passed on through inheritance for an inheritance will connect you to your forefathers forever. Decisions should be made with your forefathers in mind. Burke says that change is not necessarily a bad thing as long as one takes the time to think through one's options before deciding what to do. Burke's final claim is that people should respect each other's position within society and that people should not envy each other for their wealth and social status. However, during the Victorian Period, the force of this claim was diminished.

People wanted to improve their social status and in order to do so they used the concept of the gentleman as their example. The rank of gentleman suggested that social mobility was possible. The rank itself suggests social prestige and it is the rank that was most open to social mobility. People who wanted to enter the middle class used this rank to do so. Besides representing social prestige, a gentleman is imagined to be a virtuous character as he symbolises moral and social values. However, he proves an ambiguous figure as well. It is not possible to give one clear definition of what constitutes a gentleman, but the characters in the novels always recognise one when they see one.

The main characters in *The Princess Casamassima*, *Demos* and *Little Lord Fauntleroy* all use the concept of the gentleman in order to improve their social status and to overcome class differences. They attempt to prove that they all have a gentleman inside them. In order to do this the characters

have to demonstrate that they possess a combination of characteristics. They must show that they have a strict moral values and gentle manners. Both Hyacinth and Cedric are of aristocratic descent so they are understood to have inherited these qualities from their forefathers. However, they grew up in impoverished circumstances: Cedric with his mother in America and Hyacinth with his foster mother Miss Pynsent. This means that their gentlemanly traits never have been cultivated. However, once they come into contact with people from the upper class the reader perceives that they start to change. The most striking thing is that this change is a very gradual and natural one, and it does not take them any effort to grow into their role of gentlemen. This is different for Richard Muttimer. He is not of aristocratic descent and therefore he has more difficulty to fit into his new role. His change is neither natural nor gradual and he has to struggle to be accepted in his new place within society, even though he has all the status symbols. He has money, a friendly wife from the upper class and his looks can also work in his favour and yet he is never considered a true gentleman, because he is not one by birth.

Within the three novels the concept of inheritance is used to validate Hyacinth's, Richard's, and Cedric's rights to social status and wealth. For Hyacinth, his inheritance is even used to cultivate his gentlemanly nature and yet the result is eventually that he rejects his radical principles and thus cannot fulfil the mission he was given. In the end Richard Muttimer is unable to fulfil his mission as well. He plans to use his inheritance to improve society, but because he makes unwise decisions his scheme fails and thus he fails as a social reformer. The only character who is able to actually improve society is Cedric. He is the only one who is able to bring about social reform and in this case he even lives up to Burke's principles and he is able to reform his grandfather's estate while keeping his grandfather and his wishes in mind.

The concept of beauty is used to achieve social mobility. Several characters try to use their appearance as a means to rise to a higher class. Richard Muttimer knows that he must use his favourable looks to convince people that he belongs to the middle class. Nevertheless, his manner of speech betrays that he is not truly the refined gentleman that he pretends to be. Once again Cedric is the only character who knows to convince the reader that he is truly a gentleman. In his childlike

vision, he only sees the positive and virtuous aspects of people and society. He also knows how to value art and architecture and his loving upbringing works in his favour as well.

In all three novels, the concept of the gentleman is mainly used to symbolise the class struggles within society. Each novel takes up its own form to deal with these struggles. *The Princess Casamassima* deals with the aspect of revolution, while *Demos* deals with social reform. Both Hyacinth and Richard fail to bring about the change they had envisioned for society. Cedric, on the other hand, is able to improve the living conditions of the poor people on his grandfather's estate. However, Cedric always had the advantage of his birth-right. This improved his chance to move up the social ladder while Hyacinth and Richard were less fortunate. Hyacinth is also of aristocratic descent, but he lost the claim to his rights because he was born out of wedlock and Richard was born into the working class so he never could claim an upper-class position in the first place.

The three novels deal with the same subject, but all with different outcomes. Transcending class is not easy and often ends in failure, as is shown by Hyacinth and Richard, who are both unable to live up to the image of the gentleman. They try to rise above social stereotypes, but, in the end, they cannot overcome their origin. Cedric differs from the other two in so far as he can successfully enter a higher class. But the same time, Cedric also confirms the stereotype that you can only be successful in the upper class if you are from aristocratic descent. Out of the three main characters Cedric is the only one who turns out to be of legitimate aristocratic origin. In other words, he was born into the upper class and therefore he was destined to end up there.

This thesis tried to determine the role the concept of the gentleman plays in the attempts of the protagonists of *The Princess Casamassima*, *Demos* and *Little Lord Fauntleroy* to reach attain a higher social position. One can conclude that the attempts of Hyacinth and Richard to maintain their upper-class positions are unsuccessful because they ultimately do not fit the model of the gentleman. The only character who is successful in the end is Cedric, but he does not transcend class differences, because as a grandson of an earl he always belonged in the upper class and he did not have to try to fit

in; he only confirms that, historically speaking, he naturally and biologically belongs in the position where he ends up: as inheritor of his grandfather's estate.

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